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INTRODUCTION

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T*he Cities of Everyday Life* takes off where the *Sarai Reader 01* broke off. In *Reader 01* (Febuary 2001) we had argued that the Public Domain was a key optic to engage with the contemporary. Here *Reader 01* operated in a thematic dialectic; the crisis of the nineteenth-century public, with its imaginative motifs being those of the town square and the rational citizen, was being challenged by new practices of public-ness and collaboration in the free software movement and the possibility of new worlds of knowledge. To be sure, the conflictual nature of this space was acknowledged – the proprietary claims to know-ledge, the cruelties of the new globalisation and the crisis of the dotcom utopia. However, *Sarai Reader 01: The Public Domain* indicated a new willingness to take on the contem-porary. In doing so it mapped the foundational coordinates of our engagements at Sarai. This is a tradition that *Reader 02* continues to carry in its pages.

The Cities of Everyday Life carries within it an argument to take the urban seriously. In the context of India, where a large part of this reader has been edited, this is significant, given the frugality of writing on city life in this part of the world. The reasons for this are complex and answers may be found in many of the essays in this volume, but the remark-able absence of both public and scholarly writing on the city (with some notable excep-tions), needs to be addressed with some urgency.

The rise of the urban in 'our time' was given a certain urgency by globalisation. Globalisation, with its mixture of enforced commodification, spatial transformations and urban ruin, excavated the city from margins of academic and literary writing to a new public discourse that suddenly assumed the given-ness of urban space. As elites quarrelled over pollution and decay of public order, new fusions were taking place between the media and the fabric of urban life. 'Newness', the old battle cry of modernity, (which often had a noumenal existence for most ordinary citizens in post-Independence India) was now fused into the sensorium of urban life. The emerging urban constellation in the 1990s was marked by a rapid tempo of sensations transformed by a plethora of signs indicating the arrival of new forms of mechanical and digital reproduction. One cannot overemphasise the experience of shock, compressed temporally, which marked urban space in the past

decade. The cultures of distraction, of exhilaration and mobility, of loss and displacement were by no means new – they had been narrated by 1920s European modernism. What was different was that (as if) in this new modern we were deprived of the ability to think, our 'social body' emptied out, prised open, "bodies without organs" as Deleuze and Guattari have argued, no time to *reflect* as in the old modernisms. It was as if we were forced kicking and screaming into a new space of flows with the rhetoric of smoothness and non-linearity.

However the "place of spaces" was not, as some have argued, superseded by the space of flows. Along with the "smoothness" and the placelessness of the shopping mall, the airport and multiplex, new localities were produced both as sites for work and imagination. The urban became the site for new disruptions and ruses by those rendered placeless in the Smooth City. New struggles and solidarities emerged, once again lacking the mythic quality of the old movements, but adapting, innovating and gaining knowledge through the practice of urban life. Within the new constellation of ruin and danger of the contemporary city, strategies of living, as one of the essays in this volume suggest, often tend to be physiognomic, where detective-like strategies of masking and unmasking help negotiate the urban crowd.

The 'city' in *Reader 02* stands at the cusp of both the interpretive and the material. For, if anything, the contemporary constellation has prised open new horizons of urban experiences, and a landscape of long submerged memories. We have begun to *revisit* our cities, often through the troubled post-national landscape of our time, marked by memories of new ruined cities – thus an article in this reader places Srinagar and Sarajevo on a comparative scale of memory. If new localities and new spaces have emerged, so have new flows, which show no mercy to intimacies of old-style localisms.

In the face of such turmoil, which upset our very sense of affiliation and belonging, *Reader 02* remains sympathetic to a critical, often untimely attitude to the present. The new ruses of the Smooth City, the Informational City, or the happy fictions of a distracted global placelessnes have now run against the realities of a global crisis that seems unending, and promises a churning of which the events in Seattle and Genoa were but early intimations. But the *working out* of the crisis may well take place through smaller, non-spectacular conflicts of which cities and towns shall be important sites.

The Sections

This reader collates research, writing and looking that is alert to the city as a locus of imaginary engagements, a body of distinct practices, a compendium of different ways of knowing, and as a field of power, strategies of survival and resistance. We seek to capture the city through different views and purchases on urban being and becoming. The spatial and temporal axes of city life provide us with the architectural format. The prism of one moment, say the catastrophe of the pogrom-like dimensions of the Bombay violence of 1993, may provide us with narratives of social and cultural fear, suspicion and hate that can only be illuminated at a moment of danger. Similarly, the mediatised spectacle of 9/11 opens us to the immediacy of catastrophe in a city that lies at the heart of empire but is also one of the key icons of the contemporary cosmopolitan imagination. Clearly no

place is better organised, more amenable to the spectacular staging of violence and the cultivation of fear and suspicion than the modern megalopolis, with its demographic concentration, its interweaving of different ethnicities and registers of anonymity, its grandiose architectural environment and its myriad localities and alleyways. The catastrophic event visited on the city positions us vertiginously in the architecture of the present, but is only one axis of temporal engagement and spatial entry. Memories of childhood provide the form for an indirect sense of the violence that assailed Calcutta in the 1940s. And, posed against the large-scale spectacle of ruin, we may observe smaller vistas, but ones hardly negligible for those afflicted with visionary presentiments and fears. A subordinated urban society in Delhi is privy to a menacing entity, a shape shifter: how to account for its sudden appearance and equally sudden disappearance, a phenomenon that fleetingly brings a marginalised city space into public and national discourse? As Ranajit Guha would put it, what status do we allocate to this small voice of history, inhabiting a domain of perception not readily accessible by discourses of reason? Does this have something to do with everyday anxiety rather than the catastrophic moment, the experience of migration and displacement, of marginality and the threat of governmental scrutiny? Or is this to rationalise perception and neutralise other ways of inhabiting the city?

The notion of city as spectacle and stage, as space of performance and urban congregations, extends into another set of reflections. Contributions on the cities constructed in and through theatre, cinema, music and media mobilisation draw upon a range of methods including urban social history, the analysis of narrative form and style, and anthropological fieldwork. Issues of virtuality, temporality, spatiality and locality emerge as key categories. Each of these acquires a certain power when thought of in combination rather than as discrete phenomena. Thus the virtual dimension of cinematic fictions invites us to look at the specifics of film history and film form. But this virtuality acquires particular force when the cinematic imaginary intervenes to restructure perceptions about the divisions of everyday life and the political-ritual moments in urban spatial practices. The temporal organisation of entertainments, for example show times, a mechanism to discipline urban audiences, assumes changing calibrations in different entertainment spaces and audience congregations, and over the time of the evening. The timing of the arrival of a fax that threatens libel action against a screening of a contentious film gives rise to strategies of spatial relocation; and so on.

The section on digital urbanism mobilises the imperative of connecting the virtual to the real, such that it 'bleeds' into the real. Here the architecture of the Internet, as something governed by a sense of in-betweenness, incompleteness, and the possibilities of accessing multiple forms of knowledge and engagement, suggests possibilities for the unsettling and re-imagining of built environments. This is done both by a visionary declaration of the autonomies that exist as potentialities in online space and by envisioning the infrastructure of matter and (electrical) energy that underpins the Internet. Both these acts suggest an alteration of the frame through which we apprehend the urban.

This process of unsettling things, for example dominant media forms and representations, brings to light the variety of practices that compose the everyday. A strong motif of Sarai's media neighbourhood project, or Cybermohalla, has been one of attending to the

specific qualities of technologies of sound and image. Young people from a working-class neighbourhood in Delhi work with these different registers of the sensorium to creatively observe and interrogate their locality. In this collection, a particular dimension of their activities, writing the city through the everyday experience of the locality, is extracted to provide the lineaments of an emergent, multiple and multimedia environment. A separate section on writing the city shifts genres from the diary to the essay. Writers on Beirut, Delhi, Srinagar, Calcutta, Berlin, Lagos, London and Mexico City consider various dimensions of the everyday: the phenomenology of night, the time-space of the bus journey, the invisible spaces of hospital wards dealing with terminal illness, nineteenth-century notions of what constituted new media for the city. The city as space lived through the thickets of apprehension and violent governmentality provides the critical motivational energy to these explorations.

Surveillance is a crucial issue here, as new technologies are mobilised to identify populations against a complex grid of knowledge about the body and cross-referenced information nodes – for example, biometric surveillance of key indicators such as fingerprints and retina, and face recognition software that claims to be able to pick out faces from a crowd and match these with databases of criminals. This dimension of the politics of surveillance and identification, which received a fillip after 9/11, has clear implications for the structures of urban governance and policing, especially in a context in which urban planning gives priority to the logistics of health and environment over the populations which compose the city. These analyses are put together in a section devoted to Sarai's engagement with the politics of information. Here our contributors also map emerging fields of intellectual property rights with global ramifications, as in the patenting of human genetic material and seeds. Apart from tracking these processes, these contributions reinvest in a notion of the commons and public knowledge, and think through the possibilities of on and off-line resistance. They reaffirm Sarai's commitment to a notion of the public domain, of open access against the aggressive drives to carve up the world, its myriad resources and creative practices into a burgeoning proprietary imperium.

One note on the *form* of *Reader 02*. We have continued the essay form (both text and image), while retaining the sharp intellectual edge of the writing. The preference for the essay form in this reader is clearly linked to the idea of pushing a critical form of public writing, which is both accessible and insightful. Another point is that while readers usually contain a preponderance of thematically organised, already published texts, *The Cities of Everyday Life* is the exact opposite. The bulk of texts here are original pieces of writing and appear in print for the first time.

Finally a word on collaboration. This reader was put together by six editors, five of us working from Delhi and the sixth (Geert Lovink) working from Sydney. Collaborating on a book of this scale and ambition is not easy, but we are happy to say that it has been an extremely smooth process, with deadlines kept, themes agreed upon and wide-ranging editorial consensus. And it is a model Sarai plans to hold on to in all our succeeding readers.

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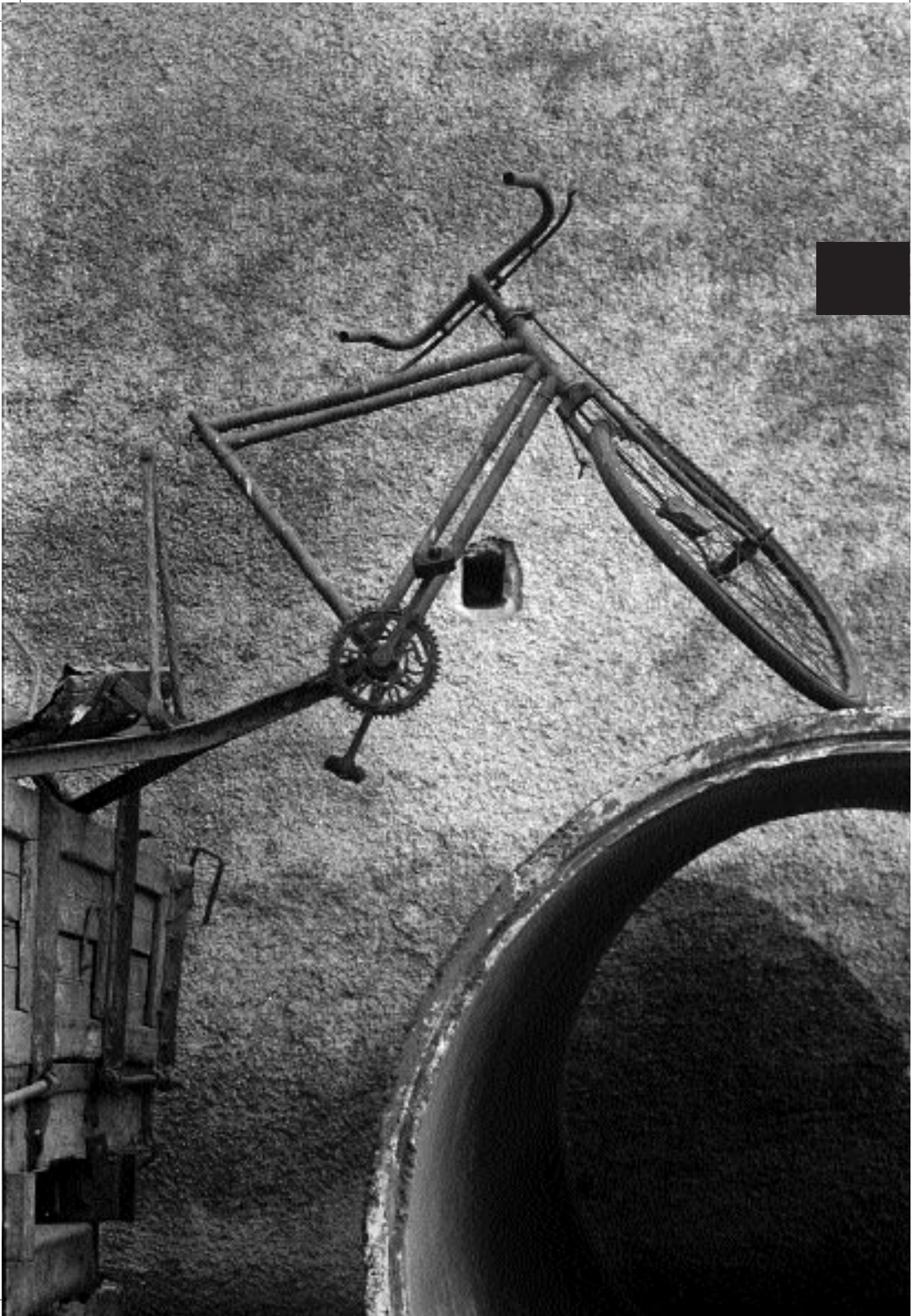
URBAN
MORPHOLOGIES

In a sense the title of this section frames the essays within it. All of them deal with the form of the city and its experience. The essays deal with India, and form part of a growing corpus of new writings that are finally acknowledging the urban in the subcontinent. Cities are of course imaginary environments, places where the material and the immaterial overlap. In *Some Cities*, Victor Burgin suggests that "the city in our actual experience is *at the same time* an actually existing physical environment, *and* a city in a novel, a film, a photograph, a city seen on television, a city in a comic strip, a city in a pie chart, and so on".

All the essays in this section acknowledge this *imagined* environment, steering clear of old-style urban sociology. From the opening essay by Gyan Prakash which discusses the recent urban turn in India, we move to Radhika Subramaniam's discussion of the physiognomy of the crowd in Bombay in 1992. Next we have Ashis Nandy's memoir of childhood in Calcutta during Partition, when the shadows of death and dislocation hovered uneasily in the city. We then read two accounts of contemporary Delhi: Aditya Nigam examines rumour, reason and proletarian subjectivity during the sightings of an alleged Monkeyman in the poorer parts of the city in 2001, and Awadhendra Sharan looks at discourses of health, disease and displacement in governmental practices.

All the essays are clearly marked by a post-nationalist sensibility, and steer clear of the older narratives of developmentalism. Here the Mythic, which was once evoked in the Plan, or the Nation, is constantly disrupted by violence and ruin. As post-mythic critiques, the essays steer clear of any larger frameworks of looking for *the* Indian City, focussing rather on particular cities: Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. We hope readers of the section will appreciate this theoretical modesty.

RAVI SUNDARAM

The Urban Turn

G Y A N   P R A K A S H
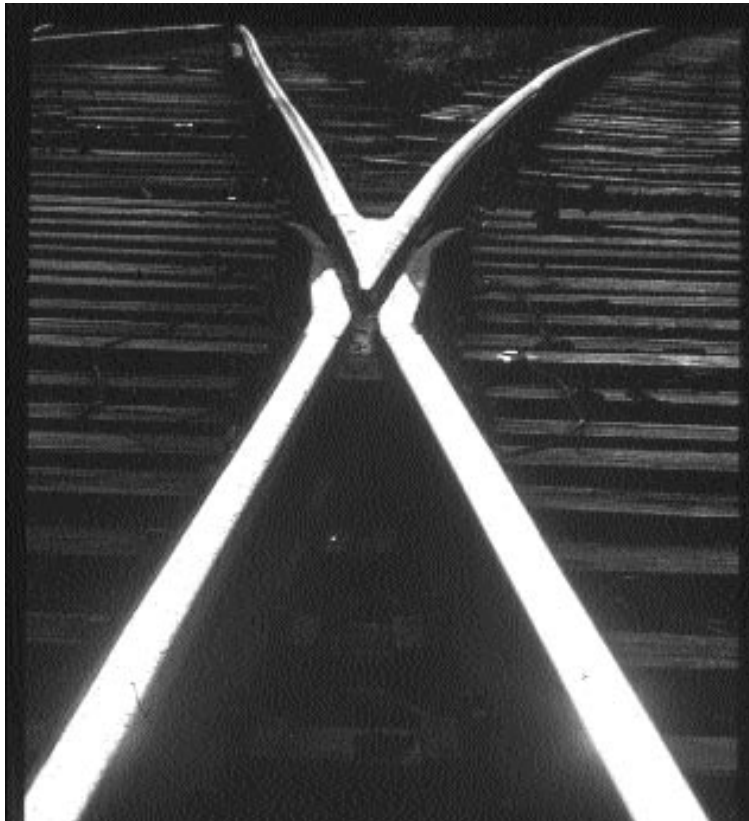
What is at stake in the urban turn? Recent years have witnessed a noticeable surge in the attention paid by scholars and activists to city life in India. This Sarai Reader registers this growing interest. Yet another example is the recent formation and activities of the Mumbai Studies Group. Founded in 2000, it has rapidly established itself as an extraordinarily lively and open forum for discussion and debate on urban questions among architects, historians, anthropologists, journalists, cultural practitioners and activists. Of course, urban scholarship and activism are not novel, but what is new is the sharpened focus on the city as society.

The city occupies an ambivalent place in the Indian nationalist imagination. Most nationalist leaders hailed from towns and cities; and Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras were chief centres of nationalist activity. Yet, the urban experience seldom received any concentrated attention. Indeed, the nationalists looked to the village in defining India. Gandhi's exaltation of the village and village communities is well known, as is his view that cities were places of evil and corruption. Nehru, on the other hand, thought of the village as a place of backwardness and ignorance. In a letter to Gandhi in 1945, he wrote "I do not understand why a village should embody truth and non-violence. A village, normally speaking, is backward intellectually and culturally and no progress can be made from a backward environment".[1] Not only was the village a place of backwardness and ignorance, but British rule had also robbed it of its organicity and vitality; it had become "progressively a derelict area, just a collection of mud huts and odd individuals".[2] Yet, Nehru added, the village held something of value, "But still the village holds together by some invisible link and old memories revive". Indeed, despite his distaste for the village and for the hierarchical social structure it represented, Nehru's *The Discovery of India* also contains a powerful sense that the countryside was an authentic symbol of India. Thus, recalling the effect of Gandhi on the Congress and nationalist mobilisation, he wrote, "He (Gandhi) sent us to the villages, and the countryside hummed with the activity of innumerable messengers of the new gospel of action. The peasant was shaken up and he began to emerge from his quiescent shell. The effect on us was different but equally far-reaching, for we saw, for the first time as it were, the villager in the intimacy of his mud-hut… We learnt our Indian economics more from these visits than from books and discourses. The emotional experience we had already undergone was emphasised and confirmed".[3]

The emotional resonance that both Gandhi and Nehru found in the village can be understood in terms of Partha Chatterjee's argument that the nationalists identified the 'inner' as the nation's authentic space.[4] The village stood for the domain where the nation was sovereign, free from the 'outer' sphere of modern politics, economics, science, and technology that was dominated by the West. What Chatterjee does not recognise sufficiently, however, is that the logic of the 'inner' was overwritten with that of the 'outer'. The very specification of the authentic and sovereign domain of the nation was also an act of outlining strategies of transforming the 'inner' with the knowledge and power produced in the 'outer'.

Consider, for example, Gandhi's conception of the village community as the 'real India'. It is clear from the appendix of *Hind Swaraj*, which mentions, among other 'authorities', Henry Maine's text on village communities, that Gandhi drew on European writings in formulating his notion that India resided in its villages. This, in itself, is not significant. But it assumes importance when considered in conjunction with his conception of the village. In 1945, Gandhi outlined his vision of the village in a letter to Nehru, "While I admire modern science, I find that it is the old looked at in the true light of modern science which should be reclothed and refashioned aright. You must not imagine that I am envisaging our village life as it is today. The village of my dreams is still in my mind. After all every man lives in the world of his dreams. My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free to hold their own against any one in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera nor smallpox; no one will be

idle, no one will wallow in luxury... It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph offices etc. For me it is material to obtain the real article and the rest will fit into the picture afterwards".[5]

Gandhi was candid about the idealised nature of his village, but from what position does he idealise it? How should we understand the dream of a village where people did not live "in dirt and darkness as animals"? Evidently, Gandhi was trying to envision an India diffe-rent from that of Nehru, but it is clear that the imagined village was also a product of the "dreamwork" of modernity. The act of "reclothing" and "refashioning" was to apply to both the old and the new, to both the 'inner' and the 'outer', to both the village and the city. The failure to recognise this double movement of the discourse is to overlook the effects of the mutual imbrications of the 'inner' and the 'outer', and conclude that nationalist politics represented the triumph of one over the other. Such a reading is unable to appreciate the complex moves entailed in the projection of the nation as a modern village, and produces the widely held but mistaken belief that Nehru appropriated Gandhi's concept of the village as the nation's 'inner' sphere and built the nation-state in the image of the 'outer'. Elsewhere, I have argued instead that, despite significant differences, both Gandhi and Nehru shared the discourse of a 'different modernity', that the establishment of the nation-state cannot be understood as the victory of one domain over another but as a historical development fashioned on the site of the intersection of the 'inner' and 'outer'.[6]

What does all this have to do with the urban question? If it is the case, as I have sug-gested, that the nationalist discourse divided the village from the city while cross-hatching them in projecting the ideal of the modern nation, then it is also in that manoeuvre that we can locate a discourse of the city. Thus, Gandhi painted the city in dark colours in imagin-ing a different modernity projected in his idealised village. Nehru, on the other hand, saw the relationship between the village and the city through a historicist lens; the relationship between the two was a matter of stages of development. In either case, the question of the city was refracted through the discourse of the nation.

Folding the question of cities into a general problem of national development, Nehru stated that "the fundamental problem of India is not Delhi or Calcutta or Bombay but the vil-lages of India... We want to urbanise the village, not take away the people from the villages to towns".[7] Because urbanisation meant modernisation, which was expected to lift India out of the morass of the past and set it on the road to progress, Nehru approached the city as an aspect of planning and development. His sense of history as a linear story of develop-ment and fulfilment, and his confidence in planning as an instrument to achieve progress came together in the building of Chandigarh as a symbol of "the freedom of India unfettered by the traditions of the past".[8] Though built to provide a capital for the recently partitioned Punjab state, the construction of Chandigarh was an expression of Nehru's confidence in planned urbanisation as a catalyst for modernisation. As Ravi Kalia shows, the architect Le Corbusier's image of himself as an architect of modern urbanism meshed perfectly with Nehru's modernising goals, "Nothing could be more appealing to Nehru, who saw in this modern-day prophet of the Second Industrial Age his own desire of ushering India into the technocratic world without repeating the mistakes of the urbanised nations of the West. What Le Corbusier wanted to produce was an architecture that would be 'neither English,

nor French, nor American', but 'Indian' of the second half of the twentieth century".[9]

Underlying the power granted to technocratic elites and experts, such as Le Corbusier, was the historicist conception of urbanisation as the pinnacle of a nation's social and political development. This framework of thought positioned the state and its technocrats as agents of History, removing planning from the scrutiny of democratic politics. Henri Lefebvre writes that Hegel subordinated historical time to the immanent logic of the state, subsuming history and temporality to the process of realising the space of the state.[10] Something of this Hegelian idea can be identified in the state's deployment of planning and urbanisation as processes outside politics and internal to its role as the agent of reason.

The state has produced a powerful discourse that acts upon the urban space and population, but its historicism fails to grapple with the challenge that cities pose. By this I mean the issue of spatiality that the city highlights. Not only is urban built environment defined by its position as a nodal point in the geographical landscape of capital, the very organisation of the city as society entails spatial divisions and relations, not distinctions between different stages in the march of history. What sets middle-class neighbourhoods apart from slums is not time but space; not just physical space but also the space of power. The historicist discourse organises these differences as distinctions in the unfolding of history. Foucault wrote, "The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of ever accumulating past".[11] Modernisation, a product of this obsession, can represent the city only in terms of the "theme of development, of transition from tradition to modernity, as a stage in historical evolution. This language of temporal unfolding and fulfilment cannot capture the lateral, socio-spatial organisation of the urban environment. Is it any wonder, then, that this discourse says very little about the experience of the city? So fixated is the modernising gaze on the city as an object of planning and development that it can approach the urban space as a constellation of problems that require solutions".

One manifestation of the problem that the historicist discourse encounters in dealing with the socio-spatial organisation of the city is that posed by the 'unintended city'. Ashis Nandy defines it as "the city that was never part of the formal 'master plan' but always implicit in it".[12] This unintended city consists of the growing number of poor housed in slums and streets, who provide the cheap labour and services without which the official city could not survive. Exploited and disenfranchised, the existence of this other cannot be acknowledged by the official city as part of its self. Seen from the lens of modernisation, the huge mass of India's urban poor appears 'obsolete' in the march of progress. But this 'obsolete' population refuses to "bow out of history", and exhibits an "obstinate ability to return and 'illegitimately' occupy a large space in the public domain".[13] The refusal to "bow out of history" points to a general problem intrinsic to the nation-state's historicist discourse of modernisation – the inability of its linear narrative to accommodate the spatiality of historical processes, the uncomfortable coexistence of the modern and the 'obsolete', the intrusion of the rural in the urban, the combined emergence of official and unintended cities. The city's historical geography of power, culture, and society resists its representation as evolution and development.

In the West, the problem of representing the city has been closely linked with questions concerning modernism and its relationship to capitalism. The challenge that traditionally preoccupied European writers was how to map the experience of the modern city, what representational strategies were adequate for capturing the opacity, the fragmentation, and the transitory nature of urban modernity.[14] More recent analysts have turned to the city in order to understand it in relation to late capitalism, globalisation, migration, and postmodern culture, and the challenges these pose to classic modernity.[15]

In India, on the other hand, the surge in the attention paid to the city, in my view, is the product of two interlinked processes – the erosion in the authority of the historicist narrative of Indian modernity and the emergence of a new politics of urban space. Thomas Blom Hansen's recent study of Bombay provides ample evidence for these two processes.[16] Analysing the historical transformations and conflicts that brought about a crisis in the vision of Bombay as a symbol of secular, capitalist modernity, Hansen provides a fascinating account of the rise of the Shiv Sena as an expression of "vernacular modernity". He shows that the Shiv Sena's emergence was made possible by the erosion of the older elitist political culture that underwrote 'classical Bombay'. Democracy undermined this elitist political culture, and opened the space for the assertion of plebeian identities and politics. The Shiv Sena utilised this space to press its claims aggressively and violently. Combining nativism with anti-Muslim propaganda, its ideal fashioned a new mode of urban politics that drove nails into the coffin of the elite of Bombay as the symbol of modernising India. Hansen focuses primarily on the Shiv Sena, but one could include the emergence of Dalit politics, the movement of slum dwellers, and the growth of the NGOs – all strikingly different in their aims and methods from the Shiv Sena – to complete the picture of the transformed landscape of urban politics.

To locate the urban turn in the contemporary refiguration of the landscape of politics, however, is not to suggest that the city poses a challenge to the historicist discourse only in the present. To be sure, the politics of urbanism has greatly changed between Gandhi and Nehru's idealisation of the village as the nation's authentic space and the Shiv Sena's transformation of Bombay. But there were always discourses of the city that sat oddly with its nationalist representation either as an emblem of evil and injustice (Gandhi) or as a symbol of modernisation (Nehru). For Sadaat Hasan Manto, the contradictory and heterogeneous world of the city, not the organic and familial space of the village, was the chosen site for his fictions about the struggle for modern identity and justice. He treats the city as a place for negotiating social difference, as an emblematic space for the encounter with the other, the different, not as a symbol of progress and modernisation. From a 'minor' point of view, his short stories – several set in Bombay – offer a counterpoint to the dominant discourse of the modern nation.[17] His fiction represents everyday life in the city as a space enframed by capital and the state, but it also identifies traces of other practices, memories, and desires in this arena.[18]

The urban turn, then, offers an opportunity to revise the history of Indian modernity, to bring into view spaces of power and difference suppressed by the historicist discourse of the nation.

NOTES

1. "Nehru's Reply to Gandhi", 9 October 1945 in M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and other Writings*, Anthony J. Parel ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 152.

2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (1946; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 523.

3. Ibid. 361-2.

4. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

5. "Gandhi to Nehru", 5 October 1945 in M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and other Writings*, 150-51.

6. See my *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), chap. 6 & 7.

7. Cited in Ravi Kalia, *Chandigarh: The Making of an Indian City* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 30.

8. Cited in Ibid. 21.

9. Ibid. 88.

10. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 21.

11. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics* 16 (1986), 22.

12. 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*, Ashis Nandy ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 2.

13. Ibid. 3.

14. I am thinking here of, among others, Walter Benjamin's "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century" in his *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schoeken Books, 1986), 146-62. See also Angela McRobbie, "The *Passagenwerk* and the place of Walter Benjamin in cultural studies: Benjamin, cultural studies, Marxist theories of art", *Cultural Studies* 6 (1992), 147-69 and Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

15. For examples, Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975); David Harvey, *The Urban Experience* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990) and Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

16. Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

17. Saadat Hasan Manto, *Kingdon's End and Other Stories* Trans. Khalid Hasan (London: Verso, 1987).

18. I am referring here to Henri Lefebvre's archaeology of everyday life, his unearthing of practices in the layers of power/knowledge. See his *Critique of Everyday Life*, Vol. 1: Introduction (London: Verso, 1991).

Urban Physiognomies

RADHIKA SUBRAMANIAM

Whether it was matter of fact, observation or cynicism that prompted V.S. Naipaul, that sour scribe of Indian modernity, to define Bombay tersely as "a crowd", it was undoubtedly an illuminating insight into the modern urban experience.[1] Certainly crowds, whether cast as the teeming millions of a growing population, as the citizens of the largest democracy, as the violent mobs stoked to communal hatred, or even as a source of annoying fascination for the tourist, occupy center stage in any account of India. They inevitably govern any discussion of its cities, often painting a picture of urban decay due to overpopulation, overcrowded housing, and crises of public health and sanitation; and equally, crowds gesture at the problems of diversity and difference in urban India.

However, by equating the city with the crowd, Naipaul casts the crowd as more than a metonym of the city; he makes it the very texture of its experience. In so doing, he follows the hunches of earlier writers of other modernities such as Walter Benjamin in his unfinished opus on the Paris Arcades, writing on the urban experience through an examination of the lyric poetry of Baudelaire.[2] Not only was the nineteenth-century crowd of which Benjamin writes poised to become a reading public and a consuming mass, it was also to leave an indelible imprint on the very sense of self of individuals in the modern city. For the city dweller who succumbed to "the temptation to lose himself in a stream of people", the crowd was not an external phenomenon to be observed but part of the perceptual apparatus of experience.

This experience was marked by shock and to parry these shocks, the human sensorium had to master a new series of strategies. No longer was it possible to approach the world through attention and studied contemplation; in fact, the rapid rush of images and sensations in the metropolis demanded a mode of apprehension that was much more indirect and deflecting. As the unblinking stare of concentration gave way to a distracted apperception that was incidental, unthinking and fleeting, the relationship of the masses to the everyday became tactile and ultimately absorbed as a matter of habit.

This point about tactility and modern urban perception cannot be understated. With it, Benjamin puts his finger on the unique configuration of technology, consumer culture and amorphous crowds that galvanised and transformed modern cities. New modes of representation arose to meet new perceptions. It was into this landscape that the mass mediated technology of film entered, and with its shock effects – the edits, juxtapositions, and changes of place and focus that hitherto could not have been conceived – it responded to
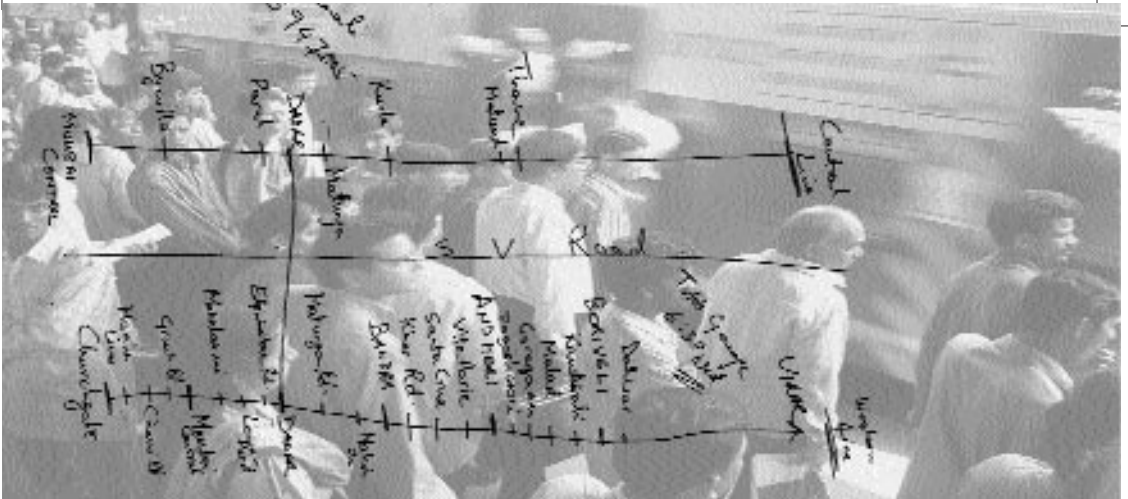
as it moulded a state of distracted reception. A relationship to the world established through abstracted, habitual and kinaesthetic patterns inspired a type of physiognomic reading of the city and its spaces that was close, enlarged and shifting, not distanced, stable and contemplative. The senses were being retooled by new structures of experience and knowledge.

Surely this insight of Benjamin's into the relationship of film to the distracted collectivity of the city is particularly pertinent to Bombay whose crowds and crowded spaces are assailed by the myriad magnifications of Bombay cinema. Its sensory onslaught is as much on the streets as in cinema halls. Towering billboards with the gigantic reddened faces of film stars are accompanied by car horns competing with blaring film songs from transistor radios and cassette players at every *paan* and tea stall, while in darkened theatres wisecracks punctuate the crackling of peanut shells underfoot. The jumps and rhythms of cinematic representation register the jostle and press of the Bombay crowds just as the images and sounds of Bombay film that saturate the city are its allegories. If it is cinematic representation that frames perception in the city, then certainly the experiential basis for this perception are its crowds.

My entry into the crowd, and this was provided by the force of the events themselves, came with the violent incidents of 1992-93, in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid, that have come to be known as the Bombay Riots. The perceptions that arise at the crossroads of habitual interactions and everyday understandings were made most visible for me as I returned to Bombay some years after the riots to listen to people talk about their experiences of the city. To many, that violence of December and January appeared as a betrayal, mainly of Bombay's crass, commercial optimism and cosmopolitan character. A Muslim writer, with whom I spoke in November 1995 of what he had lost in the riots during which his house had been burnt down and his family forced to flee up north, told me that he grieved most for the demise of his trust in the city. With it, he felt he had lost his right to the place. No longer, so it seemed, could one ask a question of the city in the same way. Its history, its people, its streets, all became signposts in a sequence leading up to this moment and leading away from it. *Bombay has changed*, I was repeatedly told, *it is no longer the Bombay we have known. Nor the Bombay you knew.* And this, as any know who have lived and imagined belonging somewhere, strikes at the supports of memory and, in fact, of identity. It was clear that identity was at the core of any understanding of these events.

Reading the city through the signifiers of sectarian identity was a powerfully remembered experience of the period. In a city whose crowded trains and streets prevent little escape from the other, swiftly determining the affiliations of people around one is an important prediction of risk or an assurance of safety at times of tension. Such practices of 'telling', through a complex constellation of clothing, language, facial features and demeanour, political or religious insignia and residential locations, says Allen Feldman in his revealing analysis of the body in the political violence of Northern Ireland, are a significant component of everyday life in zones of violence.[3] The city that emerged in the narratives of reading and telling fluctuated between familiarity and unease. People who had lived alongside each other for years began to mark the religious affiliations of their neighbours. Railway commuters pressed against each other on the packed locals began to notice clothing, caste marks, jewellery, facial hair, station stops, and other such markers not as idle signs of daily life but as signals of belonging, affiliation or uncertainty. The everyday encounter with crowds of anonymous strangers that was part of the routine uncertainty of urban life was now brought into new focus. The 'types' and 'characters' that were the customary and habitual features of such interactions had to be continually evaluated for it was through such evaluation that either safe passage was ensured or an alarm raised.

In the press of these crowds, the interpreter was also being interpreted. It was impossible to escape the snare of surveillance and marking. This meant that people distinguished themselves with badges of identity while simultaneously attempting to erase these contours and disappear into the anonymity of the crowd. They mobilised the visual and auditory signifiers of identification in contradictory and unpredictable ways. At the university, a professor began to notice that her Muslim women students started to wear *burqa*s to the classroom. They saw it as identification with community. When she questioned them about their heightened visibility, they countered that this identification granted them a sense of protection.

Such overt affiliation was read by others as a sign of vulnerability. Watching the responses of fellow train travellers to traditional women in *burqa*s, a Muslim woman noticed they cringed, moved away, and often nudged and whispered and gestured surreptitiously towards the women. Little did these travellers know that they had a Muslim sitting right next to them because in her *salwar kameez*, she said, she "looked like everyone". A Muslim man in Bendi Bazaar who had avoided the stares of other commuters by substituting his daily Urdu papers with a Marathi or Hindi language newspaper realised that there were other masquerading Muslims on the train with him when he noticed a bearded Muslim get into the compartment. Suddenly, a small cluster formed around him of people who had previously not drawn any attention to themselves. His hyper-visibility was read as an assurance of community and of protection. Despite the mask of his newspaper, the man said, he too would sometimes stand with one of these *daadi wala*s because it felt safer.

As these accounts point to the complexities of affiliation, distinction and safety, they also expose another significant practice, that of dissimulation. People faded into the crowd because they took special care to blend in. Language, clothes, and appearance were wielded as props so one could "look like everyone". The elements of this 'everyperson' were

shifting composites that varied depending on the routes traversed, the social contexts of interaction or personal histories and the experiences of individuals. Accounts that gesture both to the necessity and to the secret pleasure in such 'passing' abound in descriptions of life in Bombay both during and after the riots. In passing, people rely in large part on the swift, routine marking of external, visible and often over-determined markers. Therefore, a Hindu man might recount how he put on his friend's *namaazi topi* in order to evade a marauding mob, or a Muslim woman might speak of marking the part in her hair with vermilion in order to evoke the signs of Hindu matrimony. These experiences were recalled with fear but they were also remembered as masquerades that provided an entrée into different memberships. The techniques employed for such a strategy are inventive and improvisatory, relying in large part on the constellation of common-sense beliefs, daily perceptions, and sensory observations that nestle in the unremarkable eaves of habit and form a part of the everyday uncanny of the city.

As much an indication of the wily stratagems necessary for narrow escapes, passing was evoked by many as a path out of the experiential ghettoes of victimhood and isolation, a strike for individuality, as well as a commitment to keeping lines of communication open with members of the 'other' community. Journalists and social workers, for instance, insisted that they were able to craft generic personae that allowed them to interact with politicians, municipal corporators, policemen, trade unionists and middle and working class people with a range of community and ideological affiliations. Even as they insisted on a type of professional mobility, their personal lives might betray their sense of insecurity or mistrust. People moved to neighbourhoods where members of the same religious community predominated forsaking other histories of neighbourliness or other forms of comradeship.

But surely what is most disquieting in these narratives, what strikes deepest into the singular sense of unease and terror in a big city crowd, is the parallel existence of the systems of both passing and of telling. It is not enough, therefore, to bring to the fore the commonplace information about others in order to 'tell', it is as necessary to look behind the surface signifiers to establish if the telling is indeed accurate. Physiognomists had to be detectives. Such detection was tricky because clearly the toolkit for establishing identity was worthless if the same tools could be manipulated to pass. It would seem counter-intuitive to assert that one can *always tell*, as people repeatedly do, when one is passing oneself. The knowledge that one is passing undoubtedly raises the spectre of possibility that everyone around who has been 'identified' is passing as well. This would seem to overturn the security of the structures of telling. However, even as it undermines the practices of telling, this discourse of passing is still inextricably bound to these practices through the logic that the surface signifiers that mark racial and ethnic identities are indissolubly tied to internal truths, to essences, to blood, to slips of the unconscious that will ultimately betray one. Exposure remains a constant threat. This exposure is as much of the self as of others around one. This is a culture of open secrecy where passing, telling, unmasking, masking, recognition and misrecognition are recurrent themes that reinforce the atmosphere of suspicion.

Physiognomic practice during this period of violent uncertainty was that of unmasking,

and in its continual repetition it was fundamentally paranoid. Paranoia, suggests Canetti's subtle and unique formulation of knowledge and power, is a classic phenomenon of the crowd since the experience of the paranoiac is that of being hemmed in by deception.[4] Paranoia is characterised by the simultaneous operation of dissimulation and unmasking. It is the wearer's own masking that grants him or her insight into the strategies of others. Familiar faces become masks that hold a secret within; the façade is always suspect. Such surroundings are inherently hostile and suspicious as the interpreter is always already convinced he or she knows the truth behind the mask. No matter what metamorphoses are penetrated, says Canetti, they are dismissed as irrelevant in the excavation of the truth. This truth is no more than a reflection of the deception of the dissembling interpreter. Not everyone was dissembling and nor could or did everyone pass, of course, but the recalled experience of fear, hostility and unease existed largely within the framework of deception and continual unmasking.

If it is the seething, jostling crowds of the city that generate this proliferation of paranoid suspicion, it is in this very same multitude that the sources of a return to a habituated everyday lie. And this return to a distracted daily life manifest most visibly in the dismissive, seemingly absent-minded narrative recall of the events of 1992-93 by those whose lives had been significantly disrupted, is perhaps the most startling realisation for any listener. Repeatedly, people shrugged away the events or took them as routine. They would insist that nothing had happened in areas where there had been considerable violence, or they would fold them into long narratives of historical oppression, refusing to grant them the status of the unusual. Sometimes, remembering was substituted with a stolidly sociological listing of perceived causes, derived from externalised analyses. Communal riots are a long-standing feature of India I would be told, as if there had been no personal experience of the violence of riots. Or the person might speak of the opening up of the Indian economy, the Shahbano case or the problems of the civil code as factors that contributed to the outbreak of communal hatred while making little mention of the loss of personal property, or of family members or of friends. Such a remembering was often ruptured by the linking of seemingly disconnected events, in time and space or the identification of banal everyday events as reasons for the violence. Historical events such as the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni which have formed part of Hindutva demonology were invoked as causes for the riots while at the same time, ordinary experiences such as a difference in cooking practices between Hindu and Muslim neighbours would also be cited.

What such erratic observations, ephemeral suspicions, rumours and fragmentary tales demonstrated was not only the ways in which experiences, ideas and histories entered individual and social systems of meaning but also the ways in which collective memory and historical imagination teeter on the sensory foundations of daily habit. These foundations, whose task is to apprehend the shocks of daily urban life in a state of distraction function precisely at the crossroads of constant remembrance and a distracted forgetting.

Seremetakis in her discussion of the senses and memory in modernity suggests that the sensory structures of everyday life are perceived as naturalised, against which backdrop sensational events are profiled.[5] Because of their foregrounded relationship to the everyday, they can be narrativised in a way that is denied to the shapeless mundane

everyday. This formulation points to the crucial role of perceptual structures in memorialising, but where I would like to push it further is in pointing to the possibility for resilience and recovery that these same structures may hold. If the building blocks for the structures of suspicion that underlie practices of telling and passing are found in the unremarked and unvoiced experiences of everyday crowds, how do such suspicions recede to the spaces of inattention even when the external structural conditions for discord may still be present?

In this again I take my cue from Benjamin's formulation of the habituated perceptions of modernity. Habit, he says in a fragment from *One Way Street* entitled "Lost Property Office", obliterates a sense of landscape, disallowing the ability to discern foreground and background which the latter perspective promotes. As a tactile mode, it meant a kinaesthetic and proprioceptive, not visual, sense of one's surroundings. "As soon as we begin to find our bearings, the landscape vanishes at a stroke like the facade of a house as we enter it. It has not yet gained preponderance through a constant exploration that has become habit. Once we begin to find our way about, the earliest picture can never be restored". Since the constitutive elements for the beliefs, as banal as they are wild, about the other that provoke acts of violence or feelings of fear and unease, are learnt through habit, their ability to remain hyper-visible in consciousness is limited. The constellation of habit obliterates their contours and returns them to the peripheral spaces of attention where they are invoked, jostled and banished in the daily encounter with the crowds.

This returns me to the relationship of the crowd to urban life. Theories of the crowd have pivoted on a set of paradoxical images: the urban crowd, as a rioting mob, has been considered destructive, violent and a threat to peace and democracy while simultaneously, in its guise as the heterogeneous mass of the metropolis, it has been touted as the source of cosmopolitanism, plurality and tolerance. A simple resolution would be to say that there is no single crowd formation; rather, there are many different sorts of crowds and that these two form two different types of crowd experiences. True enough. Yet it is precisely in the tensions and transformations of these phenomena that what we call the urban experience gets crystallised. If this experience is to be read as a text, then the crowd is its interpretative paradigm. This implies that such a text cannot be read as a set of events and objects that can be said to say something else about the space and its people; rather, it must keep in mind that the crowd is the epistemic medium of the urban imaginary. The physiognomic reading of the city requires the lexicon of the crowd.

NOTES

1. V.S. Naipaul, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (London: Vintage, 1998), 1.
2. Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in *Illuminations*, Trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 155-200. See also "The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, 217-252.
3. Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
4. Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, Trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Seabury Press, 1978).
5. C. Nadia Seremetakis, "Intersection: Benjamin, Bloch, Braudel and Beyond" in *The Senses Still*, C. Nadia Seremetakis ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 19-22.

The Death Of An Empire

ASHIS NANDY

ndependence did not come to South Asia as a single, identifiable event in 1947, though that is way most South Asians like to remember it. The slow, painful process of disman-tling British India began with the great Calcutta riots and ended with the genocide in Punjab.

I was nine in 1946 and relatively new to Calcutta. Even at that age I could sense that the people around me had had enough of 'shock' and trauma. First, there had been the fear of Japanese bombing in the last days of the war, which had taken my mother, my younger brother and myself to a quieter city in the nearby state of Bihar, while my father had stayed back to work in Calcutta. The bombing was nothing to write home about, but it created tremendous panic all around and there was an exodus from Calcutta. Now we were back at the city, the war was over, and freedom was round the corner. But for a small outbreak of plague in 1946, Calcutta was limping back to normal.

Then there was the famine of 1942, precipitated by British wartime policies. Its memory was still fresh and Calcutta wore the scars of it. People no longer died of hunger in public view, but begging and fighting for food with street dogs near garbage bins was not uncommon. The memory of thousands of people slowly dying of hunger, without any resistance or violence, often in front of shops full of edibles, was still fresh in the minds of the Calcuttans. Most victims were peasants, many of them Muslims. They died without ransacking a single grocery, restaurant or sweetmeat shop. Whoever thought they would fight like tigers when it came to religious nationalism? A religious massacre was the last thing we were prepared for.

My father was a secretary of Calcutta YMCA and we stayed in a YMCA campus that had enormous lawns. Right in front of the building was a slum of poor non-Bengali Muslims from UP and Bihar, part of the large immigrant work force that kept the Bengali city alive. Everyone used to call them upcountry Muslims then. We could look into the households in the slum from our third floor apartment windows and see housewives cooking their meals and children playing. Beyond the slum were a couple of lower-middle and middle-middle class Bengali Hindu localities and, beyond them, another large slum of upcountry Muslims, Raja Bazaar. But unlike the next-door slum – modest, nameless – that slum was notorious as a den of criminals. In our slum, we used to know many of the residents by face. Some of the welfare work of the YMCA was meant for them and that also made them obsequious and friendly.

As the tough negotiations for transfer of power began to heat up and communalise the political atmosphere, in front of our eyes the slum dwellers turned into active supporters of the Muslim League. They began to fly the green flag of the party and, sometimes, take out small processions accompanied by much frenzied drum beating. Many of the enthusiasts were middle-aged and looked very poor and innocuous in their tattered clothes, even while shouting aggressive, martial slogans. Their newfound politics did not change our distant but friendly social equation with them. We, the children, were not afraid of them, and when we teased them, they smiled. They would passionately shout their slogans and we the kids would reply in our tinny voices: *Kanme bidi, muhme pan, Ladke lenge Pakistan.* In any case, their fierce slogans seemed totally incongruous with their betel nut chewing, easy style.

On August 16, our domestic help told my mother that while walking to our place through the slum, she had seen some of the residents assembling and sharpening knives and sticks. As this was not as uncommon sight during Muharram, she felt they were preparing for some religious procession. She did not even know that the Muslim League had declared a Direct Action Day in support of its demand for Pakistan. No one took the declaration seriously till suddenly in late morning, before our unbelieving eyes, Calcutta exploded. Mobs that had collected in front of the slum began to beat up Hindus; in the distance we could see houses being set on fire and looted. That was my first exposure to the politics of slums in South Asia and rioting as a crucial component of that politics.

The YMCA building had a high wall separating it from the middle-class Hindu localities to its right. The workers at the YMCA – gardeners, guards, and cooks, both Hindus and Muslims – quickly put up ladders there and brought in the frightened residents. In no time, there were about 200 families on the lawns. The main door of the building was closed. That
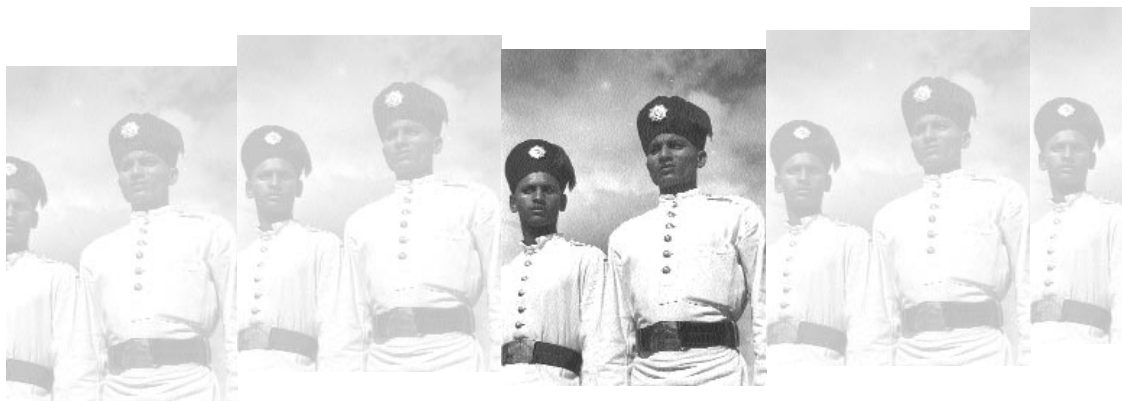
effectively contained violence in the immediate neighbourhood. But the streets belonged to the mobs. I could see in the mobs familiar faces, now trying to look very heroic. But they also seemed to have found a chance to give petty greed a new ideological packaging and a new, a more ambitious range. They would beat up the Hindu passers-by, depriving them of their money and watches and, in one or two cases, even knifing them.

The radio worsened things. Being government-controlled, it gave censored news. Though even that was fearsome, few believed what they heard. They relied on even more fearsome rumours, especially since, in other respects, the information given over the radio did not fit what they themselves were seeing. These rumours further intimidated the residents of mixed localities, and minorities began to move out of them, ghettoising the city even more. We also found the police openly partisan.

Within two or three days the Hindus had organised themselves and begun to counter-attack. Earlier they were a majority but only theoretically. Thanks to the riots, they began to see themselves as part of a larger formation and, for the first time, we were treated to the spectacle of a Hindu nation emerging in Calcutta. The lower caste musclemen and the criminal elements, apart from castes with low-status vocations such as butchers, blacksmiths and fishermen, and even upcountry Hindus, Sikhs and Nepali Gurkhas, previously considered social outcasts or outsiders, became the heroic protectors of middle-class, sedentary, upper-caste Bengali Hindus. What the Hindu nationalists could not do over the previous one hundred years, the Direct Action Day had done. Many years later, when I read that international wars created nations, it did not sound a cliché. I knew exactly what it meant.

There was a neighbourhood football club, Badurbagan Sporting Club, which occasion-

ally used to visit the YMCA to play friendly matches with us. Usually it was football, but sometimes cricket and basketball too. They always were a much better team and defeated us virtually every time, except in basketball. We had a natural advantage in basketball, because they did not play it much. But they were also an exceedingly friendly lot and we used to love their company. The members were mostly in their teens and they

all belonged to the Hindu neighbourhood diagonally opposite our home and sandwiched between two non-Bengali-speaking Muslim communities. The riots turned the club into a new kind of formation. They became the protectors of their community and some of them openly and proudly turned into killers. The community, too, began to look at them as self-sacrificing heroes.

Such new heroes mushroomed all over Calcutta, the reprisals they visited on the Muslims were savage. We saw an old Muslim driving a horse-drawn carriage being literally stoned to death. It was a devastating experience. Even when such gory events did not take place, we were not allowed to forget the riots. I remember that for days an old woman sat every day for hours on the footpath in front of our home and cried for her son who had died in the violence. The YMCA building now had to house, on another floor, a huge number of Muslim families. Strangely, there was no hostility between the communities within the building, among either the riot victims or those serving them.

My father showed remarkable courage all through those days. A couple of times he was threatened with death. Twice, he was shot at, once when he had aggressively asked the police to be firmer with the rioters. Indian police had not yet been toughened up by their encounters with militants of all hues and could still be relied upon to miss.

The family, however, was traumatised. The bloodshed and the cruelty affected everyone, but above all my father and younger brother Manish. They did not eat for days and were visibly depressed. My mother proved sturdier. She cried a lot but also kept life going. On the other hand, when my father fell seriously ill after a few weeks, the doctors diagnosed the illness as induced by that depression.

Ours was not the only family so affected. We were Christians and could perhaps, to that extent, take a slightly more distant, non-partisan, moral position. But our names did not give any clue to our faith and my parents used to be very nervous when we brothers walked to our school just round the corner. Later on, when I heard accounts of the riots from my friends, they sounded roughly similar. Only most of them sounded terribly partisan. They claimed on behalf of their newly defined community, simultaneously and incongruously, that they were the worst victims as well as the clear victors in the battle of faiths.

The riots would not have stopped easily in Calcutta but for Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He undertook a fast unto death in one of the worse affected localities of the city. No one thought the fast would work. Some of our elders in school were openly sarcastic. But it did work. In fact, it electrified the city. The detractors, of course, continued to say that had he not fasted, the Muslims would have been taught a tougher lesson. But even they were silenced by the turn of events.

One person who moved closer to Gandhi at the time was H.S. Suhrawardy, leader of the Muslim League and Chief Minister of Bengal. In many ways, he had precipitated the riots, not perhaps because he wanted a bloodbath, but because his constituency was mainly immigrant non-Bengali labourers, the lower-middle classes, and the lumpen proletariat. This support base was a potent political force but always volatile and uncontrollable, always waiting to be hijacked for violent causes. Suhrawardy had to depend on them and on his populist and demagogic skills because he was an aristocratic, Urdu-speaking Bengali leader coming from an illustrious, cultivated family that had no knowledge of the

predominantly peasant community of Bengali Muslims. His credentials for being a leader of Bengali Muslims were never foolproof. Bengalis may not like this, but he had picked up some of his mobilisation strategies from the militant nationalist leader and Bengal's mythic hero, Subhash Chandra Bose. My suspicion is that he wanted a controlled mayhem, to show his political power to the British authorities, the Indian National Congress, and the Muslim League leadership. It turned out to be a full-scale massacre.

Suhrawardy, however, *was* a man of courage. Journalist Nikhil Chakravarty once told me how, once he joined Gandhi's peace effort, Suhrawardy confronted rioting mobs unarmed and single-handed in his distinctive patriarchal style. I remember him visiting our place once or twice to meet my father who also was a part of the peace effort.

Just when the riots began to subside, came in reports of communal violence from East Bengal. Once again, rumours and hearsay made matters worse. Whatever semblance of sanity had survived the Calcutta massacre disappeared after the stories of Noakhali and Sylhet reached other parts of eastern India. Calcutta was too tired to react, but parts of Bihar did.

Looking back, Calcutta riots reconfirmed that while the poor as a class may not be prone to bigotry, urban slums are often the first to embrace compensatory or defensive ideas of a generic community offered by fanatics and demagogues. The slums are the natural bastions of people with broken community ties and nostalgic memories about faith grounded in such ties. When they develop new loyalties in the cities, there is a touch of desperation in these loyalties and a different kind of ardour associated with them. These new loyalties are then systematically endorsed by fearful, prosperous members of the same community, themselves unwilling to risk their lives, but willing to fight for their faith to the last slum dweller.

The great Calcutta riots, everything said, could not match the communal carnage in Punjab. The eastern Indians were not martial enough to push things to their logical conclusion. After the first few frenzied days, the battle of faiths in Calcutta took the shape of communal riots one sees in South Asia nowadays. It became a dirty war of attrition in which the slums and the criminal gangs began to play an increasingly larger role. Stabbing an unaware member of the other community became the preferred mode of warfare. I still remember the widowed mother of two teenaged school children who were stabbed to death crying and requesting the army to shoot her dead. However, on the whole, Calcutta being an impersonal, diverse city, there was lesser scope there for neighbours turning against neighbours as happened in Punjab. (Though even in Punjab, we are now finding out in the course of a study, the breakdown of neighbourhoods and communities was not complete, as many previously suspected).

In Punjab, communal violence reached the interstices of the village society, something that had happened in Bengal only in pockets, in places like Noakhali. There is now enough evidence to show that while the framework of violence in both Bengal and Punjab was supplied by religious nationalism, it allowed enough play for various forms of anomic and psychopathic behaviour. In many instances, old foes settled scores and greedy relatives exploited their own families.

Once the Punjab violence began, all other instances of violence paled into insignifi-

cance. The violence in Bengal and Bihar was brutal, but it had taken place partly outside the span of vision of the media and middle-class consciousness. The upheaval in Punjab – with its forty-mile long caravans, thousands of abducted women, spectacular self-destructiveness, and large-scale ethnic cleansing – was something for the whole world to see. Urvashi Butalia, a feminist publisher who herself belongs to an affected family, has recently described, in painful detail, instances of self-destruction that would have done credit to hardened Samurais.

Gandhi's India had dominated the news channels for more than two decades during India's struggle for freedom. Now, that freedom was being born in a blood bath that retro-spectively justified the imperial theory of the likes of Winston Churchill who believed that India left to itself would dissolve in anarchy and violence.

On a conservative estimate, half a million died in Punjab another half a million in Bengal; ten million were uprooted. But the victims did not find a voice in even some of the most sensitive writers of their community. In Bengal, one of the two main killing fields, there is only a defensive, nostalgic return to the idea of less violent, ecumenical East Bengal.

Except in a couple of films of Ritwik Ghatak – where the tragedy is recognised but fitted in a rather pathetic, pre-war version of Marxism – there has been no effort to confront the depth of the tragedy. In Pakistan, the partition is officially seen as a victory and the uprooted as *mohajirs*, those who have left their homeland for the sake of their faith. But even there, few have actually talked of the sacrifice; it is seen as a 'natural' by-product of the division of spoils after the demise of British India.

The only person to break through the massive wall of silence and capture something of the culture of violence, particularly the element of necrophilia that had crept into it, was Saadat Hassan Manto, a writer who had been for years a scriptwriter for popular, com-mercial cinema at Bombay. In his bitter, self-mocking short stories one senses the true dynamics of the tragedy – the near-complete breakdown of communities and neighbourli-ness, the psychopathic and sadomasochistic components in the violence, and costs of violence paid not only by the victims but also by the perpetrators.

In the aftermath of the carnage, the millions of ordinary people caught in the hinges of history and pushed into new and, in many ways, strange countries, acquired a new identity. The 1940s introduced into the South Asian public life a new actor, the refugee – the uprooted, partly deracinated, embittered victim who knew suffering and had seen the transience of social ties, betrayal of friends, and the worst of human depravity, his own and that of others. Politics in South Asia was never to be the same again.

The South Asian refugee, like refugees everywhere, retained and transmitted to the next generation something of the personality and style of the exile. That personality and style has allowed forms of creativity of which only the psychologically homeless are capable. But they have also brought into the region's public life the shrewd, ruthless entrepreneurship of robber barons and the politics of anomie.

There is almost no systematic psychological study of survival and homelessness produced by the partition in South Asia. One of the very few available is a modest PhD dissertation turned into a book, *Uprooting and Social Change*, by an American sociologist, Stephen Keller. It suggests that those uprooted by the partition riots are not only more aggressive in their professional and public life, but also within their families. They are more distrustful of others and, having a greater sense of invulnerability, more willing to operate at the margin of law.

Perhaps here lies a clue to the apparent success with which the Punjabi refugees, as compared to their Bengali and Bihari counterparts, have picked up and rearranged the fragments of their splintered lives, in India as well as Pakistan. They seem to fulfil all the psychological preconditions of the entrepreneurial person, as psychologists like David C. McClelland used to define the personality type in the 1960s. The Bengalis in most cases had not *seen* the worst; for most of them, Noakhali was hearsay. The exchange of population in eastern India was a slow bleeding wound; it was not a one-time ethnic cleansing, which affected each and every family. Half of the pre-Partition Hindu population still remains in Bangladesh and in West Bengal the Muslim population is now higher than what it was in pre-Partition days. On the other hand, the proportion of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan's Punjab and of Muslims in Indian Punjab is nearly zero today.

South Asia has many things to celebrate fifty-five years after its decolonisation. Strangely enough, one of them is the reasonable amity in which religious communities have lived in the region. Pakistan cannot take much credit for that, for after 1947 there is virtually no minority left in that country. But Bangladesh and India, despite all ups and downs, have not done too badly, despite the record of the Partition riots. In India, where more data is available, this is easier to demonstrate. The total number of persons killed in the country since independence is less than one-seventh of those killed in car accidents and one-twentieth of those killed in urban crime in the United States during the period, a country which has one-third the population of India. Five months after the sensational destruction of the Babri mosque in 1992, by a party claiming to speak on behalf of all Hindus, the party responsible for the destruction lost eight out of the nine State assembly seats in the district in which the mosque was located. All the constituencies had a majority of Hindu voters. A recent all-India survey shows that a majority of Hindus opposed that vandalism.

But South Asia still seems unprepared to face the genocide that accompanied the birth

of Independent states in the region. And these memories, disowned and carefully banished, regularly return to haunt the political culture of the South Asian societies. The past can be historicised and, thus, anaesthetised. But that is no guarantee that it will not return, like Sigmund Freud's unconscious, unless the new generations of South Asians are willing to painfully work through it. Partition violence cannot read only as a record of what some people did to others, for it is the repressed record of what the South Asians did to themselves. The region will have to learn to give that violence priority over even the moment of freedom, for only by 'working through' the memories of that violence can it acquire the right to celebrate its decolonisation.

Photographs by Glenn S. Hensley, held by the University of Chicago Library, Southern Asia Department.

Theatre Of The Urban
The strange case of the Monkeyman

A D I T Y A   N I G A M

DELHI / NIGHT AND DAY OF PANIC AND HORROR

The monkeyman mystery deepens

I n April-May 2001, the eastern outskirts of Delhi were suddenly gripped by a strange fear, occasioned by widespread reports of a creature said to be stalking lower class neighbourhoods. Not many had actually seen the creature – or at any rate, not seen it well enough to be able to describe it, though quite a few claimed to have actually been injured in its attacks. Consequently, it was described by different people in many different ways, though generally *kaala bandar* or *bandar aadmi* – that is 'black monkey' or the 'Monkeyman' – was how it came to be described in popular parlance.

In about a month and a half of its existence the Monkeyman had acquired the character of an urban legend, going through many mutations through the various tellings of the stories of its exploits. The creature was variously described as a "half-monkey, half-man", "a strange creature with a machine-like body with glowing lights" and in some cases, a "man with a mask". According to one news report, although the first complaints were filed at the Vijaynagar Police Station in Ghaziabad, starting from April 5, records do not show any mention of a "man wearing a mask". Except for one, "all the complaints… are about nocturnal monkey attacks, mainly on people sleeping in their terraces, a common practice in the summer".[1] The first complaint at the police station, that suggests anything out of the ordinary appeared as late as April 30, when a local resident Anil, alias Kapil, claimed that he had been attacked by "a dark shadow-like creature which seemed like a monkey", and which had hit him "through his stomach". The report adds, "His wounds seemed to correspond with his version".

The police however claimed that on investigation they found that Anil had made a false complaint "to save himself from arrest as he had actually had a violent fight with his brother, and disturbed the peace". In order to mislead the police, therefore, he had created the story of the Monkeyman.[2] According to the report, however, this angle was revealed much later, by which time the rumour of the Monkeyman had acquired a life of its own. "After the story appeared in the press, people became desperate despite the fact that victims of attacks such as little Guddi's father in Ghaziabad, positively identified the attacker as a monkey, but with black hair", says the report.

As the stories began circulating, with new accretions at every step, the Monkeyman began taking shape in popular imagination. The Hindi daily *Amar Ujala*, reported that on May 2 residents congregated at an open field near Vijaynagar, after someone claimed having seen a "monkey like shadowy figure". Gradually, the terror of the creature also built up. So much so that on May 10, the district administration gave shoot-at-sight orders in order to control the situation.[3] From May 13 onwards, the Monkeyman carried on his activities in the capital, especially in the eastern outskirts bordering Ghaziabad. By this time, interestingly, the creature had mutated into a kind of cyborg – a kind of computerised/robotised figure with almost supernatural powers. It was claimed that it had green eyes, that it presumably had a springboard under its feet and a green belt with buttons for navigation.[4] Some other reports however, showed that at least some of these characteristics had already been acquired by the Monkeyman by the time it entered Delhi. The Superintendent of Police (City) of Ghaziabad, Mr. R.K. Chaturvedi, for instance told *The Hindu* reporter that while initially most reports came from Vijay Nagar, Raj Nagar and Sanjay Nagar – areas with "a high simian population" and people mostly "reported attacks by a dark monkey with lips cut", descriptions soon changed to those of a "masked figure".[5] Very soon, according to Chaturvedi, people were speaking of how it "could jump off tall buildings and move at great speeds", even though there were no first-hand accounts.[6]

'When I grabbed it, it turned into cat'

Whatever the point at which the new features may have got added to the Monkeyman, there is little doubt that by the time the scare became rampant in Delhi, this mutant cyborg was 'in existence'. In my discussions with ordinary folk, a kind of deductive reasoning was offered for the claim that the creature had intricate electronically operated/computerised systems to keep it going. They claimed, for instance, that at one house where the Monkeyman attacked, a pitcher of water got spilt in the course of the attack and seeing the water 'he' took to 'his' heels. Water, they reasoned, would have destroyed his electronic system, which was why he ran away.[7] In one version, this was then extended into a diffe-

rent narrative that is already available these days for any such oddity, namely the narrative of the Pakistani enemy: it was claimed that the creature was a robot with remote control that had been sent in by Pakistan to create terror.[8] The episode thus became the occasion for the externalisation of a whole series of latent fears – often of a deeply pathological nature. Some of them may not even have been entirely innocent, as for example the one expressed in the Shiv Sena's bizarre claim that the Monkeyman was a handiwork of the Pakistan secret service, the ISI, which had sent "131 monkeys from across the border to create terror".[9] So great was the scare that for some days people stopped sleeping on the terraces, night patrols of neighbourhood youth were formed to reinforce the patrolling by the police. *Havans* and *yagnas* (Hindu rituals) were performed in different parts of the city to exorcise the evil.

Undoubtedly, once the legend took on a life of its own, it seems that a whole series of otherwise unconnected, often innocuous incidents started getting inserted into the larger

Police caught between rumours, facts

stories of the Monkeyman's exploits. Descriptions about its height varied, indicating that either people had not seen the creature or that they were generally mistaking different creatures for the elusive Monkeyman. One person in NOIDA claimed, for instance, that he had been attacked by it but when he turned to catch it, it turned into a cat with glowing eyes. Some others claimed that it came on wings and disappeared into thin air when attacked.[10] One of the rare 'sightings' in a well off middle-class colony, for instance, occurred when a gentleman standing on his balcony at 5:30 in the morning, "saw a speeding Maruti Zen which braked suddenly" and "a man dressed as a black monkey reportedly stepped out of the car which then sped away". Injuries that may have been caused by entirely unrelated incidents now came to be cast within the larger narratives about the Monkeyman.

While speaking to *The Hindu*, the SP of Ghaziabad, Chaturvedi also made some other perceptive observations. Some things, Chaturvedi claimed, remained unchanged through the changing narratives. For one thing, "all cases were reported from lower-middle-class [and] jhuggi clusters with a very high population density". And in all cases "the attacks took place within about half an hour of a power breakdown after nightfall". He further stated that, "all cases were reported from residential areas and there was not a single incident in which a person travelling home alone on a road at night had been attacked".[11] This last feature of the Monkeyman's exploits remained unchanged through all its excursions in Delhi too. Settlements of the poor, largely labouring populations, living through prolonged spells of power cuts and darkness, sweating it out on the terraces that join together with those of other houses, was the theatre of its activities.

There have been many occasions in the past too, when Delhi has witnessed the sudden eruption of rumours that have had large sections of the city on its feet, running around

in panic and/or excitement. One of the most recent ones, of course, was the rumour of the Ganesha idols 'drinking milk', in 1995. That was, however, a rumour that had a much wider spread both within the city, enveloping within its ambit its more affluent sections too, and outside – reaching out to expatriate Hindus living abroad. The Monkeyman, on the other hand, confined its activities to the subaltern neighbourhoods of Delhi.

The space of subaltern existence

One of the distinctive – and interesting – things about the recent episode of the Monkeyman is the spatial span of its activities. In a sense, the very fact that the activities of this crea-ture were limited to the lower and lower-middle-class neighbourhoods indicates its close link with a subaltern imagination and existence. What are the kinds of spaces invoked in the course of these descriptions? What do they tell us about life in subaltern Delhi? Let us look at the spatial descriptions more closely. These descriptions continuously refer to densely populated settlements of labouring populations, usually located on the peripheries of the city – in this case, the eastern outskirts. These constitute the theatre of the Monkeyman's activities. The Ghaziabad police chief in fact, reminds us that on no occasion was anybody attacked while returning home at night – that is to say on the main roads – open spaces – leading to the residential areas. The Monkeyman's appearances were in places where people sleep on terraces – and in lanes outside their houses – in the dark and hot summer nights, densely populated areas with winding lanes and bylanes, where the creature could easily disappear into thin air. We hear of small open fields in the vicinity, characteristic of suburban, relatively 'undeveloped' areas, where people collect to exchange notes after a series of attacks by the creature. We also hear of 'tall buildings' that the Monkeyman is able to jump off with ease – which probably mean, in this context, low-rise three or four storey buildings of Delhi's 'urban' villages, and 'unauthorised' and resettlement colonies. Stories of
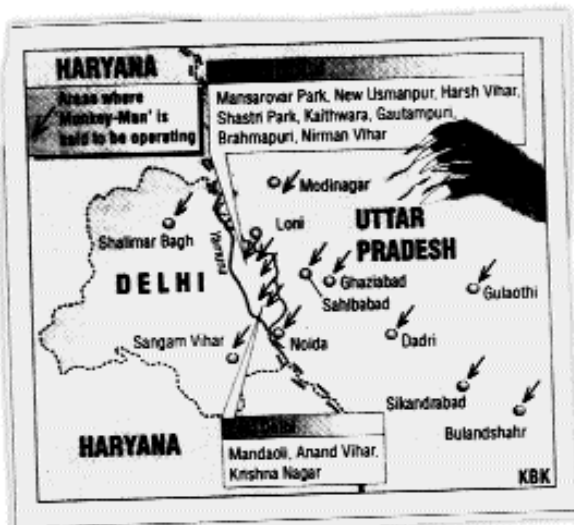
these sightings thus provide a glimpse of one kind of space of subaltern urban existence. We can also see that these areas are entirely segregated from the affluent colonies – most of which are located in New Delhi, especially its southern parts. Even when there are some relatively affluent areas nearby, they remain effectively cordoned off by huge iron gates and a certain social distance. The spatial re-ordering of the city that has taken place in the last two decades has now made this segregation almost complete. As a result, the only reported 'sighting' of the creature in a middle-class colony is when somebody 'sees' a "man wearing a mask" from the balcony of his house, from a considerable, safe distance.

From my own observations of these neighbourhoods over the years, what I have found interesting about these spaces is that subaltern life here continues to reproduce the patterns of *qasba* of small-town life. The internal spatial layout of these areas gives a strange sense of distance from the speed and movement that characterise the life of the metropolis, embodying as it were, almost a different sense of time. Life inside these colonies and neighbourhoods provides a kind of refuge from the hectic pace of life that the mostly male workers – especially factory workers – experience from the moment they step

Rumour evolution: It was a

out for work and within which they live till they return. The spatial organisation, as well as the specific histories of these neighbourhoods, also ensures a kind of life where a community existence is reproduced on a daily basis and one that stands in sharp contrast to the atomised existence of middle-class and affluent sections of the city. Networks of communication here, therefore, tend to be quite active and live, organised as they are around certain kinds of sociality centering mainly on tea shops and *paan* shops. The lanes and bylanes where people simply sit outside on cots and spend their free time provide another mode of exchange of information, gossip and rumours. Unlike the middle-class and affluent colonies, where contact with the locality is minimal and where the routine trips to the markets too are likely to be purely commercial transactions with minimal human interaction, in these subaltern spaces the rapidity with which information travels through informal channels can often be truly mind-boggling. Interesting however, are the ways in which, through repeated tellings and retellings of stories and news, different angles emerge, new accretions take place and occasionally, some things are also lost. If the representational mechanisms through which information gets broadcast in the mass media transform their object in some, often predictable, ways, the transformations here are likely to take very unexpected directions – as some of the descriptions above reveal. The easy insertion of the ISI/Pakistan angle into these transmissions also indicates the activity of certain

right-wing political groups that exist there and make good use of such opportunities.[12]

It is really difficult to say, for instance, whether there was ever such a thing as the Monkeyman or whether it was somebody – or a group of people – playing mischief. In one early instance, as we saw, we did hear of a "false complaint" being registered after a fight between two brothers. In a sense, the question as to its actual existence is not really as interesting as the glimpse that the episode might provide into the daily existence of subaltern Delhi. Take for instance the following reading of the episode. Extrapolating from the life of small towns, where joined and continuous terraces become, in the monotonous lives of people, a theatre for the playing out of sexual desire, noted Hindi intellectual Sudhish Pachauri, in fact, perceived a libidinal dimension in the matter. Pachauri alludes here to the *meaning* of the space that we can roughly translate as the roof or the terrace that appears in countless ways in small town or *qasba* life as the site of the play of a generally unrequited desire. The *chhat* or *baam* (as Urdu poetry would have it) and in some cases the *chhajja* (an extended 'balcony' or roof) becomes the place where initial furtive glances are

monkey till April 30, man after

exchanged, often developing into bolder exchanges leading up to written notes setting up secret rendezvous. The continuity of the terrace provides the place where the rigidly guarded boundaries of sexuality and domesticity stand potentially threatened. It is not uncommon therefore, or so Pachauri suggests, for such transgressive acts to be played out in the darkness of the summer nights – nights of surreptitious wakefulness when someone 'accidentally' strays into somebody else's terrace.[13] The suggestion in Pachauri's reading is that there was, in all probability, one such angle in the initial incidents that led to the appearance of this mysterious creature who merely gently 'scratched' his victims – often women.

Whatever be the case, it seems unlikely that the Monkeyman's exploits can be separated from the specific spatial layout and structure of the lower-class neighbourhoods. The Monkeyman could not have animated the imagination of the middle and upper-class residents of the city of Delhi in the way the self-fulfilling story of the Ganesha idols drinking milk did. Ganesha was fixed to his place in the temple and you had to go out, to see him 'drink milk'. The location of the action was in the temples not in the isolated homes of the rich, where there is a singular absence of the networks that animate life in subaltern settlements. The networks of communication mobilised in the Ganesha episode characteristically, were long-distance telephones and the rudimentary electronic mail service that was available those days, not as with the Monkeyman, spatially internally situated networks within and between localities.

Hysteria on the wane

Another space

There is another kind of space that this episode draws our attention towards. We can begin to outline this space by looking at the reaction of rationalist public opinion to the episode. It was in some senses classic. The key spokesperson of the Indian Rationalist Association, Sanal Edamaruku dubbed the entire episode a "mass delusion". Similar opinions were expressed by many others too. *The Hindu*, for example, editorially commented on the entire episode, as did many other newspapers – apart from a flurry of articles that appeared subsequently. This editorial in a way sums up best what came to become the rationalist consensus on the issue. "It is not for the first time in recent memory", it averred, "that *civil society in Delhi has shown signs of cracking up*". It recalled the Ganesha incident when, it lamented, "even those from affluent sections" were seen moving about with glasses of milk, and marked these incidents out as occasions when "rational behaviour took a beating". It criticised the instruments of the state and the police in particular for adding to the crisis.

After trying to give a rational explanation of what might have happened, the editorial added that, "The only way to put a stop to such things is to deal firmly with the rumour mongers". However, it also underlined that this will not be sufficient. Therefore, it is important "*to infuse the fundamentals of a scientific temper among the people*" so that they learn to react in a rational manner. It concluded by observing that "*this is where institutions of civil society… will have a role to play… A vibrant civil society is the only way out of such situations*". An editorial in the *The Indian Express* too expressed concern at the "galloping spread of unreason" which it saw as a global phenomenon.[14]

Civil society – or its conscience keepers – lashed out at the institutions of the state, particularly the police force, for falling prey to the same "irrational forces" and forced it to intervene, in order to rein in "the galloping spread of unreason". And sure enough, the state fell in line – one of the very rare occasions when it showed inclination to do so. Within a month, the Delhi Police produced a 200-page report debunking the "monkey business" as a myth.[15]

What, we might ask, has all this got to do with space? My argument here is that this comment is also about a different kind of space – what we might call a social or conceptual space.[16] There is a certain spatial imagination that becomes evident in our theorisations of the social when we start dealing with modernity and the urban transformations that it brings forth. These are abstract spaces but terrains nevertheless, on which we situate different layers of the social. There are three distinct social/conceptual terrains that the comments above, for instance, identify. At one level is the terrain of *civil society* – the ground that is the bearer of rationality and scientific temper. Even though the editorial commentator is worried about its occasional "cracking up", s/he sees it as the high ground

of modernity on which alone can 'unreason' be reined in. This is also the ground, we can see, that is inhabited by the atomised, individuated, rights-bearing citizen. The other terrain in this narrative is the state and its instruments like the police, who seem too, to occasionally slip into roles not quite becoming of them. Even though the comment does not make it explicit, we could say that the occasional 'lapsing back' by the state into such behaviour has to do with the fact that it is not quite insulated from the third and most problematic terrain. This third terrain is relatively unnamed and unspecified. Its existence here is acknowledged merely as 'the problem': 'the people' who inhabit this ground, figure in this discourse as the objects of the pedagogical activity of the state and civil society – into whom 'scientific temper' is to be infused. The agency of its inhabitants goes unacknowledged for they have to be taught to "respond to such situations in a rational manner". Following from our discussion above, we could say that this terrain is also the domain of community existence. At any rate, it is the terrain where the imaginative power of smaller, face-to-face communities is still quite strong and is reproduced daily in the life conditions of these subaltern settlements. Because they are seen as the domain of the pre-modern and the irrational, their very existence constitutes an always-present threat to both civil society and the state's 'instruments'. This third terrain, if it cannot be eliminated, must at least be controlled and assimilated.

The terrains identified here function *as sites* of the theatre of the urban. The simple representations of the non-urban/rural spaces as in some sense continuous, linked to a kind of singular temporality and rhythm of agrarian life, give way here to a more complex, layered, segregated and somewhat enclosed spaces where the 'modern' and the 'non-modern', the 'enlightened' and the 'irrational' live.[17] The city represents what Foucault calls "the epoch of simultaneity". The urban, especially the post-colonial urban, brings together these different rhythms and times within the space of a single city, inaugurating a highly mobile and dynamic arena of contestation. To be sure, these conceptual representations are problematic insofar as the first domain, that of 'civil society', does not really correspond to the middle class and upper middle class living an atomised existence, in its entirety. For there too, in the post-colonial scenario, notions of community existence have a continuing power. The difference, however, is that here communication is mediated through technology – telephone, electronic mail, Internet – and ceases to be a locally grounded face-to-face community, as we saw in the case of the idols drinking milk. That kind of community, however, does not seem to present a 'problem' for the modern city. It is the existence of

Monkeyman a case of acute stress, feel experts

the subaltern, constructed through different imaginations of a spatially situated community life that presents a problem that the city and its citizens must deal with. If physical entry into the city cannot be prevented, there certainly are ways by which the enlightened citizenry insulates itself within this space and within the conceptual universe made possible by this experience of the city. In any case, there certainly are ways by which entry into the representational/conceptual domain of the 'civil' can be controlled. Civil society, as the domain of the rights-bearing individual citizen marks itself out as the domain where entry is predicated upon a certain prior pedagogy: the rustic must first be 'civilised' before s/he can claim entry into its hallowed precincts. In a sense, this bifurcation of the abstract conceptual space of the city parallels efforts to cordon off and segregate its real-physical spaces.

NOTES

1. Nistula Hebbar, "Rumour evolution: It was a monkey till April 30, man after", *The Indian Express* (*Express Newsline*), 17 May 2001, 3.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar, "Ghaziabad terror enters Capital", *The Hindu*, 14 May 2001.
6. Ibid.
7. Conversations with a *paan* shop owner in Rajpur Road.
8. Narrated to me by a resident of Shastri Park area.
9. "Monkeyman gives power to the people: parties score points", *The Hindustan Times*, 17 May 2001, reported that the Shiv Sena's Delhi Unit claimed that "The ISI is behind it; 131 monkeys have come across the border to spread terror". I am grateful to Prakash Upadhyay for this reference.
10. This last story was told to Sanal Edamaruku of the Rationalist Association, "It is a mass delusion, say rationalists" *Express Newsline*, 17 May 2001, 3.
11. Ibid.
12. Of course, these kinds of narratives draw on certain mindsets that are already in place and do not require organised political intervention. However, in this case, the fact that the Shiv Sena did take such a public position indicates that such might have been the case.
13. Sudhish Pachauri, "*Naye zamane ki vaanar leela*", *Jansatta Ravivari*, 3 June 2001.
14. *The Indian Express*, 19 May 2001. I am only referring here to some of the articles out of a much larger number which came out in those days. Also see, for instance, Ashok Vardhan Shetty, "Imagination on the prowl", *The Hindu Magazine*, Sunday 10 June 2001.
15. *The Hindustan Times*, 18 June 2001.
16. See also Henri Lefebvre, *Production of Space* (Blackwell, 1990).
17. Premodern spaces too, undoubtedly have rigid hierarchies and many like those in and around temples or the residences of the upper caste and landed gentry are physically separated and inaccessible. Modern spaces of the city are not, in that sense, inaccessible. What is different however is that modern, urban societies, precisely because they are not in principle inaccessible to lower orders, need to be protected from them. They therefore call for a continuous activity on the part of 'civil society' and the state to discipline them. However, it seems to me that these premodern agrarian spaces, even when segregated, are marked by certain common rhythms and pace of life.

Claims On Cleanliness
Environment and justice in contemporary Delhi

A W A D H E N D R A   S H A R A N

"New Delhi will be the paradise of the garage owner. To live there without petrol is impossible... a town planned to surround the office desk of the chief bureaucrat, where converge the railway lines, the telegraph and roads of our Empire, but where its soul will never rest".[1]

"Public health has to do with public... Nineteenth century public health... has to be understood within the context of other valorisations of the notion of the public (public opinion, public interest etc.) in this period".[2]

C ontemporary Delhi oscillates uneasily between the desire to live and to work. There is a sense of urgency that makes the life-work struggle a zero-sum game – healthy air for the 'public' even as there is job loss for workers, cleaner fuels in the interest of the city even as the long queues of autos imply longer nights for their owners/drivers. In a deeply hierarchical city, whose modern foundation was laid on the principle that status can be codified through housing class and distance from the 'centre', it is obvious that the desire for a clean environment is fraught with conflict. In an ideal situation this need not be so. Article 21 of the Constitution, creatively interpreted by the Supreme Court, should ensure justice and fairness on all counts. "The right to life", Justice Krishna Iyer asserts, "means the right to livelihood, to dignity in existence. The right to health, to drinking water, to a pollution-free environment, to a biosphere where people can live, is all part of the right to life". Delhi's, and urban India's, particular predicament today is not the dispute over the wider meaning of the expression 'the right to life' but the conflicts internal to it – between

the livelihood of workers and public health, between dignity and the desire for a 'clean' city.

This is not Delhi's first cleansing. Congestion, ventilation, drainage, conservancy and concerns about noxious trades are to be found from the mid-19th century onwards. Sanitation through slum clearance and pushing out of *gwalas* (milkmen) from the city in 'sanitary interests' prefigure contemporary concerns, though with the important difference that colonial urban planning was underwritten by the imperative of maintaining racial distinction. Interestingly, though not surprisingly, colonial planning too was justified as being in the public interest. Slum clearance, thus, was done on the assumption that "the city contains numerous well defined slum areas of the meanest type and abounds in insanitary lanes and dwellings constituting a menace to the public health of the whole urban area of Delhi".[3] Post Independence, democratic norms required that the reform from above be mitigated by greater sensitivity to local aspirations and community participation in manag-ing public health, though this again was violently undone in the slum clearance drives of the Emergency. New resettlement colonies came up on the periphery of the city with roads, water supply, sanitation, parks and small-scale industries offering employment, ostensibly "a move toward social revolution, a trend which will secure for the urban poor, a greater degree of social justice in the near future".[4] The near future has since become distant and, on review, it would appear that these colonies are no more than "planned slums".[5] In short, even as the discourse on urban environment moved away from being conducted under the aegis of a colonial police state to the arena of democratic politics, there has been a persistent strain of anti-poor bias and the rhetoric of social justice has failed to secure either dignity of life or a clean environment for the majority of the city's inhabitants.

Contemporary environmentalism

Contemporary debates on Delhi's environment both reinforce these longer trends and simul-taneously depart from them. In terms of change, there is first the greater pervasiveness of the discourse itself. It is no longer about slums alone or an epidemic in isolation or the need to plan the location of industries but a combination of all these (and more) elements. This combination, in turn, gives rise to greater relentlessness and speed through which the city is spatially modified and inhabiting it becomes an act of constant negotiation of daily routines, from where one can shop for/sell vegetables, to the time/mode of transport that one needs to get to work, to ways in which one can dispose waste or choose to live with existing water supply. Plague scare in 1994, dengue in 1996, interim orders on closure of hazardous factories the same year and then another round beginning 2000, CNG and conversion over the last two years and all through it a constant demolition of slums that supposedly 'rob' the citizens of Delhi of their due share of water and electricity and are an eyesore for its middle-class citizens, together provide a heightened sense of urgency to the issue of environmental risk and give it a larger public profile than earlier. In fact it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that environment today is the single most important issue shaping Delhi's physical and social life. This is no longer simply about cleaning up while con-tinuing to 'develop', though that view persists too – "surely it is possible to have electricity, roads, progress, prosperity – as well as clean environment".[6] Rather, what is at stake is the very model of development itself, the need to roll back from "an advanced case of

unsustainable, undesirable, ecologically disastrous and inequitable development".[7]

Second, there has been a shift in the languages that frame the environmental issue, a shift on two levels. In formulaic terms we may express the first shift as being from the symbolic to the scientific. The local dignitary with the broom in hand promising to rid the city of its accumulated garbage is a thing of the past. They continue to be important for photo-ops, but the images look tired at best and their reception increasingly cynical. Instead, we find a new vocabulary on offer – pH levels, clean fuels, suspended particulate matter, common effluent treatment plants – these are the terms that increasingly saturate the media and public spaces around us, from billboards that provide information on SO_2 levels, to weather reports that report on pollution across cities, to the legal discourse that relies on expert committees to guide them on technical matters.[8] Objective science rather than an ambiguous political rhetoric, we argue, signals an important shift in our conceptual apparatus regarding environmental issues.

At another level, the 'public' language sits uneasily with the discourses of individual conduct. From refusal to use plastics to campaigns in schools to encourage students to desist from bursting firecrackers and voluntary drives to clean the Yamuna, there is a new optimism that managing the environment can be made an individual responsibility. This is, as yet, a minor strand that pales into insignificance before the greater intensity of debates around regulatory issues. However, its importance may lie elsewhere, in the synergy that obtains between environmental self-help and a new emphasis on 'caring for the self' (reiki/ yoga, no smoking, safe water, exercise, diet etc.), which is addressed to the health of the middle class though deploying the language of a larger urban public. In the Western context, the new discourse on public health is argued to be related to individualism, consumerism and victim blaming and, even more fundamentally, a "new politics of citizenship, with a great- er emphasis on duties implied by rights".[9] In the case of Delhi, this might be a premature judgement, but there is no mistaking that languages of the self and public now intermesh in complex ways and have important ramifications for the future reshaping of the city.

Tied to the shifts in language is the third noticeable characteristic of urban environmentalism today, viz. a new institutional framing in which the courts have come to play a major role.[10] There are two related issues here, the innovation in legal principles and (as pointed out earlier) the use of expert committees in dealing with environmental issues. Significant advances here relate to the use of public interest litigations as an instrument of justice, marking a shift of the 'centre of gravity of justice' from 'traditional individualism' (*locus standi* and *tort*) to 'community orientation', invocation of Directive Principles in interpreting Fundamental Rights,[11] adoption of 'precautionary principles', ensuring that the 'polluter pays', shifts in the 'burden of proof', and considerations of inter-generational equity.[12] All these have played an important role in recent environmental legislation, with various degrees of effectiveness. However, the immediate point that we wish to make here is not in terms of the success or failure of the courts in securing environmental justice but the fact that legal innovations have been a contested development, in terms of constitutional principles, democratic norms and ethical implications. In other words, law operates 'publicly', validating the point that issues of public health/public good receive their public-

ness only in conjunction with other aspects of the 'public', most notably public opinion.

In contrast, the language of science and scientific management and the role of experts have invited little comment. We hear little of the principles through which scientific assessment of risk is made or the remedies evaluated. Nor enough about the contexts and references through which assessments of environmental 'goods' and 'bads' are arrived at. To the extent that there is a public debate on the issue, it has been confined to rather sterile name-calling, as in the case of accusations of bad faith among the various experts who are currently debating the issue of clean fuel. The need for a critical evaluation of expert opinion is however more than evident. Assessments of environmental risk and remedial standards are set in the context of scientific uncertainty and have impacts that are far-reaching socially, across generations and involve questions of autonomy and agency. There is nothing given about what constitutes an environmental risk, how to prioritise among competing risks or indeed about what constitutes an 'acceptable' level of pollution or environmental degradation. Indeed it would be entirely reasonable to assume that on *most* environmental issues there are likely to be differences (about impact, prioritisation etc.) across class, gender, age groups, social status and physical location.

'Difference' and environmental justice

The consideration of 'difference' and 'situated knowledge' brings us back to the point of continuity between earlier and contemporary environmental concerns in Delhi, namely the persistence of anti-poor bias. The effect of the 'democratisation' of the environmental issue and its greater public presence, we argue, has paradoxically served to cloud the varied interests at stake. The debate on Delhi's environment manages to be both too general and limited simultaneously. Even as the health and environmental needs of an abstract urban public are being foregrounded, there is limited appreciation of how the needs of specific publics can be addressed or indeed how the conflict between the environmental needs of different publics be resolved.[13] In other words, there is little acknowledgement that 'the environment' in the singular splits up into many 'environments' and following from there, spaces need to be created for community actors to define and prioritise environmental risks for themselves.

Smog, environmental sociologist Beck points out, is democratic and indeed it may well be.[14] Closer home CSE's newsletter on health and environment points out that "the emerging challenge of modern diseases caused by rapid environmental changes is far reaching and affects the poor and rich alike".[15] The point of these observations is not however to establish 'an equity in degradation'. In fact both these observers are careful to qualify their assertions by looking at how "risk seems to strengthen, not to abolish, the class society" (Beck) and the fact that "the poor suffer disproportionately because of the double burden of diseases that are caused by industrialisation and rapid resource depletion" (CSE). It follows therefore that Delhi's environmental improvement, to the extent that it has remained innocent of the centrality of location, economic and physical, has served to marginalise the already poor. Delhi is an old, precolonial city with a range of settlement types ranging from 'Old Delhi' to Lutyen's colonial landscape to the refugee colonies of the 1950s and 1960s, the resettlement colonies and housing societies across the river and *jhuggies* and *bastis* ('slums' and shanties). Within this complex fabric of formal and unregulated urban environ-

ments, the poor are to be found both in mixed neighbourhoods and exclusively poor settlements. The environmental remedies offered by Delhi's bureaucratic and political elite has operated on the principle that it is these poor communities, especially those who are squatters on public lands, who are a primary source of pollution, an assumption that cannot be sustained on deeper enquiry. When it comes to water or sanitation facilities, in fact, it is the urban rich who are subsidised and the poor who have to bear a higher burden.[16] Specifically in the context of Delhi it may be noted that over 60 percent of the poor in Delhi live along the drains and the river through which the untreated sewage of the city flows, often without access to clean water and sanitation. In the event of a flooding therefore it is these residents who are likely to be first affected by disease. To make matters worse, it is precisely these slum neighbourhoods which house small-scale polluting industrial units that pose additional health hazards.[17] A socially just environmental agenda requires therefore that we look at the ways in which pollution, poverty and urban space relate to each other.

A second way in which environmental pluralism needs to be considered is to look at the intersections and divergences between the health of workers and those who deal in waste and the health of the city. Historically, there have been two kinds of discourses linking work and environment, those on 'noxious' trades that adversely affect their surroundings and those on 'dangerous' trades, which refer to workspaces whose internal conditions had an adverse effect on the workers' health. It is obvious that in the environmental crisis that we witness today, the latter strand has been entirely eclipsed through a focus on the former. This, despite the fact that even a casual observation reveals that many of the industries that have been singled out as polluting are small-scale units with little or no regard for work safety.[18] Similarly, if one looks at hospital waste which has emerged as a rather serious problem in Delhi, there has been little concern about the health of those who are most likely to be adversely affected – children in *bastis* who 'play' with wastes; rag-pickers and *safai karamcharis* (municipal cleaners) most of whom lack elementary protection and are thus prone to cuts and infections; and finally, patients (especially poor patients) who use recycled wastes such as syringes, bandages and intravenous tubes. The point we wish to make is that urban health cannot be imagined in the name of an abstract 'public' alone but needs to be refracted through the concerns of many specific publics that stand to lose (or gain) from environmental improvement.

Finally, there is the question of boundaries. Factories located in Haryana pollute Delhi, which in turn severely pollutes the Yamuna, adversely affecting the lives of those downstream. These facts however do not seem to have triggered a greater public appreciation of thinking about environment in regional terms, about linking the fate of Delhi with its hinterlands. The point may also be made that the concern with environment needs to move away from exclusively considering the disposal of waste to looking at how resources are obtained. Water, food, energy and leisure demands of Delhi have a major impact on the regions that surround them, and engagement with *environmental* justice requires that the implications of these linkages be explored alongside the issue of pollution and waste within the city.

This is an exploratory essay for a larger study of environmental issues in modern Delhi.

NOTES

1. Anonymous commentator in *Garden Cities and Town Planning* (Vol. 14, 1924) cited in Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning. The Making of British Colonial Cities* (London: E& FN Spon), 145.

2. Thomas Osborne, "Security and Vitality: Drains, Liberalism and Power in the Nineteenth Century" in *Foucault and Political Reason*, Andrew Barry et al. eds. (Routledge, 1996).

3. Narayani Gupta, *Delhi between Two Empires* (OUP, 1981) and Ritu Priya, "Town Planning, Public Health and the Urban Poor", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 24 April 1993. The quote is from the *Report on Relief of Congestion in Delhi* (1936).

4. Jagmohan, *Island of Truth* (Vikash Publishing House, 1978), 177.

5. Ritu Priya, "Town Planning".

6. Tavleen Singh, *India Today*, 17 November 1997.

7. Praful Bidwai, *Frontline*, 29 November 1996.

8. The principle was established in 1986 with reference to the leak of oleum gas from Shriram Foods and Fertilizer Industries wherein the court noted that "since cases involving issues of environmental pollution, ecological destruction and conflicts over national resources are increasingly coming up for adjudication and these cases involve assessment and evolution of scientific and technical data, it might be desirable to set up Environmental Courts on the regional basis with one professional Judge and two experts drawn from the Ecological Sciences Research Group keeping in view the nature of the case and the expertise required for its adjudication".

9. Alan Petersen, "Risk, Governance and the New Public Health" in *Foucault, Health and Medicine* (Routledge, 1997), 204.

10. This is not to deny the important role played by Delhi based NGOs such as Toxic Links and Shristi in disseminating information about wastes, hazards and pollution, but to point to their more limited impacts than that of the courts and scientific institutes such as CSE and TERI and experts from CSIR and IIT.

11. Justice A.S. Anand, M.C. Bhandari Memorial Lecture, "Public Interest Litigation as Aid to Protection of Human Rights", 2001.

12. **Precautionary Principle:** In case of threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full *scientific certainty* does not come in the way of acting in favour of environmental improvement. **Polluter Pays:** Those who cause environmental damage should bear the costs of avoiding it or compensating for it. **Burden of Proof:** To be placed on the person or entity proposing the activity that is potentially harmful to the environment, rather than on those who are adversely affected. For a commentary on some of these principles see Rajeev Dhavan, "The Wealth of Nations Revisited", *Seminar*, August 2000.

13. The severity of conflicts around competing environmental goods is all too familiar in Delhi, the most glaring example being the struggle between residents of Sukhdev Nagar JJ Cluster to use a public park for defecation, and the view of the Ashok Vihar residents that their public parks could not be so used, a conflict that eventually saw the resort to police firing.

14. Urlich Beck, *Risk Society* (Sage, 1992), 36.

15. CSE, *Health and Environment Newsletter*, November 2001.

16. Amitabh Kundu, *In the Name of the Urban Poor* (Sage Publications, 1993).

17. Trade unions and organisations such as Sajha Manch have also emphasised this link between poverty and environmental degradation.

18. See for instance "How Many Errors Does Time Have Patience For?", *Janwadi Adhikar Manch*, April 2001.

THE CITY AS SPECTACLE AND PERFORMANCE

How can we think about urban experience through the world of spectacle and performance? The distribution of venues of entertainment and spectacle are intimately bound up with the modern spectatorial practices which compose city life. The way entertainments are placed in relation to social segregation and audience formation provides a crucial dimension of the city as a differentiated space. And this process relates to the way finance, urban policies of licensing, crowd management and policing are organised. Indeed, it impinges on the way in which the chaotic life of cities is subject to the discipline of time – programmes, schedules, the ordering of beginnings and endings – though often in a way which is flexible and alert to the variety of audiences which compose urban life.

The cadences of city life are captured through the poetic meditations and formal innovations of urban musical forms, consciously dedicated to capturing senses of space, of how we inhabit a locality, give it imaginative body and self-awareness as we move through the changing landscape of a complex history such as Calcutta's. Or we can move into the imaginary dimension relayed through the cinema. How is the city presented to us through this protean form? As a media form with a rich and distinctive history, it provides an archival resource which is crucial to the forms of modern memory, and for ways of encountering social and cultural transformation. It is also a body of techniques, rendering our engagement with the city through its assembly of views, movements and cuts, of flow and disjointment, paralleling the sense of shock and disequilibrium integral to urban being within its own processes of fabrication.

The cinema has also been a crucial resource to think the future of cities, and often in ways which envisage virulent projections of contemporary experience. New technologies fabricate the future, but also erase the trauma of the present, as Hollywood's global destiny turns on the trauma at its heart, digital erasure blanking out the twin towers whose destruction lifted global audiences into an unexpected destination for the experience of ruin. Away from this traumatised grand narrative, media flows continue to trace complex paths, as groups made marginal within the hierarchies of national and urban order devise ways of becoming visible through micro-strategies, low-cost technologies and guerrilla manoeuvres to gather audiences.

RAVI S. VASUDEVAN

Parsi Theatre And The City
Locations, patrons, audiences

KATHRYN HANSEN

In 1840, 455 of Bombay's leading citizens submitted a petition to the Governor, Sir James Carnac, requesting the construction of a new theatre.

> *"The Humble Memorial of the undersigned Inhabitants of Bombay and others – Sheweth That your Memorialists are of opinion that the General public feeling in Bombay is Favourable to the erection of a Theatre for the purpose of Dramatic entertainment. There being no place of public amusement in the Island and that such a measure would promote good humour and tend to induce a desirable tone of feeling in Society at large, Your Memorialists regret deeply that the former Bombay Theatre which was identified with so many pleasant recollections should have been destroyed, and fallen a sacrifice to debt and want of efficient patronage".*

The names of Jagannath Shankarseth and Framji Cowasji, prominent merchant princes, headed the list of backers for the project. After a campaign carried out in the pages of *The Bombay Gazette* and in meetings in the Town Hall, the government agreed to underwrite the project. But the new theatre remained an unrealised dream until Shankarseth donated a building site on Grant Road. Along with a generous contribution by Jamshedji Jejeebhoy, the shortfall was met and in 1846 the Grant Road Theatre opened, the fruition of these collective energies.

Thus began a new epoch in the urban life of Bombay and its public culture. Initially it was Bombay's merchants who pressed for theatre as an enhancement of civil society, a source of "good humour" and "desirable tone of feeling". Enlarging upon their commercial interests, they sought a physical site for cultural transactions, a "place of public amusement", as befitting the rising profile of the city and their own place within it. Yet once the theatre was built, performers, audiences, and patrons from diverse groups sought to establish their claims to it as a public good. The playhouse opened under English management, and the first plays performed there were in English. Before long however, the Grant Road Theatre was recognised as an ideal locus for Indian theatrical performances. Beginning in 1853, a group of professional players from Sangli, Maharashtra, staged dramas in the new theatre based on the Hindu epics. Parsi dramatic clubs similarly chose this site for their fledgling efforts, and for the next three decades, Grant Road and its theatres were synonymous with the Parsi theatre.

Here were offered unusual possibilities for theatrical production and reception. A proscenium arch rose high above the stage, positioning the players within an expansive picture frame and separating them from the audience. Massive painted curtains, sets that shifted between scenes and lavish costumes created a sumptuous atmosphere filled with exotic images. Gaslights placed on the apron of the stage lit the players from below, accentuating their gestures in uncanny ways. Seats arranged by class and row announced times for starting and stopping, and amenities such as refreshment rooms and intervals added a sense of decorum to the proceedings in the hall. Theatricality had suddenly reached a new level.

If the playhouse with its proscenium stage defined the interior spatial set-up, it also altered the older fluid geographies of performance. The physicality of the playhouse in the urban environment allowed the theatre to assume an enlarged social value. Beginning with the Grant Road Theatre, theatrical entertainments were relocated within particular zones of the city. Theatre-goers encountered each other in new spatial configurations that spiralled outwards from the purpose-built theatre hall to the entertainment district in which the hall was situated, and the larger patterns of traffic between the district and the city. Not only in its innovative visual economy but also in the ecological relationships in which it was embedded, the Parsi theatre introduced new equations between leisure and location.

In this essay, I consider the set of spatial transformations connected to urban expansion, the development of neighbourhoods, the consolidation of the mercantile class, and shifts in public performance. As Bombay developed from a colonial port into a major industrial centre, the city's theatre houses in their specific urban locations became indices of emerging social and cultural formations. Subsequently I examine the role of the *shetias* as cultural agents in the burgeoning metropolis, a group critical to both the growth of the city and the theatre. In the final section, I assemble a picture of audience participation in the urban theatre, based on a variety of historical sources.

Urban growth and theatre houses

In the century between 1776 when the first western-styled theatre house opened on the Bombay Green and 1879 when the Gaiety Theatre was built near Victoria Terminus, Bombay passed through a period of extraordinary prosperity and expansion. The population numbered 156,987 in 1816, having risen from 16,000 a century earlier. Less than forty years later, it had grown more than fivefold. In 1864, on the threshold of the Parsi theatre era, the first official census reported that the inhabitants of the city totalled 816,562, qualifying it for the proud title *urbs prima in Indis*.

This population was notable from the outset for its racial, religious and linguistic heterogeneity. A small British community, numbering no more than 1% of the total population, comprised mostly men in colonial service. The mercantile communities from Gujarat formed approximately 25% of the city's population. Included within this were the influential Parsis (6% of the total population of Bombay). Muslims constituted 20% of the populace; Hindus made up 65%. Indian Christians and Jews, as well as Armenians, Arabs, Malays and other groups lent an unusual degree of diversity to the city's character.

Initially the town grew around a central open space, called the Bombay Green, which

lay adjacent to the East India Company's fortified Castle. When the European zone was enclosed by walls in 1716, the Green formed the node at the intersection of the main streets leading from the three city gates. Renamed, in the 19th century, Elphinstone Circle and now known as Horniman Circle, the Bombay Green formed the focus of social life in the British settlement. It was here that Bombay's first theatre was built. An observer, W. Milburn, described the vicinity in 1813:

"In the centre of the town is a large open space, called the Green…; around the Green are many large well-built and handsome houses, the Government House and the church… On the right of the church gate is the bazaar… where the native merchants principally reside; at its commencement stands the theatre, a neat handsome structure".

The theatre on the Green, also known as the Bombay Amateur Theatre, opened in 1776 and served as the principal stage for amateur theatricals and professional touring companies until its closure in 1835. Its location in the Green not only allowed for easy access by Europeans living close by, it signalled the place of theatrical spectatorship within the round of social and cultural activities that gave the port city its colonial character".

From the early days, geographical separation along racial lines divided the southern part of the island, the 'Fort' with its European businesses and residences, from the 'Native Town' to the north. The north-south cleavage reflected the unequal relations between the British colonisers and the people they ruled. Gradually, the northern part of the Fort became dominated by wealthy merchants, particularly Parsis, Banias and Bohras. These affluent residents were among the first Indians to evince an interest in theatre, and they were well situated to observe the fondness of the British for the stage, being so close to the Bombay Green.

After the great fire of 1803, which destroyed much of the northern Fort district, Indian merchants were encouraged to inhabit a separate 'Native Town', as existed in Calcutta and Madras. With the growth of banking, manufacturing and retail trade, this area expanded rapidly in the early 19th century, extending to the north. A significant reclamation project was the completion of Grant Road in 1839. (Insert map, from Maclean's *Guide to Bombay*, 1876.) It was built through a tract of open country along a parapet wall at a high elevation. The flats alongside Grant Road remained barren wastes where the town deposited its refuse. To the north of Grant Road began the New Town, including the populous neighbourhood of Kamathipura. Later synonymous with the red-light district, Kamathipura was named for the Kamathis, artisans and labourers from the Nizam's dominions around Hyderabad who immigrated to Bombay at the end of the 18th century.

It was on Grant Road, at the growing edge of the Native Town and far from the European quarter, that the first theatre was built. Known variously as the Theatre Royal, the *Badshahi Natyashala*, the *Shankarseth Natyashala*, or simply the Play House (*pila haus*), the Grant Road Theatre was the sole building on the street at the time of its opening. According to K.N. Kabra, the influential journalist, it stood "as an oasis in the desert". English society, although initially the intended audience for the theatre's shows, had to traverse a substantial distance to come from the Fort or Malabar Hill. The area rapidly developed into a thriving commercial district, but it remained distinctly downmarket.

The shift of the theatre to this part of the city suited the Indian theatre-going public,

CITY OF BOMBAY
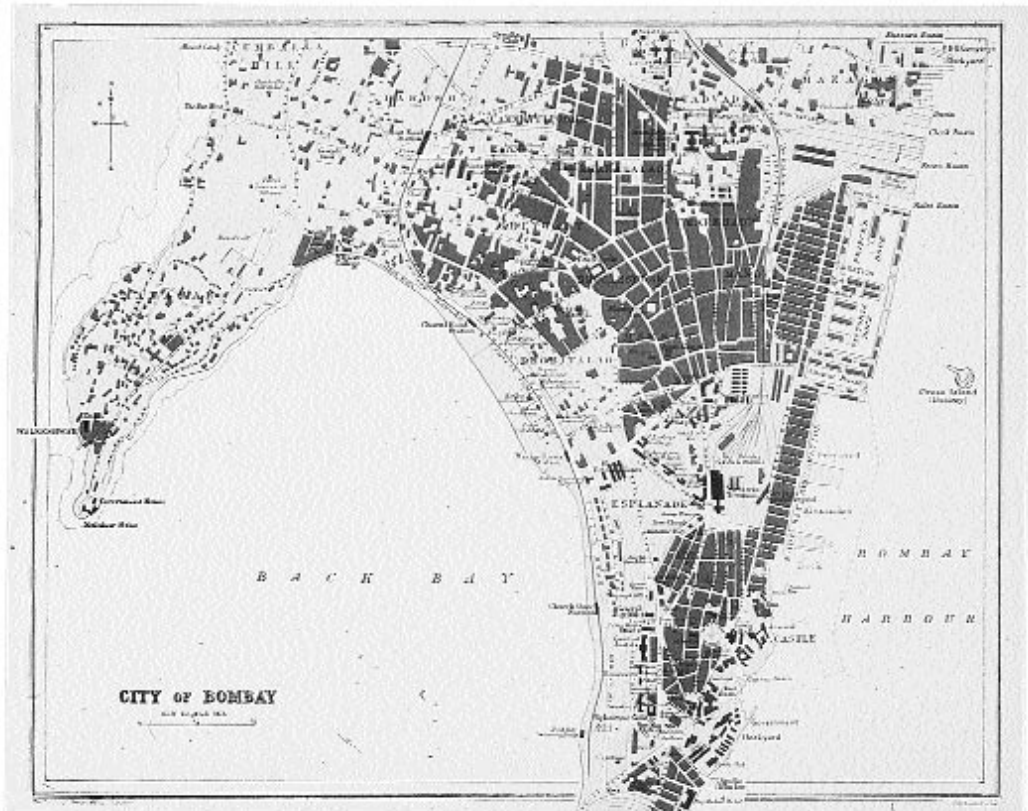
whose numbers were on the rise. Grant Road was shortly populated by a number of other theatre houses including the Elphinstone, the Victoria Theatre, the Hindi *Natyashala*, the Grand Theatre, the Ripon and others. This district, separate from the better neighbour-hoods of South Bombay, suited theatre managers intent on attracting a larger, more heterogeneous audience. Proximity to Khetwadi, Mazagaon and Girgaum ensured that the Hindu middle class would have ready access, just as the location of Market, Umarkhadi and Mandvi nearby invited Muslims. As textile mills mushroomed in Tardeo adjoining Grant Road to the west, workers availed of the chance to amuse themselves after long hours of employment.

    With the employment of professional actors and actresses, the value of segregating entertainments in a separate district also increased. Theatre personnel whose reputations and nocturnal activities were considered dubious were separated from the neighbourhoods of their well-to-do patrons. The affluent public was inconvenienced by the rigours of travel

to the Grant Road entertainment district. But they also could take some satisfaction in the compartmentalisation between their everyday world and the tainted *demi monde* of the theatre district.

Although the shift to Grant Road marked a broadening of the class base of theatrical spectatorship, the Bombay theatre world did not abandon its ties to elite patronage, nor did it confine its activities to the Native Town. An impressive wave of urban development and architectural activity altered the character of the Fort section of Bombay beginning in the 1860s. The construction of large public buildings was now embraced as a visible expression of Britain's hold over its colony in the age of empire. The Secretariat building was completed in 1874, the vast Law Courts in 1878, and the University clock tower in 1878, all based on the Gothic Revival style. At the site of the old Bori Bandar railway station the massive Victoria Terminus arose between 1878 and 1887. This feat of modern engineering was the largest building constructed by the British in India. Attesting to the Victorian synthesis of science, industry and commerce, these monumental edifices were located at the heart of the administrative and commercial areas of the city. Their magnificence created the imperial aura of the city that radiated outwards, travelling along with the Parsi theatrical companies as they toured South and Southeast Asia.

Eager to plant themselves firmly in this part of the city, Parsi company owners opened two large theatres near the Victoria Terminus. The first was the Gaiety Theatre built by C.S. Nazir, a leading Parsi actor-manager, in 1879. Designed by an architect named Campbell, its stage dimensions were seventy by forty feet, with a curtain height of twenty-two feet. The Governor, Sir Richard Temple, took responsibility for supervising the crafting of the painted drop scene. The image chosen was one to reinforce civic pride: "a fine view of Back Bay with the new public buildings – of which the High Courts, the Clock Tower, and the Secretariat are the most prominent – from Malabar Point". The Novelty Theatre, constructed by the Victoria Company's owners Baliwala and Moghul in 1887, was even larger, with a stage size of ninety feet by sixty-five feet. It seated fourteen hundred people and featured a drop scene by the German painter Maurice Freyberger. The Novelty was torn down and the Excelsior Theatre erected on the same spot in 1909.

The extravagant fittings of these new theatres generated rivalry on Grant Road, where the old theatre houses were given a quick refurbishing. The foremost location of the Gaiety and Novelty renewed elite interest in the productions of the Parsi, Gujarati and Marathi theatres, as well as attracting English and European performers on their global tours. The two halls were used for early cinematic exhibitions as well. After their first shows at Watson's Hotel, the Lumière Brothers moved their Cinématographe to the Novelty in 1896.

The three areas in which theatre houses came up in Bombay mapped out distinct locations in the urban landscape. Grant Road was a busy cross-town thoroughfare, whereas the Bombay Green and Victoria Terminus areas were each hubs where commercial and civic activity converged. Each facilitated a high degree of public access, but in distinctive ways. In the days when Bombay was a small outpost, the theatre was next to the church at the heart of the colonial quarter. As the city expanded to the north, the entertainment district shifted to accommodate its growing public in the 'Native Town'. Then as Bombay acquired its metropolitan skyline and became linked to the hinterland, the city centre assumed

renewed significance as a focus for leisure and sociability.

Enclosed in the European-style playhouse, the Parsi theatre presented new solutions to the problems of boundaries and visibility. The building's design symbolised status and order; its specified timings required discipline even in the pursuit of leisure. As an enclosed physical structure, the theatre was capable of restricting access. Through its internal compartmentalisation it could separate groups by assigned seating within the pit or orchestra, galleries, and boxes. Yet its location within a densely populated area, criss-crossed by the commerce of multiple groups, also made it available and connected to the world outside. The space of theatre was inscribed at times with different, even opposed, meanings. Sometimes it tended to enclosure and separation, working in the interests of class differentiation. At others it yielded to openness and excess, merging into the liminal space of its surroundings. The use made of the theatre space depended on the desires of its patrons, performers and audiences, who themselves were extremely diverse.

Commerce, theatre, and cultural patronage

The early Indian patrons of theatre in Bombay were upper-class men whose gains had been acquired through trade and finance. A colonial city based on commerce and access to the sea, Bombay lacked both an aristocracy with strong ties to the agricultural hinterland and a priestly caste of Brahmins to legitimise their regime. The mercantile elite, or *shetia* class, consisted of families of diverse caste, regional and religious origins. These were, in the main, communities and castes that had long been involved in trade in western India.

Most numerous among the *shetias* were members of the Parsi community. As immigrants from Iran in the 8th century, Parsis had maintained their distinct faith of Zoroastrianism, while adopting the Gujarati language and other customs of the surrounding society. Before the 18th century, their economic activities were diverse, with many engaging in agriculture and artisanal occupations such as weaving. A persistent trading practice among a section of the Parsis linked India and the Islamic world in pre-modern times. Hindu and Jain Banias from Gujarat were the second important group, which included several sub-castes. The third important trading community was the Bohra community, converts from Hinduism to Islam, who also were present in Bombay from the 18th century on. Later, they were joined by the Memons and Khojas. These groups established the markedly Gujarati character of the *shetia* class; the Gujarati language became the lingua franca for business negotiations in the city. Non-Gujarati mercantile groups also were represented among the *shetias*. Jagannath Shankarseth came from the Maharastrian Sonar caste of goldsmiths and jewellers. The shipbuilding Konkani Muslims, descendants of Arab seafarers and Baghdadi Jews, 19th century immigrants from Iraq, were other important trading communities.

There were many avenues to profit for this class. In the 18th century, a number of wealthy Indian brokers financed British military expansion and territorial conquest. Middle-men staffed the Company's houses of agency and supplied servants to its private or 'country' trade. Indian merchants disposed of imported goods on local markets and obtained new goods for export. They also supplied the ships, on which the entire trade was dependent; most ships were built by one family, the Wadias, who migrated from Surat to Bombay in 1735. As a result of these new kinds of transactions, by the 1780s a commercial revolu-

tion had transformed western India. When the Company lost its monopoly over the lucrative China trade in 1833, new opportunities burgeoned for the Bombay *shetias*. They made enormous fortunes in opium and cotton and established a number of large merchant houses. Later in the century, while some families lost fortunes in the crash of the cotton shares market, others generated new wealth by investing in the manufacture of textiles.

By the beginning of the 19th century, the *shetias* had begun to crystallise into a self-conscious group. Their physical proximity symbolised the tight network of relationships that ensured mutual benefit. *Shetia* presence became inscribed in the public space of the city as the great families clustered in the Fort area. By the 1830s, they were uniting in ways that went beyond simple commercial collaboration. They founded the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, and through this body petitioned for the construction of roads and bridges. Three years later they petitioned Parliament to protect the trade in opium. A wider set of concerns were voiced in the request to the House of Commons for Indian representation on the Bench of Justices, which resulted in the appointment of 13 Indians as Justices of the Peace in 1834. By the 1850s, most of the leading *shetias* had become Justices, and this became an avenue for direct involvement in the municipal administration of the city in the sixties and seventies.

During this period of expanding civic activity, the *shetias* also participated as spectators at the English-language theatre. They were most likely drawn to the cultural capital of theatre in a context wherein sociability and mutual hospitality reinforced economic collaboration. Leading *shetias* may have been invited to the English theatre in return for hosting their colleagues at entertainments such as *nautch* parties. By 1821 they had begun attending the Bombay Theatre on the Green, and in 1830 they played a major role in its renovation. *Shetia* support for the Grant Road Theatre showed the nexus between civic leadership and theatre as an object of cultural philanthropy, marking the mercantile class for their status and taste.

Simultaneously it laid the foundation for much broader class participation in the years to come. Whereas the Parsi theatre companies were largely financed by *shetias*, who bought and sold shares in them and stood to gain or lose sizeable amounts of money, the Parsi theatre depended heavily on the emerging middle class of Bombay for its audience and corpus of dramas.

Members of the middle class were distinguished more by their educational histories and public roles than by their sources of income. Some continued to carry on commercial activities or priestly duties; others were pioneers in professions such as law, education, medicine and journalism. Although the *shetia*s who flourished early in the century were informally acquainted with European knowledge and attitudes, the middle-class group were distinctly marked by formal induction into English education. Education opened pathways to entirely new sources of livelihood such as government service, making available occupations that were neither desired by the rich nor accessible to the poor.

With the founding of the Bombay Association in 1852, the middle class began to compete with the *shetias* for control of civic organisations. Voicing their views through political bodies and the press, the earliest generation of Elphinstonians, known as "Young Bombay", and later a broader section of lawyers and graduates challenged the unity and numerical strength of the upper-class coalition. Gradually they introduced a more inclusive agenda that

reflected the gamut of issues facing the middle classes. Pherozeshah Mehta emerged in the 1870s as a leader of the educated in opposition to *shetia* predominance, a role that flowered with his participation in the Bombay Presidency Association and the Indian National Congress, both formed in 1885.

The middle class attempted to free itself from material want and the symbolic tyranny of wealth by finding respectable alternatives outside the pursuit of commerce. The early Gujarati playwrights of the Parsi theatre and many of the pioneer performers were men who made their livings in journalism, law, medicine and other professions. One of the first Parsi groups to appear on the Grant Road stage, the Elphinstone Club, was founded at Elphinstone College and comprised students and ex-students from the prestigious college. The Victoria Theatrical Company was established by K.N. Kabra, an eminent journalist who edited the Gujarati newspaper *Rast Goftar*. He was succeeded as manager by Dadabhai Sohrabji Patel, one of the first Master of Arts graduates from the University of Bombay. The growth of the middle-class audience was aided and abetted by Bombay's assorted English and Gujarati newspapers, which displayed paid advertisements, commented avidly on performances, and created a continuous furore of debate and sensation around the fledgling theatre.

As the Parsi theatre entered the phase of professionalisation in the 1870s, more of the actors were drawn from Bombay's lower classes, and class differentiation among the audience also appears to have increased. Kavasji Khatau, C.S. Nazir, Jehangir Khambatta and other actors are known to have lived in the narrow lanes of Dhobi Talao, a poor district centrally located in the city. Sixty-eight percent of its households consisted of only one room. Accounts of Parsi prosperity in the 19th century obscure the fact that Bombay's Parsi community also comprised large numbers of poor people. Many of the poor descended from Parsi artisans and farmers who arrived in the city after the decline of Surat and the famines that afflicted Gujarat between 1780 and 1840. Lower-class groups eked out a living as domestic servants, petty clerks, mechanics, waiters and carpenters. There was even a band of poor Parsi thugs active in the Bazaar Gate area of Bombay in the 1850s. A genteel brand of poverty also characterised families whose traditional occupation had been the priesthood. Offspring of some of these families, e.g. Dadabhai Naoroji, K.N. Kabra, and M.N. Dhalla, with scholarships or other support were able to work their way into the middle class.

The prices for admission to the Grant Road Theatre ranged from an upper ticket of Rs. 2.50 or Rs. 3 for a box to a place in the pit for one rupee or less. It is therefore unlikely that the indigent were able to attend shows in the Parsi theatre, at least in mid-century. The companies however depended on working-class Parsis and other communities for all the labour and services that were necessary to sustain their productions. As the base of support for the Parsi theatre broadened, ticket prices declined and audiences shifted downwards in class composition. Patrons and dignitaries, including British officials, would still fill the boxes and promenade at society events such as benefit nights. The middle-class viewers came to include more Hindus, Muslims and non-Parsi spectators, an outcome in part of the Grant Road location but also related to the companies' attempts to diversify the thematic content of their dramas and present perennials such as stories from the epics and

puranas, Muslim historicals and romances, and social dramas aimed at the middle class.

A bipartite structure of presentation, consisting of a serious drama or social comedy followed by a farce or other variety acts, also strengthened the diversified class basis among the audience. The serious play would be announced for a fixed time, usually early in the evening, e.g. 8:00 pm. However, in keeping with traditional theatrical performances which ran through the night, the main drama would be followed by farces and skits whose performance time was not fixed and which can be assumed to have catered to an audience whose daily routines were less influenced by the European temporalities of work and leisure. The farces, in other words, probably attracted a lowbrow audience, and admission rates seem to have been reduced for the late show.

Prominent among the lower-class audience were soldiers and sailors. The military forces were invested in promoting theatrical evenings as a harmless form of entertainment. Theatre could distract the soldiers from visiting the red-light districts, with the ensuing dangers of sexual contact and venereal disease. In the absence of playhouses, regimental theatre formed a regular part of cantonment life, and the garrison band was frequently pressed into service even in the Gaiety and Novelty. Acts of disrespect and rowdiness are often attributed to soldiers and sailors by the press, although such behaviour was certainly not limited to this group.

Family shows, that is special performances for women only or women properly chaperoned, were also a feature of Parsi theatre's popularity and growing respectability among the middle class. Certain companies made it a point to cater to female spectators and even their dependent children, as for example the *Natak Uttejak Mandali* which set up crèches outside the playhouse where children were tended by their *ayahs*. Although sepa-rate sections were reserved for women during mixed performances, the presence of women of easy virtue within these areas was a source of comment in the press. When actresses began to appear on stage, a furore once more erupted. Certain companies such as the New Alfred upheld a ban on women performers, whereas the Victoria led the way in employing women, a move considered a sign of progress by certain reformers and a rank concession to commercialism by others.

The kind of atmosphere generated by this mixed audience within the theatre can be judged from contemporary newspaper reports. Notices published in newspapers, as well as handbills posted about the town, were the main method of informing the public of upcoming theatre events. Journalists, who often were in the employ of one company or another, acted as opinion-makers and leaders, urging the public to greater attendance and castigating performers for their shortcomings. They also commented upon behavioural norms and acted as a tribunal in cases of dispute. Despite the spatial regulation that the proscenium theatre introduced, audiences were exuberant and fulsome in their praise or blame of theatrical performances. A favourable reception was demonstrated by loud applause, shouting, and demands that a song or dance be repeated "Once more". Multiple curtain calls and showering of artists with cash gifts or *inam* were also common. Disfavour was indicated by hurling of *chappals*, rotten fruit, empty liquor bottles and shouts of "shame, shame". Fighting and rowdiness were common, onstage and backstage among the artists, between the artists and the audience, and among different groups in the

audience. Shows could not start without the necessary display of force by a police constable. A night out at the theatre was made even more unpredictable by the frequent mechanical disasters and foul-ups that besieged the theatre companies. Fires were also a common menace, as they were in theatres in England and America. Given all the obstacles, it is no wonder that theatre managers spoke of their successful performances as "victories" and begged the audience through their prologues and prefaces to show mercy and favour them with kindness.

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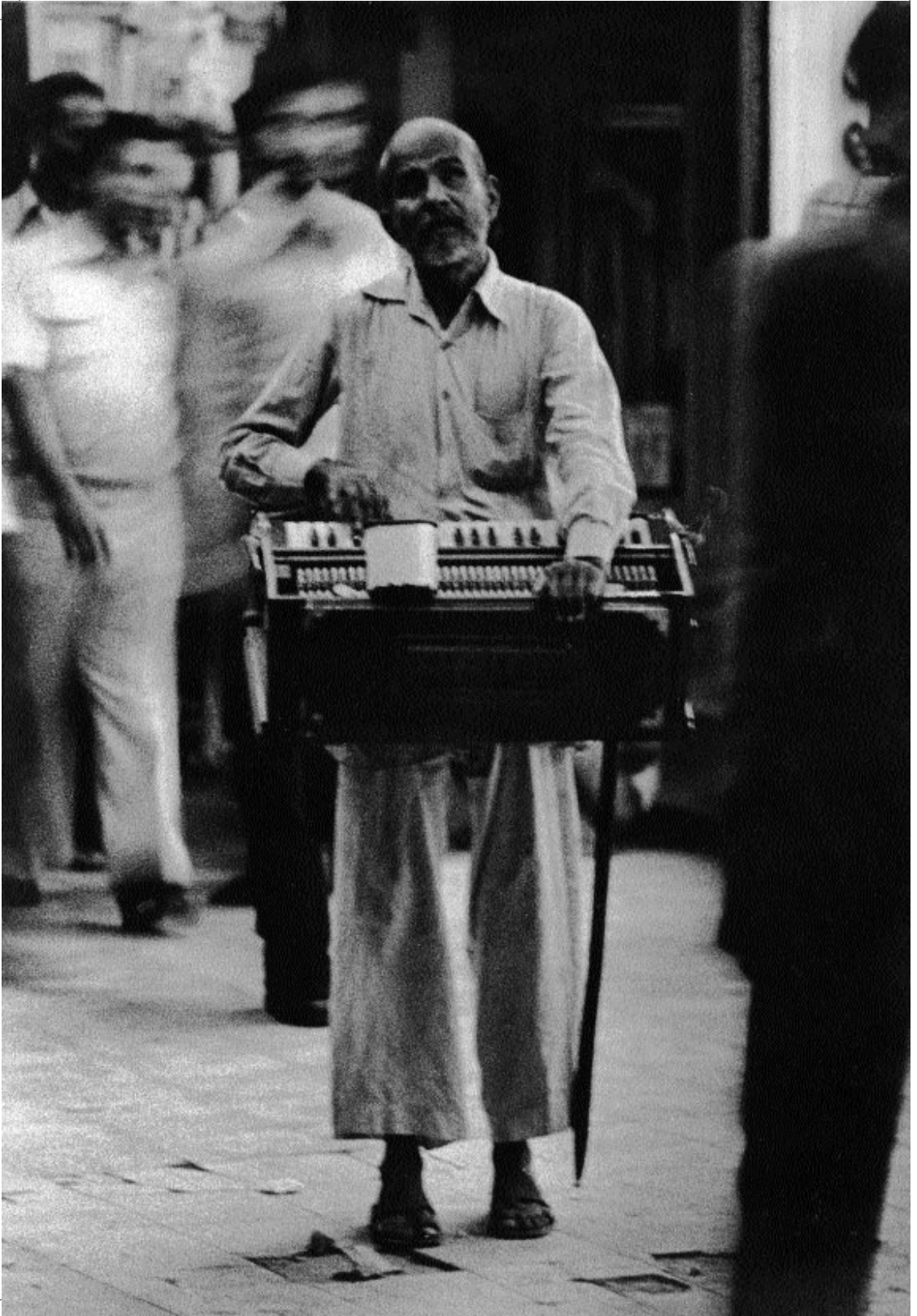
Citybeats
Urban folk music in late-modern Calcutta

AVISHEK GANGULY

"The literature which concerned itself with the disquieting and the threatening aspects of urban life was to have a great future…", predicted Walter Benjamin, and in this short history, rather geography, of the thriving subculture of urban folk music in the city of Calcutta, I would like you to believe that it is not only the literature but also the music of the city that was to have a great future.

The first fumbling strains of urban folk music in Calcutta can be traced back to 1976, when Moheener Ghoraguli (Moheen's Horses) (naming themselves in an allusion to the prominent *Bangla* modernist poet Jibanananda Das), emerged as a band while the agony more than the ecstasy of the Naxalite Movement (and the nation-wide Emergency) was still fresh in the political unconscious of the Bengali people. Within the short span of five years (1976-1981) that they were around (which can safely be called the New Wave of *Bangla* urban music), the band's repertoire went on to include three records and a dozen odd public performances before it died a premature death. Most of the band members were active during the Movement – so it was not surprising that the politico-cultural beliefs of the 'ultra-left' Naxalites found their expression in many of their lyrics, which were, interestingly, also marked by an increasing awareness of a globalising modernity and its attendant

discomfort, manifest in their vision of everyday life in the city. The bandleader and primary creative force behind their music was a maverick musician Gautam Chattopadhyay – a self-taught musical genius who was equally comfortable with the *ektara* and the saxophone. Reliving their musical beginnings Gautam later wrote in a *Bangla* journal: "With full respect for all that had been accomplished in *Bangla* music till then, we realised that those songs did not articulate our thoughts and emotions. We felt intellectually deprived and underrepresented. It was from such a consciousness of intellectual marginalisation that we had spontaneously embarked on our musical odyssey".[1]

The short but illustrious trajectory of *Bangla* urban music had reached its first formal articulation in the hands of Ramnidhi Gupta in early nineteenth-century *babu*-Calcutta. *Nidhubabur Toppa* (literally Nidhubabu's *Toppa* where '*toppa*' was a semi-classical musical form), as these songs came to be known, were composed of romantic lyrics set to lighter variations of Hindustani Classical tunes, and to this day retain the strongest association with *Purono Kolkatar Gaan* – the songs of old Calcutta. Urban music thrived in the numerous minor genres like *baithaki* or *kabigaan*, sung mainly on festive occasions till the later half of the 19th century, which saw the rise of musical geniuses like Rabindranath Tagore and Dwijendralal Roy. While Tagore left behind the vibrant legacy of *Rabindrasangeet*, Roy has been best remembered for his patriotic compositions, but both of them pioneered the use of western musical styles alongside folk elements in *Bangla* songs. The 1930s saw the beginning of the long tradition of *Bangla Adhunik Gaan* (*Bangla* Modern Songs), which continued uninterrupted well into the seventies. While no significant attempts to re/produce the immediate locality of the city – incidentally the place where most of these lyrics were composed, recorded and performed – can be discerned in these *adhunik* urban musical productions, one significant change had taken place, unnoticed, over the years. With the strict division of labour that came into the process of musical production, the performer, unlike Tagore and Roy, no longer remained the lyricist and composer of his/her own songs. This departure from earlier conventions had also significantly altered the Bengali audiences' notion of musical performance until the rise of urban folk bands sought to displace them in the last quarter of the last century.

In this uninterrupted flow of modern *Bangla* urban music the one notable exception was of course the music of Salil Chowdhury, arguably the single most important influence on later urban folk. Chowdhury's songs, composed in the wake of the left-wing cultural activism of the IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association) in the 1940s and '50s, constituted a new sub-genre of *Ganasangeet* (Public Songs). But Salil Chowdhury's achievement lies not only in his brilliant reworking of traditional folk tunes to convey explosive political messages, it was more importantly in his extensive use of the back-up orchestra that set the stage for the emergence of band music. In his work, the "orchestra achieved its much needed liberation" and, along with the innovative use of percussion, he accorded the accompanying instruments the status of voices capable of making statements to qualify or modify those made by the human voice.[2] The foregrounding of the orchestra was to become the ubiquitous feature of the musical arrangements of band music later.

The corpus of *Bangla* urban folk music has been subsequently expanded with many interesting compositions from numerous other bands and performers in the nineties and

beyond, namely Suman Chattopadhyay, Anjan Dutta, Nachiketa, Cactus, *Poroshpathor* (Touchstone), *Chondrobindu* (after the last letter of the *Bangla* alphabet), *Bhoomi* (Grounds) et al. But since a detailed study of all their musics falls beyond the scope of my present enterprise, I will limit my discussion only to Moheener Ghoraguli, since theirs was a pioneering effort towards a radical redrawing of the cartography of Bengali urban music. The release of their first record *Sangbigna Pakhikul o Kolkata Bishayak* (*Anxious Feathers and Of Calcutta*) in 1977 was accompanied by an introductory pamphlet that stated in a half-ironic, self-mocking fashion, the who, what and how of Moheener Ghoraguli. I would like to quote at length from it, if only to illustrate the sheer novelty that these acts imparted to the ossified notions of *Bangla* musical performances:

> *Moheen's horses graze in the moonlit steppes of autumn. And sing. Wingless though,*
> *at the sound of their wings being spread out, breaks the dawn of skylarks*
> *and the ebbing streams. Where dwell domestic emotions and moonless hurdles*
> *of human existence…*
> *The neigh of Moheen's horses, or is it music?*
> *Their ballet of swaying gallops glide beyond the cosmic horizons*
> *through drapes of moonlit fog, roving away from the homely nooks*
> *of filter-tips or palm-leaf-fans in noiseless bounds,*
> *for it is known that Moheen's horses wear no shoes.*[3]

The songs themselves were exquisite pieces of lyrical innovation that attempted to repro-duce the immediate locality of the city through an evocation of its familiar spaces. While S*ongbigno Pakhikul* lends a deathly desolation to the unmistakably urban space of a run-way, evoking the image of a necropolis waiting for some imminent yet unknown upheaval:

> *An eerie nothingness lies*
> *Stretched across the desolate runway,*
> *Ominous clouds gather on the horizon*
> > *The frightened torpor of the radar,*
> *Long out of use.*
> *Ruffling of anxious feathers nearby…*

Bheshe Ashe Kolkata (*Drifting images of Calcutta*) speaks of a nostalgic urban reality, the experience of the first light of dawn on the city's broad, tram-lined thoroughfares:

> *Drifting images of a suburban dawn*
> *Toss upto me*
> *On a misty* Kolkata *morning*
> *A canopied childhood of* kaathchanpa *and* krishnachura
> *The muffled sounds of the first tram car*
> *Stirs within*
> *Strains of a familiar solitude.*

Not only are the urban commonplaces inscribed with a dreamy quality that overrides their mundane presence, but the shifting boundaries between the city and its suburbs are also subsumed in a straddling together of differential spaces in the lyrical imagination of the singer. The evocation of "*a kinky mess-room, semi-lit*" – a familiar sight in '70s Calcutta – in the lyrics of *Ajana Uronto Bostu* (*Unidentified Flying Object*), for instance, reproduces the

immediate flavour of an urban locality but lends a surreal colour to the prosaic existence of the inmates – "*four of us, airy clerks*" – embodied in a dialectic of belonging and displacement in a city that seems to offer them little more than a monotonous routine of office work.[4] In fact, what Lipsitz observed about rock music worldwide could now be said about Calcutta's urban folk as well:

"[a] poetics of place permeates popular music, shaping significantly its contexts of production, distribution, and reception… through music we learn about place and displacement. Lament for lost places and narratives of exile and return often inform, inspire and incite the production of music. Songs build engagement among audiences at least in part through references that tap memories and hopes about particular places. Intentionally and un-intentionally, musicians use lyrics, musical forms and specific styles of performance that evokes attachment to or alienation from particular places".[5]

And nowhere is this sense of "attachment to and alienation from" particular places expressed better than in the immensely popular lyrics of the song *Hai Bhalobashi* (*Alas, We love it all*). One of the most evocative stanzas runs like this:

Picasso, Bunuel and the verses of Dante,
The sounds of Beatles, Dylan and Beethoven.
To walk back on a misty morning
After a nightly concert of Ravi Shankar or Ali Akbar
Is what we know we love most –
A lingering sadness, yet,
Somewhere in the deepest recesses of the mind
Unhinges the heart.

Keeping the intellectual predicament of the urban folk singer in mind, we can see a conscious attempt to coalesce the local with global cultural modernity in these lyrics, but the evocation of the nightly concert in particular reproduces the familiar spatialised locality of the annual Dover Lane Music Conference among other things, a space where the musical preferences of Calcutta are still shaped and nurtured. The juxtaposition of Bob Dylan and Ravi Shankar on the other hand, articulates the eclectic musical choices of the convent-educated Calcutta youth growing up in late-modernity, the youth who co-habits the jazz bar and the *sangeet sammelan* – and who is thus able to relive his/her lived "locality of culture" in the song.[6]

Tomay Dilam (*For you, My Love*), a later composition which was included in *Jhora Somoyer Gaan* (*Songs from a Lost Time*), released in 1978, a collection that was edited by Moheener Ghoraguli, articulates this metropolitan sensibility, for instance of love in the city, through lyrics unprecedented in the history of *Bangla* modern songs:

I can give you the freshness of the first shower
On the sun-scorched streets of the city,
Little else, but the familiar sights
Of trams stuck in a marching michchil,
Red and white balloons growing on the sidewalks
   *Rhododendrons in the city,*
My gift of love.

> *Neon-lit restaurants on a city-night*
> *The highest terrace of the tallest apartment*
> *My love, I offer you today…*
> *Tonight, I give you all that I could ever give*
> > *My verses of the city.*

Emotions are spatialised in this metropolitan love song, and those spaces are reproduced in an effort to bring home the distinctively modern urban flavour of the music. Lovers in the city walk the labyrinthine bylanes, the neon-lit restaurants or the terraces of jostling apartments, and the archaic musical motifs of "the moonlit bower" or the apocryphal 'Garden of Eden' celebrated in mainstream *Bangla* songs perhaps appears remote to them.

If we listen to Moheener Ghoraguli now and think in retrospect, it is not difficult to imagine that Calcutta played host to three successive International Jazz Fests (1978-80) in those heady days of the seventies where, apart from many jazz groups from all over the world, the native *Bauls* of Bengal were also called upon to perform.[7] Radical experiments in syncretic music had already begun in *Bangla* modern songs, and taking the cue from Salil Chowdhury, Moheener Ghoraguli accomplished some startling feats in this direction, which eventually led them towards evolving their own brand of music. "Baul-Jazz",[8] as they preferred to call it, thus became one of the fullest expressions of a creative fusion of the local (*Baul*) and the global (Jazz) ever accomplished in the history of modern *Bangla* music.

Moheener Ghoraguli, along with the similar musical endeavours that immediately followed,[9] had ushered in radical transformations in the cultural production of *Bangla* modern songs. Apart from introducing vocal innovations like 'harmonisation' that deconstructed the sanctity of the lone voice of the singer valorised in contemporary mainstream *Bangla* music (with the exception of the choral renditions in Tagore's dance dramas),[10] their experiments also had far-reaching influences on the musical arrangement and performance of modern *Bangla* music. In a departure from the choir form of singing that Salil Chowdhury had introduced and which still employed a mono-tonal singing, Moheener Ghoraguli made extensive use of harmony in their music. The notion of harmony in musical rendition was inspired in part by their self-professed mission of collective singing, a process that tried to include as many voices as possible, and partly from the desire to experiment with new musical conventions. Harmonisation had already become a common feature in the songs of prominent western groups like the Beatles and, in introducing similar tonal variations along with rustic melodies in their songs, Moheener Ghoraguli set the stage for the emergence of later band music. It is also interesting to note that the practice where the lyricist, the composer and the performer was one and the same person, discontinued in modern *Bangla* music since the 1930s, once again became the norm in the hands of these experimental music bands. Be it the musical arrangements that once even included a seven-piece orchestra – for *Ajana Uronto Bostu* (*Unidentified Flying Object*)[11] – or stage performances that were accompanied by extra-musical histrionics that was not always well received by a passive urban audience, Moheener Ghoraguli had zealously redefined the performative aspect of modern *Bangla*
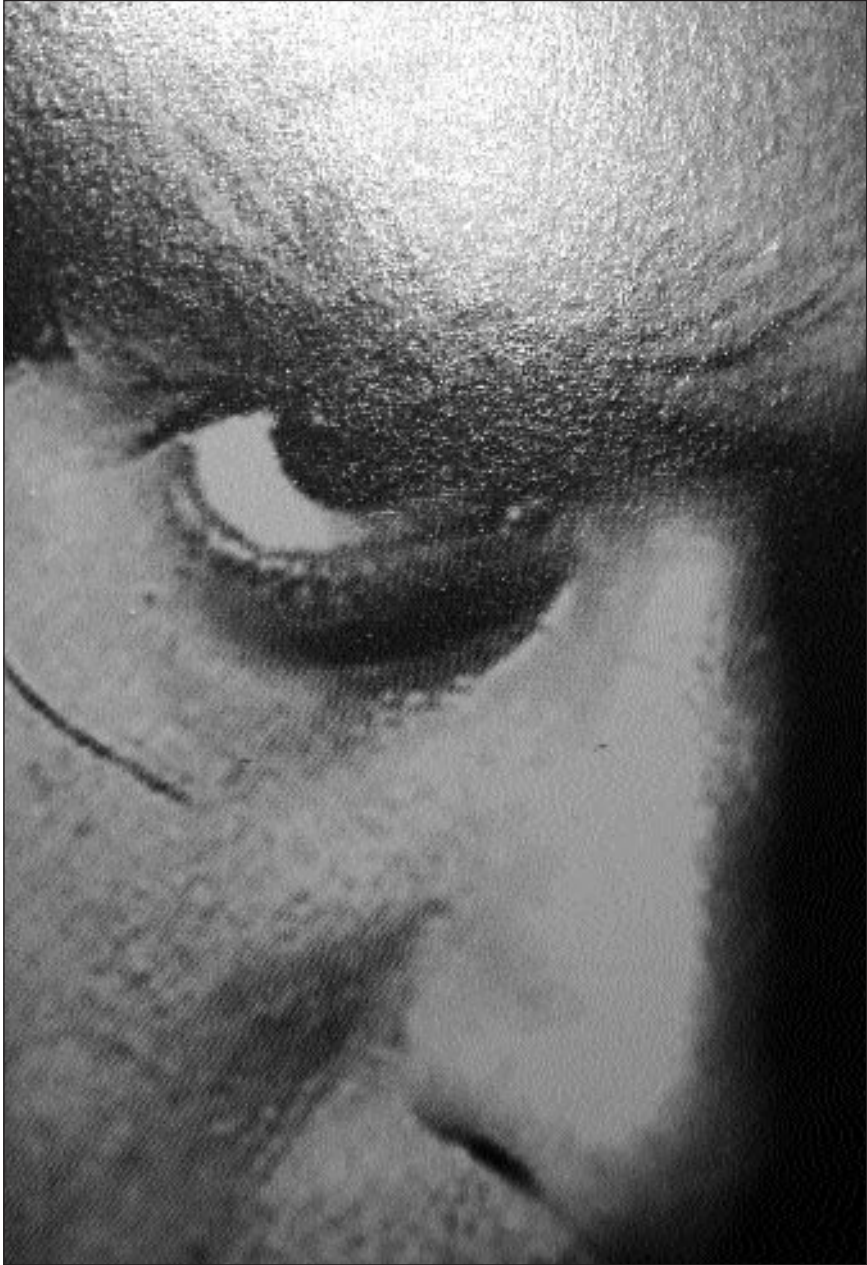
The Exhilaration Of Dread

Genre, narrative form and film style in contemporary urban action films

RAVI S. VASUDEVAN

Some crucial transformations occurred in the city of Bombay in the early 1980s. There was the epochal failure of the Bombay textile strike of the early 1980s and a basic reordering of political economy, with shifts away from the factory system into more dispersed forms of production, and an undercutting of labour's presence in public political life. This moment precipitated a crisis for left wing perspectives, and was paralleled by the emergence of a powerful Hindu chauvinistic politics at the local and national levels. The Shiv Sena acquired political presence in the state and this right wing regional movement linked up with the nationwide Hindu political mobilisation under the Bhartiya Janata Party and its radical wings, leading to the devastating attacks on the city's Muslim population in 1992-93. A few months later, bomb blasts in the city were seen as revenge attacks associated with a Muslim underworld. Alongside these political upheavals, Bombay, like many other metropolises in India, became the object of various programmes for urban reorganisation, in keeping with the imperative of inviting large-scale foreign investment. The drives to clear urban space fell most heavily on the subordinate sections of Indian cities, vendors, hawkers, small workshops and artisanal units.

We can see well enough how a cinema of urban anxiety has ample sources to develop its scenarios from the life world of the city and the nation. Indeed, the cinema produces a sense of turbulence and transformation, but to seek linkages between one phenomenon and the other may be to fail to engage with the range of forms, energies and social vistas that compose the cinematic experience of the city. In this essay, I seek to address the specifics of film narration, form and history, with a particular concern for how a sensorium related to the city exists in the cinema and can be identified and explored.

By choosing the urban action film for reflection, I will dwell on the mechanisms of storytelling, of excitement and astonishment which accompany tales of fear and danger. The paradoxical relationship of audiences to such entertainments suggests the duality posed by such genres, where the audience is invited to enjoy the pleasures of heightened kinetic engagement and perception while entering fraught narrative worlds governed by a gathering sense of anxiety. This then is a cinema which conveys to us the exhilaration of dread, with all the ambivalence that phrase is designed to convey.

The transformation of narrative structures

One of the most significant transformations wrought in this genre, and more broadly in the contemporary cinema, is the transformation of narrative structures away from older binaries. Moinak Biswas notes that there is in these fictions an effective end to the old lexicon: east/west, country/city, police and criminal underworld, perhaps even, we may add, to the opposition between public and private domains. To explore the sensibility of the period, Ranjani Mazumdar, for example, draws upon one node, that of the depressed and dystopian urban subjectivity that defined the Bombay of the mid-1980s. Such a mood is only able to conjure up the most fleeting of residual utopian energies in its references to a country idyll as object of longing for the doomed characters of Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *Parinda/Pigeons* (1989). Shohini Ghosh articulates another depletion of binary symbolism in her analysis of mythic archetypes in the structuring of narrative logics and worlds. She notes the shift from the characteristic *Karan-Arjuna*, legitimate/illegitimate oppositions in the construction of the hero. There is the emergence of a more directly ambivalent and tortured rather than split self, in the persistence of Karan and the emergence of Abhimanyu as distinct figures in the landscape of the contemporary.[1] The latter is of course particularly pertinent, legitimate and yet a victim for his inability to gain the full knowledge which would enable him to move from secured, stable and legitimate territories into dangerous and hostile zones and back again.

The particular confusion and continuity between spaces designated as opposed, such as in the relationship between public and private, conveys a sense of the contemporary urban imaginary as a kind of maze. One of the most interesting popular films of the 1990s, *Baazigar/The Player* (Abbas-Mustan, 1994) approaches this question through a scenario of subaltern masquerade and entry into upper-class society. While the objective is to expose the cut-throat underpinnings of legitimate wealth, the strategy of class exposé opens the protagonist to an amoral, instrumental logic, and finally to death and self-destruction. There is no doubt that the contemporary imaginary of cinema is, at its most productive, devoted to such senses of an unstable and dangerous subjectivity. This allows us to capture a fluidity of symbolic space and poses, in turn, a problem for spectator empathy and identification.

New forms of knowledge

Apart from the broad symbolics of narrative structure, there are issues relating to the nature of cognition and forms of knowledge which define the fictions of urban anxiety. How does one account for the distribution of narrative attention amongst various characters, in ways which appear to both reside within but perhaps fundamentally stretch melodramatic binaries? These films displace focus from good/evil oppositions, or at least suggest that this frame does not provide adequate explanations. In the process, they may actually help us understand that terror reduces everyone to vulnerability, and perhaps this has something to do with the way life is imagined in the city. A discussion of *Parinda* shifted focus from the overt, morally calibrated central characters to the villain, the Tamil gangster Anna (Nana Patekar), a figure whose psychosis invites audience fascination in very distinctive ways. Interestingly, a careful reading of the film will suggest that the key event which defines the

psychosis – the burning of Anna's wife and son – is contradictorily rendered. We do not know if Anna enacted the horror, or was witness to it, whether it was an expression of psychosis, or whether the horror in turn precipitated Anna's madness, punishing him for the will to survive and dominate others. (In this sense we have here the dystopian rendering of another tale of Tamil immigration and violent assertion, Mani Rathnam's 1987 *Nayakan/ Hero*, but now in a manner where the issue of Tamil subalternity in the city is suppressed). Ultimately, as Jeebesh Bagchi suggests, the locus of authority shifts to an opponent, Moosa, astute in manipulating the weakness of others, but otherwise so marginal and almost phantom-like in characterisation that he is not so much character as presiding intelligence. Of course, this is only another level of narrative authority identifiable in the diegetic world. For there is always the extra-diegetic, the position which constructs the space-time of the narrative world and assigns functions to its inhabitants. Whether we call this by the name director, generic convention or its transmutation, or whether we call it the position which emerges from a self-reflexive critical discussion about the dominant epistemologies which organise perception in the narration of terror, one thing is clear: this intelligence appears to assume that the source of terror in the city always slips away, beyond the field of full knowledge, and into some cavernous other space.

The perception of space

This leads us directly on to another thematic, how symbolic narrative dimensions and narrational mechanisms can be conceived of in terms of the links between key and recurring spaces in the cinematic exploration of urban being: police stations, courts of law, the space of the criminal organisation, the home, and the cluster of *mohalla*, bazaar and street that often provide crucial coordinates for the way the 'social' domain in the cinema of urban action and revenge is rendered. Crucial to the *mise-en-scène* of urban terror is the premise that characters are rarely able to conceal themselves from some overarching gaze, that all spaces are vulnerable to surveillance, and characters are liable to receive messages and other intimations of danger in the most sacrosanct of spaces.

Mazumdar's spatial analysis of *Parinda* indicates an almost schematic rendering and opposition between a domestic space already infiltrated by the criminal history of an elder brother, and the criminal underworld, Anna's factory. As Mazumdar shows, a superordinate terror continuously threatens the melodramatic space of romantic possibility, weaving itself into the sentimental construction of domestic bliss. The young couple Karan and Paro's idyll is constantly interrupted by anonymous intrusions and ultimately by death. However, the film redefines space, extending it to character interiority. Terror intrudes into the very psychology of the primary assailant, visiting on Anna irrupting visions of past traumas and premonitions of doom. Mazumdar points out that Anna's garlanding of a photograph of himself and his dead family at the outset of the film seems to cast him in the role of a wraith, a figure already from the beyond whose cold ruthlessness covers an interior world governed by his own escalating fears.

Ira Bhaskar draws our attention to the importance of gothic scenarios to the *mise-en-scène* of terror. Anna's factory draws on the gothic lineage of dark dungeons and cobwebbed attics, spaces that disclose the inner logic of their narrative worlds. The

factory circulates drugs under the guise of oil production, but is primarily intelligible as an assembly line for dead bodies. We enter this space to look at this processing of death, the secret spectacle that constitutes the inner reality of the city. Here, bodies are mutilated by drills, churned along with kernels, and flushed down waste disposal chutes. Ultimately, however, the bodies return, or persist, as elements of the uncanny. The corpse of Anna's lieutenant, Abdul is propped up in a sepulchral coffin as if to leer at Kishan. Framed alongside the coffin, the hero's body contorts with a realisation of the ultimate destiny of a life started at the margins of the city and now manifest in the annihilation of his brother. The hero knows this space, his instincts are bound up with a knowledge of its precincts and practices. But he desires another destiny for his brother. However, the factory of death comes to be recognised fatalistically, sickeningly, as the resting place, ultimate home in this homeless world. Thus might Freud have construed this uncanny, *unheimlich*, so remote, so other, and yet so undeniably and dreadfully home.

In these abstract spaces the narrative world is pared down to certain essential units of meaning. But these scenes are also stylistically elaborate and draw upon international generic codes. Mazumdar develops interesting comparisons between this narrative of doom and the post-war American genre of film noir.[3] Spaces wreathed in shadows, a night city empty of people or populated by anonymous crowds, a soundtrack filled with the portent of danger by the constantly ringing phone from some demonic source, all these suggest a rather self-conscious drawing on of codes generated elsewhere, but, as I will suggest, historically available for the contemporary. Here fate, and its manifestation as an ever-receding and untraceable authority, would appear to function as the other side of a social domain that has been swept away to reveal its underbelly.

A cinephiliac history

Here the question of history comes to face us as part of the history of cinephilia. In ongoing work on the analysis of this context, Lalitha Gopalan has suggested that this period signalled a new availability in India of a global cinema. She sites as important to this context the renewed import of US cinema after a long embargo, the circulation of films through the video market, and the induction of graduates from the Film and Television Institute of India into the industry.[4] It would be important to distinguish different moments in such a global circulation of the cinema; surely we have such an interactive discourse right from the beginning of the cinema, and in ways which do not reduce the global to American cinema. Nevertheless, the emergence in particular of a certain film-technical cinephilia with the arrival of the FTII graduate in the industry suggests a more precise node of trans-formation. In this context, film noir is not a historically remote phenomenon, but part of a synchronically available filmic resource.

The history of Bombay cinema is punctuated by formal transformations such as these. In the 1970s, the emergence of a character and an urban subjectivity which could not be recovered within legal and social hierarchies was accompanied by a transformation in filmic representations of Bombay. Hitherto iconically indexed by the establishing shot of Victoria Terminus, Marine Drive or the High Court, the city extends into a kaleidoscope of visual fields. Rather than a realistically evoked space, the cinematic city becomes a stage

for the working out of new types of conflict, rhythms of existence and subjectivity. A new aesthetic composes the city in terms of the elaboration of backgrounds, something that the contemporary period takes over and transforms into a tactile field that suffuses the subjectivity. To get to a sense of what I mean here by a tactile field, I will oppose it to the theatrical notion of the prop or the painted background, as something which shifts registers from a presentational to a more dynamic, virtual aesthetic. Rather than positioning us as external viewers of figures cast against a background, our look is drawn in and flows amongst objects and figures within the space-time of the fictive world.

Let me use *Deewar/The Wall* (Yash Chopra, 1974) to describe the earlier form. A black and yellow cab rank provides the background to a debate about morality and pragmatism between two brothers. While this famous sequence draws on new iconic frames of reference, character relationship to setting is rendered statically, and the scene crucially depends on zoom shots and declamatory dialogue for its effects. Mazumdar's analysis of this scene draws upon Benjamin's notion of the ruin to understand the way in which an object or a space may be invested with memory or meaning that is fragmentary and is threatened with dissolution by the tyranny of history's onward march.[5] Here the narrative is brought to a halt, becomes spatialised and is opened to a rhetorical and melodramatic appeal to memory which transcends the impetus of the present moment.

This is a suggestive reading of the scene, one which we may juxtapose with an urban *mise-en-scène* from Priyadarshan's *Gardish/Celestial Turbulence* (1994). Shiva (Jackie Shroff) is being chased by the hatchet men of the villain, Billa Gilani. The chase takes place across the roofs of cabs caught in a traffic jam. Figures thud across rooftops and collide with each other as Shiva pushes his assailants off him and counter-attacks only in order to evade them. Here objects and characters impact on each other, transposing dialogue to a discourse of bodies in space. Urban space is present to the characters who inhabit it, it is integral to the articulation of being. This is not to argue that one form is superior to the other, but that there is a braiding of urban elements with filmic techniques so that the filmic affords a new imagination for inhabiting the urban.

Other instances of a cinematic tactility of urban being abound, as for example in the way Bombay is defined by the monsoon. Black umbrellas provide for an extensive metonymisation of the city in *Arjun* (Rahul Rawail, 1986), as they unfold en masse, glistening in the rain, and provide a textured space for violent pursuit and killing. It is an index of the self-consciousness of the cinema of this period that Rawail's film quotes here from an audacious motif in Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* of 1940.

Most important here is the railway station, and the railway tracks. In *Zanjeer/The Chain* (Prakash Mehra, 1973), we are provided a sense of the everyday vulnerability of the massified city to the railway accident, as when a key witness to a gangland killing falls from his precarious perch on a crowded commuter train. Here villainous design precipitates the accident, as the assailant plunges his cigarette into his target's hand, thereby loosening his hold and despatching him to his death. But the documentary-like structures of the scene suggest something more precarious posed within the domain of contingency and chance in everyday urban life. Nevertheless, this scene, with its emphasis on close-ups to designate villainy, and its recourse to the studio for the shots of the train's interior, continue to inhabit a

static, tableau rendition of its subject.

The railway track captures liminality and transience, and provides intimations of impending dislocation as the existential condition of the urban. In *Zanjeer* we notice that the policeman hero, who will be framed and expelled from the police force, lives next to the railway track, and later he is beaten and cast down on the railway tracks from an overhead bridge. However, later, these symbolically significant backgrounds are transformed into features of subjectivity. In *Hathyar/The Weapon* (J.P. Dutta, 1988), the violent, emotionally unstable protagonist accompanies his family to Bombay, where they take up residence in a tenement overlooking the railway track. As he listens to his parents in conversation with neighbours, his look is involuntarily drawn to the railway tracks. The character's distracted, edgy look integrates the space into the *mise-en-scène* of his neurotic subjectivity.

The films of the 1970s generated their own cinephilia, variously drawing on certain populist strands in Hollywood such as the work of Capra and Kazan, and international genre developments, such as Italian appropriations of the American western, as with Sergio Leone. But the particular highlighting of the cinematic apparatus as a body of techniques, and a fluency of their deployment, seems to be of more recent vintage. *Gardish* is notable for its use of steadicam, and in Ramgopal Varma's *Satya* (1998), for example, a gang fight is orchestrated via a highly self-conscious camera. A massive crane movement sweeps down the length of an apartment block to meet a gang as they exit from a lift. Subsequently, character and camera movement parallel each other, creating a dynamic doubling of presence, culminating in a top-angle pan from the rooftops as we look down on the chase in the streets below. In a particularly resonant segment, the chase climaxes on an overhead suburban railway bridge, quoting from Friedkin's *The French Connection* (1971), and then crescendo-ing via Scorsese's De Niro/Pesci double gun burst in *Goodfellas* (1990) as the protagonists Bhiku and Satya dispatch their opponent Guru Narayan. The scene is cast against the backdrop of the train hurtling below. Apparatuses of cinema and everyday urban speed double each other, referencing the moment through a kind of world cinema parallax. Characters and actions shadow each other in phantom relay, the baton of form being carried into another territory of social experience. We have here an act of transposition of form where the experience of cinematic looking is not merely self-referential and autoerotic but enabling of a heightened perception of reality.

One of the issues here is squarely posed by Moinak Biswas, when he asks us to think about the relationship between the cinematic sensorium and the urban sensorium. Rather than simply catalogue parallels between the body of sense impressions that cascade from screen and the urban everyday – sounds, sights, senses of speed and volume and depth and surface – he asks to consider the limits of this sensorial flow, the way the senses are subject to disciplines of frame, narrative structure, rhythm and duration.

Realism/reality effects

Biswas goes on to argue that to deploy the category of realism to this new form in the 1980s would be to void it of explanatory force. He deploys the terms "reality effect", even "realism effect" to capture the "realist gain", in the sense of an augmentation of object perception and perception of space, of volume and flow, that emerges in the cinema of this

period. He situates this in the emergence of television and the new, global traffic in images of late capitalism and in the fluidity of post-modernist sign systems. In this argument, such heightened perception remains on the surface, and does not engage us in narrative depth. However, we have seen the impact of such formations elsewhere, and they are highly differentiated in the way they configure themselves in relation to local and global audiences. For example, in France, the "*cinema du look*", with its avowed subordination of narrative content to style, overlaps in a film such as Kassovitz' *La Haine/Hate* (1996) with the "*cinema du banlieu*", the cinema of the ethnic suburbs, films dealing with a sense of ethnic marginality and struggle.

Within the Indian industry, certain trends in the diaspora family film of the 1990s (which Monika Mehta's research into the industry has uncovered as the category of the "family love Story")[7] acquires a particular virtuality of appearance, place abstracted into a non-identifiable space of the globalised imagination. Films such as *Parinda*, *Gardish* and *Satya* emerge from a rather different matrix of production and exhibition. The urban action film has not been such an important vector of the film trade in the lucrative markets of the US and Britain, though there is no lack of a global traffic of images and, indeed, sequences, in the way they are put together. In these films, there is a strong orientation to local constructions of the city, of course inflected by the way Bombay functions as part of a national imaginary. Their "reality effects" occasionally gesture to modes of observation associated with the documentary essay. The pro-filmic, the space organised for the camera, may be rendered in terms of a significant density of incidental activities which appear to have a logic which carries on irrespective of the actions of the main characters; until, of course, an action scenario emerges to bring a halt to the everyday pattern of events. The reality effect, as opposed to realist procedure, affords us an enhanced perception of this incidental space. For example, in *Gardish*, a washerman's space in the market is indexed by the increased volume of the sound of clothes being beaten against the stone, and by a visual enhancement, sprays of water cascading upwards in the frame.

As with *La Haine*, we may have something in the way of a hyperrealist form, perception being enhanced through but beyond the commonplace everyday, and with a certain deliberation. The reality effects of *Satya* are such that there is both recognition and a strange sense of hyper-location in the way the film privileges the spectator with perceptions about how the everyday social world and the world of terror are contiguous and threaten to overlap. A top-angle shot on a bar terrace above a crowded Bombay street allows us to see goons mercilessly beat down on Satya as an unaware everyday concourse stream by on the street below. As Bhiku, Satya and their gang torture an opponent in a basement, we see Satya's beloved, Vidya, through a skylight which opens out on to the street above, as she walks along, unaware of what we are privileged to see. The systematic deployment of the steadicam, of seamless bodily movement and character focalisation, essayed by Varma earlier as an abstract formal exercise notionally yoked to the horror genre in *Raat* (1991) is in *Satya* recurrently deployed to problematise the inside/outside world in the city. Here the camera's bodily pursuit of a character highlights how privatised spaces may be rapidly infiltrated, often with violent results. Such a hyper-location, braiding the spectator into spaces that are differentiated, draws upon the omniscient con-

ventions of classical narration. Separated spaces can be figured as adjacent, as collapsing into each other, and as rapidly negotiable, via that key apparatus of contemporary communication, the mobile phone.

This is where we may consider that realism is still very much an issue in the contemporary action film, especially in the bid of this cinema to build a coherent spatio-temporal universe dominated by notions of verisimilitude. In a film such as *Satya*, we can see how this is very specifically a Hollywood strategy of exercising a limit, as Biswas might call it, in the sense of building continuity, where a highly consistent narrative dovetailing of sequences is developed. However, the popular format of the Bombay cinema insures that other registers of play and performativity can be drawn upon to complicate such an agenda, if consciously harnessed to infiltrate the overall structure. Here we need to continue to focus on the multi-diegetic composition, indeed, spaces of multiple narrations, of Indian popular cinema to understand the way the spectator is inserted into the cinematic imagining of the city.

Ravikant points out that in some of the key song sequences, especially "*Goli maaro bheje mein*", the comic and parodistic outlook of the male student hostel and 'bachelor party' is evoked to provide a particular spectatorial access to the gang world. Realism is displaced by a scenario which allows us imaginative access to the point of production, the way perhaps scriptwriter Saurabh Shukla, *Satya's* Kalumama, fabricated the group dynamics of the film's narrative world, through group interaction and performativity. This gesture to off-screen narrative worlds gives us a particular entry point for *Satya*, and in ways which periodically distance us from its narrative drives. This is not of the mode exactly of Brechtian realism, or the Iranian director Makhmalbaf's perspectivist strategies which stress the importance of perception for an engaged response to reality, for the rest of the narrative abides by a relentless generic drive. However, it nevertheless suggests a movement between distance and immersion in the way spectatorial stances are mobilised, and the layered spaces through which the cinema engages the city.

I will conclude these reflections on the contemporary cinema of urban anxiety by, for the moment, only gesturing to the question of politics. There are ways in which contemporary political transformations are echoed in these films, as in the phenomenon of the extended male group, founded on neighbourhood ties and united by a perceived sense of deprivation based on fallen status. Such fictional focuses certainly become more obvious in terms of character formation in the cinema of this period, and echo the worldview of the Shiv Sena in Bombay. This is especially so of the work of N. Chandra, as in *Ankush/The Goad* (1986), but is observable in a host of other films. Such discourses were to acquire a national frame of reference with the high caste investment in a resurgent political Hinduism in this period, crucially crystallising around reactions against the V.P. Singh government's attempt to implement the Mandal Commission report on reservation for backward castes in 1990.

However, the overall political framing of experience through the cinema is probably more complicated. Can we come back to the political through the play of sounds and images that compose our relationship to the genre? Let me end by pointing to a motif in *Satya*, which may be construed as a cinephiliac intervention in contemporary forms of

political spectacle. Satya, determined to avenge his comrade Bhiku, arrives at the Ganesha Chaturti on the beach, an urban spatial practice associated with over a century of nationalist mobilisation, and a crucial cultural form in contemporary Shiv Sena and Hindutva politics. Bhiku's assassin, Bhau Thakre, the gangster successfully turned politician, presents himself and his followers before the deity. As Satya moves in, the camera focuses on the red cloth which he has swathed around a knife. The red sheath bobs along in the crowd, reminding us of a similar scene in Coppola's *The Godfather Part II* (1974) in which Vito Corleone moves through Roman Catholic festivities to target the local gangleader. Satya stabs Bhau Thakre to death, and as the scene dissipates in chaos, we are left with a haunting image. The camera is positioned at the lofty elevation of the deity, looking down on the solitary figure of the dead villain as the ebb and flow of the tide tugs at his body. His followers dispersed, his command over spectacle voided, his rag doll body is offered up for a view that at once assumes the cosmic perspective of the deity, and the cultural momentum of a cinephiliac camera that enframes it. We do not need to recognise the cinematic reference to be caught in the allure of the moment. It is as if the film invites us to be carried along by the rush of a sensorium specifically composed by our investment in the cinema. The energy of that very particular compact between screen and audience is then channelled as an intervention into the contemporary, disembowelling one form of political spectacle by our heady engagement with another.

This article follows on from discussions at the Sarai workshop on this theme, held at Sarai, CSDS from 29 November-1 December 2001. References to arguments by Moinak Biswas, Ravikant, Ira Bhaskar and Jeebesh Bagchi are to their oral interventions at the workshop.

NOTES

1. Shohini Ghosh, "Streets of Terror: Urban anxieties in the Bombay cinema of the 1990s", paper presented to the workshop "The Exhilaration of Dread", Sarai, CSDS, 29 November-1 December 2001.
3. "Ruin & the Uncanny City: Memory, Despair and Death in *Parinda*", paper presented to the workshop "The Exhilaration of Dread", and published in this volume.
4. Lalitha Gopalan, *A cinema of interruptions*, MS.
5. Ranjani Mazumdar, *Urban Allegories: The City in Bombay Cinema 1970 - 2000,* PhD dissertation (New York University, 2001).
6. Monika Mehta, *Selections: Cutting, Classifying, and Certifying in Bombay Cinema*, PhD (University of Minnesota, 2001).

Ruin And The Uncanny City
Memory, despair and death in *Parinda*

RANJANI MAZUMDAR

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.

Jonathan Raban

Popular cinema is perhaps the most innovative archive of the city in India, saturated with urban dreams, desires and fears. In this essay, I reflect on the 'urban mood' of Bombay in the 1980s through the intricate workings of terror in a popular film. Vinod Chopra's *Parinda* (1989) is a story of despair and death where terror becomes the vehicle through which urban spectacle is destroyed and the image of Bombay as the 'dream city' turns into a violent nightmare. There are two issues central to the discussion of terror here. The first is the elaborate mediation on urban space through the use of specifically cinematic techniques. The second is the allegorical evocation of the city as the site of *ruin*, darkness and the uncanny.

Parinda weaves an intricate plot that deals with the Bombay underworld and its over-powering capacity to destroy ordinary dreams and pleasures of the city's residents. Karan (Anil Kapoor) returns from America after completing his education, full of dreams and romantic feelings for his childhood sweetheart Paro (Madhuri Dikshit). These dreams are shattered when Anna, the eccentric underworld don, gets Prakash, a police officer (Paro's brother played by Anupam Kher) killed when he meets Karan at a favourite spot of their shared childhood. Kishen (Jackie Shroff) who works for Anna, tries to dissuade his brother, Karan from appearing as a witness for the state. Unable to work through the law, Karan gets involved with Anna and strikes a deal with a rival don to kill all the three responsible for Prakash's death. Subsequently Karan marries Paro and decides to leave the city for their village. On their wedding night, Anna kills Paro and Karan. Unable to save his brother's life, Kishen finally kills Anna. The ordinariness of *Parinda's* plot is however energised through a complex evocation of space to show urban terror. *Parinda* does not use many locations, instead the limited use of space is fragmented further through a skilful editing pattern that combines film noir cynicism with Eisensteinian montage and Hitchcockian terror.

Space, terror and despair in the mythology of Bombay
In his exploration of Bombay's spatial characteristics, particularly its density and pressures on the ordinary worker, Sandeep Pendse says that over the years there has been a gradual destruction of privacy and ordinary conversation because of the overcrowding

of *chawls*[1] by multiple families. The claustrophobia of the urban crowd, overwhelming the limited space available to them, makes the struggle for a personal world almost impossible. Movement within the city usually involves an effort because "the city as a total entity, in its entirety is only a notion, an abstraction, not something really known or grasped". Added to this is the density of construction, which artificially encloses space in the city. "There is a constant, though at most times well hidden and perhaps even unrealised fear that the 'closed-up' space may conceal a danger or a death trap" (1996: 14).

Many writers have commented on the decay of Bombay, its loss of community and spirit, equating this process with the rise of the criminal underworld. In a personal encounter with the crisis of the city, writer Pinki Virani uses the phrase "Who Killed Bombay?". Virani's despair stems from a loss of faith in collectivity – that the citizens of the city have given in and allowed Bombay to disintegrate. Virani looks at the loss of the city's dreams, a place where dead souls now walk the streets. For Virani both collusion and fear have worked towards expanding the underworld's base. She also draws attention to large-scale upheavals in the city like the textile mill workers' strike in the early eighties. The strike stretched for over 18 months, finally discredited and defeated. Many workers who had migrated to the city and worked in these mills were subsequently unemployed (1999).

In another detailed account, Rajni Bakshi notes that the strike (which was the biggest and the longest in the history of India) in retrospect had all the makings of a "suicidal death wish". Driven by their circumstances, but unable to see what they were up against, the ordinary workers were caught in a "morass of impotence vis-à-vis the world". While Virani's instinct is to present this vast multitude of unemployed men as the ground for an increase in crime, Bakshi sees a certain nihilism and self-destruction emerging from an inability to sustain the force of the strike. For most workers, in the end, the defeat was a personal tragedy (1986: 232).

While these are ultimately perceptions of resident journalists, they present us with a narrative of despair that many people share in the city of Bombay. The key issues in Virani's, Bakshi's and Pendse's narratives are migrant workers, unemployment, nihilism, tragedy, underworld, claustrophobia and terror. All these perceptions seem to coalesce in the complex formal structure of *Parinda*, presenting the city as a giant home for spatial anxiety, *ruin* and the uncanny

Ruin and the 'architectural uncanny'

It was Walter Benjamin who first presented the city as the site of *ruin* in his *Arcades Project* (2000). Benjamin developed the idea of an allegorical gaze that would seek to understand *ruin* as the opposite of the phantasmagoria of the city. *Ruin* enables one to see history not as a chain of events, marked both by linear time and the glory of civilisation, but as a narrative on death and catastrophe. The modern city, which articulates itself as the glorious culmination of industrial culture, hides behind the spectacular and seductive world of the commodity. Yet the city as *ruin* can be excavated through an allegorical gaze that allows one to deal with estrangement, alienation and spatial displacement within the city.

Parinda develops the image of the city as *ruin* through a peculiar articulation of the 'architectural uncanny'. Anthony Vidler suggests that the notion of the uncanny as an

older private form transforms itself into a public experience in the modern metropolis. The metropolitan uncanny was commonly associated with all the phobias related to spatial fear, in particular claustrophobia. The uncanny therefore works metaphorically to articulate a "fundamentally unliveable modern condition". The interpretive force of the uncanny is best captured in film where the "the traces of its intellectual history have been summoned in the service of an entirely contemporary sensibility". In the literary and cinematic form the uncanny emerges within a tense space where the yearning for a home and a fear of home-lessness constantly impinges on desire and freedom. Thus the homely, the domestic and the nostalgic are constantly placed under threat (Vidler: 1992: 10). In the uncanny city of the imagination, memory, childhood, nostalgia, claustrophobia and primitivism co-exist to produce a distinct form of spatial anxiety. Destroying the myth of the rational planned city from within, "this modern uncanny always returns as the labyrinth to haunt the City of Light" (Donald: 1999: 73).

In cinema, the fascination for dark spaces became central to the representational strategies of film noir. Noir films evoked a "savage lyricism" emerging as a critical tendency within popular American cinema. Some have called it an "anti-genre that reveals the dark side of savage capitalism" (Naremore: 1998: 22). One of the principal features of noir is its ability to destroy urban spectacle. By using low-key photography to evoke shadowy and mysterious spaces, the texture of the city is given a twist directly in opposition to the phan-tasmagoria of aerial photography so commonly used in tourism and travelogue films. Urban display is countered by dark shadows, panoramic visions with fragmented shots and the glitter of daylight with the darkness of the night. Paul Schrader has suggested that in the period of noir films after the second world war (1941 to 1958), "Hollywood lighting grew darker, characters more corrupt, themes more fatalistic, and the tone more hopeless" (1996: 53). Clearly one can draw a connection between Benjamin's evocation of *ruin* in the city and the shadowy pursuits of the noir genre. For in many ways the dark textures of the city have enabled a cinematic exploration of the idea of *ruin*.

Film noir and the dark city: Anna's death wish

The now abundant literature on noir suggests that the genre's aim was to articulate the crisis of experience within 20th-century capitalist society. Alienation, the unfulfilled yearning for romantic love, the psychological crisis of humanity and an inability to make human contact became the social markers that defined noir. Noir is usually identified by its pessimistic mood and sense of foreboding, an intense anxiety, fear and the latent inevit-ability of death. In *Parinda*, death is not associated with martyrdom. Rather death is the event that is the culmination of a series of failures. Central to the narrative of death is the noir-like darkness of the city.

Parinda's Bombay is fragmented into dark, morbid spaces with all the characters framed within a light and shadow zone. Rarely in the film do we see a riot or spectacular display of colour. There is a peculiar obsession for the night, for darkly lit interior spaces that are fragmented as against the panoramic vision one usually gets in Hindi cinema. The city appears decrepit and spartan with no directorial gesture towards conventional cine-matic spectacle. Modern life, said Sartre, increasingly appears like a "labyrinth of hallways,

doors, and stairways that lead nowhere, innumerable signposts that dot routes and signify nothing" (cited in Polan: 1986: 252). *Parinda*'s alleys, closed spaces, ordinary sites, elevators, dark staircases, peeling walls and streets are ubiquitous. The city is dark, crowded and ruthless whose human form is Anna.

Anna is the centre of the city whose social net connects him to the police, other underworld rivals, factories, politicians and so on. Anna's eccentricity or 'madness' is central to the way the city's lawlessness and decay is portrayed. He is ordinary and spectacular, human and inhuman, powerful and vulnerable. Like in noir films, *Parinda* offers a combination of the themes of excess, the bizarre, cruelty, madness, innocence and a fascination for death. Death here acquires a ceremonial quality, elaborately staged.

Parinda opens with long-shots of the city of Bombay in twilight as the credits appear without the loud, spectacular music usually associated with Hindi film credits. The eerie sense of danger is evident from the staccato music. As twilight turns into night, a sense of expectancy and mystery surrounds the city. The credits end with the director's name appearing on the long-shot of a house with light filtering out of the window. Here the music soundtrack is mixed to introduce a mechanical sound. In the next shot the sound is identified as we see a little toy moving on the floor. There is a clear association here with a child, but we see no child as the camera tilts to show Anna standing before a photograph of himself, a woman and a child. We hear a woman's tortured singing on the soundtrack as Anna folds his hands to pray before the garlanded portrait. The strangeness of the scene is evident since the portrait on the wall seems to evoke the death wish of a tortured yet powerful man[2].

This initial introduction is suddenly interrupted by the sound of the phone as Anna turns to walk towards the sound. He picks up the phone and curtly says "*Anna*". We then hear the sound of a scream and the profile of a dead man's face, shot in close-up. In the next cut we see the face of one of the three men who have killed the man. As the men wipe the blood off the weapons they have just used, we are introduced to Anna's close associates. The close-up of weapons and faces in low-key lighting makes this moment look like a ritual killing. The discontinuity in the editing imbues the killing with a level of grandeur, ritual spectacle and 'primitivism'. This aesthetic framing of death is repeated several times in the film. Like in the classical form of Eisensteinian montage, the act of killing is never directly shown but created through an effective editing pattern. Eisenstein believed that montage was produced by the collision of two pieces of film unrelated to each other. The content of a film should unfold in a series of shocks linked together in a sequence and directed at the emotions of the audience (1977: 45-63).

Film noir heroes tend to live in the present, retreating into the past only when they are unsuccessful in the present. Themes of loss, nostalgia, lack of clear priorities and insecurity are presented primarily through mannerism and style (Schraeder: 1996: 58). Anna's mannerisms are peculiar, his eccentricity and madness are linked to a traumatic event, the burning of his wife and child. Somewhere in the film, a cameo character informs Karan that Anna fears fire because he burnt his wife and child alive. This fear of fire is introduced at several moments in the film through fragmented visual intrusions (bodies enveloped by flames) and always from Anna's point of view. This fear of fire is of Anna's own making,

embedded in the recesses of his consciousness. The fear of the 'self' is thus his greatest weakness and ultimately consumes him at the end of the film.

Anna's power and complexity, his psychic investment in violence, are established through associations: objects (the toy), memory (the portrait, the singing), the burning figures of his wife and child. Anna talks about the need to forget, even though the past follows him constantly. He maintains a simmering exterior, a savage control, an ascetic persona and intimacy with the everyday violence of the city. The psychological investment in Anna's character clearly breaks with popular representations of villains in Bombay cinema who are rarely invested with a complex past.

Terror in *Parinda* is linked to 'madness' and madness has to be located spatially. Anna brings to his performance a sense of both everyday ordinariness and a spectacular and exaggerated form of brutality. Anna's importance lies in his ability to render visible a sense of internal destruction and neurosis that drives the people around him to brutal deaths.

The uncanny invasion of private worlds

The inability to sustain a personal private world runs throughout *Parinda*. In what is perhaps the only romantic moment, Karan and Paro go to her house after a scuffle with one of the killers near a temple. We hear night sounds of the city as Paro cooks inside the apartment. Karan is in the verandah. Paro walks up to him and tries to console him. A romantic song intercut with images of their childhood follows. This happy moment is suddenly interrupted when the lights go off and Paro drops her plate. A disturbed Paro pleads with Karan not to leave her. The song resumes and ends abruptly again when the phone rings. The juxtaposition of these sounds with the song on the soundtrack introduces a terrifying invasion of personal space. The song resumes after some time and then ends with Kishen breaking into the house to drag his brother away.

This experience is developed again in Karan and Kishen's apartment. When Kishen is shot, Karan brings his injured brother to the apartment. The doctor comes home to treat Kishen and leaves promising to send a nurse. Karan uses all the latches to bolt the door. Karan's fear is justified as in the next shot the killers talk to the doctor in the darkly lit staircase outside the apartment. The doctor is with the underworld. Just as Karan and Kishen start reflecting on their childhood entry into the city, the doorbell rings again. This ominous sound is intercut with close-up shots of Kishen, Karan, the doorbell and the staircase outside the apartment showing the killers ringing the bell. Here the shots are repeatedly cut to music and end in silence with the staircase now empty. The doorbell rings again after a pause, and this time Karan walks gun in hand towards the door with Kishen begging his brother not to open the door. Again the film uses a montage of shots and sounds as Karan removes all the latches to reveal the nurse standing outside. Unknown to the brothers, their private space is already invaded by someone whose real self is not visible to them. The night clock chimes and the nurse injects Kishen. Suddenly the doorbell rings again. The nurse tries to walk to the door but is prevented by Kishen. Karan again moves gun in hand towards the door, as Kishen shouts from his bed. All the latches are again removed and Paro walks in. In a stressed state Karan tells her he cannot be a witness because Anna's men shot his brother. There is an argument and finally Karan agrees to be a witness.

The incessant use of the doorbell to trigger tension inside the apartment is cinemati-cally developed through a Hitchcockian montage. Close-ups of faces, door latches, the gun in Karan's hand, are regularly intercut with the sound of the doorbell to create a palpable tension within the apartment. The power of the sequence lies in its very cinematic quality, its ability to create a visual and aural language with which a written narrative cannot com-pete. While the visual appears like a set of fragmented shots, the soundtrack combines Kishen's desperate voice with the sound of the doorbell and highly effective music. Fear is now all-inclusive as terror is omnipresent. The next day at the police station, Karan refuses to be a witness when he learns of the nurse's identity. As Vidler suggests, the uncanny emerges as a "frame of reference" that positions the desire for a home and domestic secu-rity with its exact opposite" (1991: 12). In *Parinda*, the cycle of terror encircles the city, the home and the private world of the protagonists. As a result the desire for peace becomes a nostalgic yearning for a return to childhood.

Childhood memory and the city: the form of remembrance
Childhood impressions and experiences connect all the characters including Anna as orphaned children. Childhood images are woven together through songs and a few con-versations that allude to that experience. Childhood is a state of homelessness. Living on the 'footpath' is brutal and cruel, but also full of hope. Images of the children singing on Bombay's Marine Drive are presented against the magical backdrop of the Nariman Point skyline. The city is represented here as the city of dreams. This mythology of the city is linked to the idea of childhood and dreaming. The city never appears magical in the adult life of the characters.

Karan and Paro's relationship too develops during their childhood at a neighbourhood fountain – an image that is recalled in their adult life, only to be destroyed by the violence around the site. The twilight hue of many of the childhood sequences invests the past with a certain beauty, magic and innocence. Yet *Parinda*'s childhood images are like snapshots, dislocated and unresolved. They do not provide us with a well developed chain of events. Memory in *Parinda* appears like a series of unfinished moments. Recalling the past of child-hood homelessness seems to be the only way to deal with the terror in the city.

Childhood remembrance and perceptions are particularly significant in the develop-ment of an urban identity. As an adult these perceptions turn into nostalgia, remembrance and yearning. In the *Berlin Chronicle*, Benjamin presents us with a series of impressions of the Berlin of his childhood. Contrasting his style of remembering the past with autobio-graphical writing, Benjamin suggests that while the mapping of time in the classical auto-biography tends to be sequential and linear, urban reminiscences are usually discontinuous (1992: 316). The relationship of specific locations to time and the ways in which the city both shapes and in turn is shaped by memory, becomes the core of Benjamin's investi-gations. The space of moments and discontinuities presents the recent past as frag-mented, fleeting and in the form of snapshots.

It is this aspect that seems so relevant to the structure of *Parinda*. For unlike other popular film narratives that create a temporal continuum of past/present/future, *Parinda* produces the past in flashes, as incomplete and unfinished moments of the past, which

are relevant only in the adult life of the protagonists. All the characters remain caught in a battle with fate, their past and their futures, and all are defeated by life in a poignant loss of innocence in the city. The film however goes beyond just the everyday sites of memory to question even the mythic power of the monument, whose relationship to the city has always been complicated.

Monument and the city

The monument is a deeply contradictory site, often presenting itself as the concentration of a city's historicity. As a spectacular space, the monument renders the city to the world, while at the same time displacing the everyday sites of memory. Benjamin says the monument hides the persistence of barbarism in the present. It presents us with a false history, eternalising the past as a closed space, with an end. However Benjamin also sets up a series of counter monuments that bear witness to a personal history.

In *Parinda*, the space of both the monument and the counter monument of the individual is shattered by the spectacle of violence. The film uses the Gateway of India, the Babulnath temple located in Malabar Hill and a neighbourhood fountain as spaces of terror. The use of these display sites which are central to the cartography of Bombay are turned into nodes of violence and death. Fragmenting the panoramic vision of tourism photography, which establishes monuments and display sites as beautiful and spectacular markers of the city, montage in *Parinda* creates conflict and introduces the uncanny shock of the urban.

In one of the most dramatic scenes of the film, Prakash is murdered at a neighbourhood fountain, a site which has traditionally evoked romantic and joyful associations for all the characters, particularly Karan and Paro. The fountain operates here like a counter monument, a particular site of memory whose use in the film is deployed effectively to show both the yearning for peace and happiness, as well as its impossibility within the space of the city.

The fountain is the place where Prakash and Karan are meeting after many years. Just before their meeting they are shown in two cars driving through the city's labyrinth singing a song of their childhood. During the song we are taken back to the past to see childhood shots of happiness, anger, destruction and love. The Nariman Point skyline is often present in the childhood sequences. These visuals are woven into the song and are important for their depiction of innocence, hope and a child's vision of the city 'at first sight'. As Karan and Prakash finally reach their meeting point, we have already been introduced to their friendship. From here on the editing changes along with the music as the car with the killers arrives at the site.

Parinda's film editor, Renu Saluja, contrasts action and emotion through a rapid back and forth structure. We see the glass panes of the car come down three times, intercut with shots of the startled pigeons, each time a window comes down. The killers are revealed through this montage just before the gunshots and Karan's helpless expression as his friend is shot. The entire action is fragmented into minute parts with close-up shots of the pigeons (startled by the sound of the gunshots) providing the bridge for the editing pattern. In Saluja's words, "city films demand a kind of editing where the cutting is visible". Saluja

contrasts the editing here with that of a lyrical storyline where the cutting is made to look invisible (Mazumdar & Jhingan: 1998). In *Parinda*, on the contrary, disembodied shots are put together through a stylised editing technique to produce the shock of the urban. The images are cut to the sound of music and gunshots, creating a montage from collision, rather than linkage.[3]

Like the fountain, the Babulnath Temple emerges as another violent space. Karan runs up the steps of the temple to see Paro feeding pigeons. Paro has broken up with Karan since he refused to be a witness for her murdered brother. Karan walks up and expresses a sense of desperation to Paro who finally relents, knowing that Karan himself had no role in her brother's death. A romantic song plays on the soundtrack. Suddenly Karan spots one of the killers and starts chasing him down the steps, followed closely by Paro. The downward descent introduces a dynamic movement. The spectacularly visual conflict of steps, people, lines of force and the sound of the temple bell are all linked together through the chase. The chase down the steps stands in contrast to the casual climbing of other temple visitors. Moving from the close-up of running legs on the steps to long-shots of all three characters, the sequence appears to combine montage based on the mechanical beat of cutting and montage based on the pattern of movement within the shot. As a statement on a sacred site of the city, *Parinda*'s urban space is enveloped by crime and violence.

The Gateway of India is similarly implicated in the violence around the city. Throughout the narrative, the Gateway is used as a major backdrop. While Kishen is shot by Anna's men near the Gateway, it is the use of this structure in the climactic moment of the film that concretely presents it as a space of terror. Karan and Paro decide to spend their wedding night on a rented boat near the Gateway. The couple want to return to their village. The narrative presents this imagined space of the village as a sign of hope away from the violence of the city. But this was not to be. From the crowds thronging the Gateway of India, participating in the revelry of New Year's eve, Anna emerges, both as a man of the crowd and a stranger to that crowd. He boards a little boat that ferries him and his companions to Karan and Paro's boat. This entire sequence is presented again through a back and forth editing structure.

We see the Gateway of India, well lit, with its crowds. Anna on his boat moving towards the other boat is regularly cut with shots of Karan and Paro making love. The erotic energy of this sequence is heightened by its fragmented and expressive quality. This is regularly contrasted in quick succession with Anna coming closer to the boat. Just as Karan and Paro reach their climax, with Karan whispering the name of their future son, Anna pushes open the door and releases a volley of bullets. The bed is now covered with blood. The power of the monument to imagine the beauty of a city is systematically destroyed, as Bombay looks dark and terrifying, a city of death.

Death as *ruin*

While there are many characters that die in *Parinda*, the cinematic shock in the erotic and aestheticised killing of the newly-wed couple after a sensual lovemaking sequence is the climactic moment of the film. With the volley of bullets, the two fall into each other's arms, united in death but unable to reach their dream. Death here is symbolic at many

levels – while the return to the village is no longer possible, the return to childhood is fleetingly posed through a childhood song playing on the soundtrack. It is this utopian flash combined with deep despair that makes *Parinda* such a fascinating film about the city. Throughout the narrative, we are reminded of the village. But the return to the village is now no longer possible.

Parinda does not try to project a heroic figure caught in an urban nightmare. Instead, every character except Paro colludes in the making of the nightmare. The film's cynicism lies in the way the yearning for happiness is constantly posed but never fulfilled. Through a narrative about homelessness, the footpath, death and self-destruction, *Parinda*'s city transforms into a site of *ruin*, emerging as an allegorical response to the urban experience in India.

NOTES

1. Dilapidated buildings with small rooms connected to a shared balcony. A *chawl* of five to seven storeys can have almost a thousand people living in it.
2. In India, photographs on the wall are garlanded only when the person is dead.
3. Collision was central to Eisenstein's theory of art. The intensity and meaning such collision takes would depend on the qualities of the opposing forces in the colliding shots.

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The Metropolis And Mental Strife
The city in science fiction cinema

NITIN GOVIL

"It is not that I have no past; rather, it continually fragments on the terrible and vivid ephemera of now".

Samuel Delany, *Dhalgren*

"When we made *Armageddon*, all of us certainly didn't think we were going to be seeing any of those images in real life… when it actually does happen and you're watching it on CNN, frankly, it gives you the creeps".

Jonathan Hensleigh, screenwriter,
commenting on the events of 11 September 2001

Upon its completion in 1931, the Empire State Building was declared by the *New York Times* to be "a monumental proof of hopefulness" whose designers "must have been firm in the belief that the future of New York is assured".[1] Within this buoyant statement, so full of irony in light of recent events, we find the essence of science fiction film's strong attraction to the architecture of the city. With extrapolation the most common form of time travel in SF narrative, the futuristic cinematic city in its utopian, technophilic guise represents reason encoded in the unity of form and function, its wind-tunnel designed buildings basking in the spectacular white light of technological rationality, sourceless, but all-illuminating (no shadows, naturally). History and memory – indeed all traces of a tumultuous past – are ground into the reflective surfaces of the built environment, so that, as Le Corbusier's maxim goes, "nothing is contradictory anymore, everything is in its place, properly arranged in order and hierarchy". In films from *Just Imagine* to *Things to Come*, from *Buck Rogers* to *Logan's Run* and the countless incarnations of *Star Trek*, the camera lingers over the technological marvel in rapt, sublime contemplation. These films re-enact the utopian imagery familiar to readers of SF magazine fiction, which deploys the icono-

graphy of science and hardware fetishism that informed the pulp zeitgeist of the North American 1930s and elevated the engineer to the status of modernity's architect.[2]

While the camera caresses the surfaces of the total environment in the SF utopia, in the dystopian city film the camera jabs and prods in fits of distraction. Here, the ecstasies of urban monumentality are inextricable from the anxieties of disenfranchisement, social ferment and sprawling danger: a veritable psychology of urban dread. Erected from the ruins of technocratic urban rationality, the gothic city spaces of *Bladerunner* and *Dark City* depict a phenomenology of urban space that hinges on terror, violence and paranoia. It's little wonder that a contemporary SF film like *Dark City*, with its Piranesi-like perspective and aesthetics of abstraction, turns to the clearly identifiable iconography of the German Expressionists, those early SF pioneers responsible for films like Paul Wegener's *Der Golem* and Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr Caligari* which project interior psychological torment on to their delirious set design.

The alignment between architecture, psychology and film design is almost as old as cinema itself. Vachel Lindsay celebrated architecture as the catalyst for creativity in the motion picture, and early film theorists like Hugo Munsterberg claimed that because of its fundamental attention to the mind's internal movements, cinema allowed the spectator a correspondence with the interior world of psychology, memory and imagination. Siegfried Kracauer's exaltation of the urban street eschewed distracted and cluttered artificiality in favour of more realistic depiction, where the camera might record even the most fleeting moments of modern urban life. However it is Kracauer's major theoretical influence, Georg Simmel, who provides the most cogent appraisal of the relationship between film and architecture. Asserting that the fast-paced rhythms of the modern city imbue its citizenry with a psychology that is equivalent to the task of handling the constant barrage of urban stimuli, Simmel (perhaps even by accident) links the psychology of the metropolis with the difference-engine that drives the cinematic experience itself:

"Man is a differentiating creature. His mind is stimulated by the difference between a momentary impression and the one which preceded it. Lasting impressions, impressions which differ only slightly from one another, impressions which take a regular and habitual course and show regular and habitual contrasts – all these use up, so to speak, less consciousness than does the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions".[3]

This utterly filmic statement of the differences between urban contemplation and distraction are echoed by Walter Benjamin, who notes that the film landscape "passes in review" for the film spectator, unable to rest on a singular image because of its rapid progression. The attendant perceptual logics of shock succinctly address film's ability to shake the foundations of 'mere' architectural contemplation. Even architecture, the "proto-type of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction", provides the radical possibility of "an optics of reception which occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion".[4] Benjamin is careful to note that habituation trains the viewer's eye, that the commodification of space itself under urban capitalism creates its own forms of vision, its own genre of the look.

Though it has strong antecedents in myth and the pastoral, science fiction is a narra-

tive form rooted in the urban experience of modernity and clearly invites the modes of inter-pretation associated with these industrialised phenomenologies of vision. Samuel Delany's fiction has a strong urban sensibility: he notes that his novel *Dhalgren* – with its central city of Bellona constantly aflame – is a "fairly pointed dialogue with all the depressed and burned-out areas of America's great cities".[5] Similarly, his classic invocation of the poetics of science fiction, which focuses on the literalisation of metaphor, is clearly architectonic. Asserting that sentences like "her world exploded" or "she turned on her left side" are understood quite differently in the SF text than in "mundane" fiction, Delany describes the reading of SF as a type of speculative geographic survey: "with each sentence we have to ask what in the world of the tale would have to be different from our world in order for such a sentence to be uttered... as the sentences build up, we build up a world in specific dialogue with our present conception of the real".[6] SF is a genre of accumulation; it builds narrative worlds through the slow, elaborate and often subtle accumulation of detail. A glimpse of a dirty countertop aboard the Nostromo tells us as much about the world of *Alien* as the bone-white plastic surfaces of *2001*'s Discovery spacecraft. The master of the densely detailed visual landscape, Fritz Lang, remarked on many occasions that the visual dynamism of *Metropolis* was more interesting than its socio-historical context. With its extensive use of the passing reference and the fleeting glance, science fiction tests the limits of our distracted urban consciousness to build, brick by brick, the densely detailed visual landscape of an alternate world. Magnified by the logic of generic habituation, science fiction invites us to think the "not-yet" (to borrow Ernst Bloch's phrase), to play out the drama of anticipation in the realm of the popular. The SF experience is parabolic: like gravity's rainbow, it returns us to an unfamiliar present as ghosts wandering the urban machine, strangers in a strange land.

The city science fiction film takes full advantage of recoding familiar architectural imagery in a transformative fashion. The iconography of Los Angeles is prominent in, for example, *The Terminator*, whose 'tech-noir' aesthetic illustrates SF's fascination with the city via the classic American detective films of the 1940s and '50s. Similarly, *Bladerunner* is a postmodern neo-noir that brilliantly inverts Disney's theme-park fascination with the topo-graphy and urban psychology of LA.[7] In contemporary American cinema, LA displaces New York as the center of science fiction's urban imaginary in films like *Predator 2*, *Demolition Man*, and *Terminator 2*. Los Angeles also figures strongly in recent SF films about virtual reality, which demonstrate the powerful influence of cyberpunk as a major urban aesthetic. However, particularly since the early 1980s, New York iconography has become prominent in SF dystopias that range from *Escape from New York* to *Batman* and *Dick Tracy*. *Batman* director Tim Burton, who describes the film's Gotham city set as looking "like Hell erupted through the pavement and kept on going",[8] engages the cartography of New York to map the nightmarish urban vision that serves as the film's backdrop.

Recent millennial and apocalyptic anxiety has, however, restored New York fully to the forefront of the mainstream SF film. Of course, Los Angeles figures prominently in the popular imagination of natural disaster, subsuming anti-environmental and man-made profit oriented design under the narrative logic of ecological revenge,[9] and New York City has been destroyed in classic SF films like *Deluge*, *When Worlds Collide*, and *The Beast*

from 20,000 Fathoms. Yet there is a distinctive iconographic reversal in these new, mega-budget, SF films. While films like *Metropolis* (Lang claimed that the film was inspired by his first glimpse of the New York skyline), *Just Imagine* and *King Kong* portrayed New York's built environment as a monument to the machine age, these new millennial SF films represent the graphic and repeated destruction of these modernist architectural icons. *Independence Day*'s depiction of urban annihilation is so prolonged that its September 16th 2001 US TV showing was pulled by Fox in favor of *Mrs. Doubtfire*. *Armageddon* features the meteor destruction of the Chrysler Building, Grand Central Station and the World Trade Center. Similarly, in *Deep Impact* the World Trade towers topple under the force of a tidal wave that destroys all of New York City, while in *Godzilla* the monster is chased by the military and press alike, demolishing Manhattan to comic effect along the way.[10] At the heart of all these deeply conservative films (most disaster films suggest that renewal is possible through a return to traditional values) beats the spirit of global geopolitical collaboration – the world coming together in the aftermath of American urban destruction to fight a threat who, in the words of the *Independence Day*'s mad scientist figure, is "pretty much like us". *Independence Day* is particularly unabashed about the post-Cold War national catharsis engendered by the world marching to the strains of American triumphalism.

Most science fiction films, Susan Sontag has suggested, are about disaster's "aesthetics of destruction, the peculiar beauties to be found in wreaking havoc, making a mess".[11] These words were written in the 1960s, in a largely dismissive polemic against the way in which "escapist" and technologised spectacles of urban disaster evict any possibility for SF film to mount significant social critique. Sontag's disdain aside, as a genre of the spectacular, science fiction does engage those industrialised phenomenologies of vision made possible by the technology of special effects which direct the spectator to the kinaesthetic qualities of the cinema and the sheer wonder of photographed movement.[12]

Is it not uncanny that these very same special effects technologies are being used to erase even the most fleeting evidence of real urban disaster in upcoming Hollywood releases? In light of the September 11th 2001 attacks on New York's World Trade towers, film executives are caught between the desire for verisimilitude and the worry that even a quick glimpse of the complete tower's existence would exacerbate a national trauma. That is why special effects technicians are working round the clock to digitally remove images of the towers from upcoming releases and trailers, with one digital animator realising with shock that it took her almost exactly as long to remove the background image of the towers in the laboratory as it did for the real towers to fall. In a reversal of Sontag's polemic, we are left to wonder what dangers are posed by the fictional reminders of real disaster, especially since we are continually bombarded by the repetition of the building's collapse, from east and west, from below via tourist snapshots, from above by satellite imagery, punctuated by a staccato televisual rhythm.

As the major purveyors of special effects technology, science fiction films have not been spared the digital knife. Sony subsidiary Columbia Tristar pulled the *Spiderman* theatrical trailer which depicted the ultimate arachnid *flâneur* swinging between the World Trade Towers, spinning a web in which to snag a getaway helicopter. The print poster – which

showed the Towers reflected in Spiderman's eyes – was also removed from circulation within a day of the attack.[13] In addition, Sony is reshooting the end of *Men In Black 2*, so that a Chrysler Building backdrop will replace the previously filmed Trade Center set. There are also reports of reshoots on the set of *The Time Machine*, which had featured the destruction of New York by a lunar meteorite. Media attention on the photographic fate of the towers has spectators searching the filmic frame for a glimpse of them in what Francois Truffaut called the "privileged moment": those quick flashes of real life that emerge briefly through the veil of cinematic artifice.[14] Yet at the same time that a legitimation crisis has emerged in the representation of disaster, some in the computer graphics community have suggested that all available photographic imagery of the event be combined into a virtual 3D model that might provide more insight into the event than the *real* wreckage,[15] hoping that the digital composite might offer significant clues to help unravel continuing questions of structural engineering and forensic analysis.

There is, of course, no bowing out of the dizzying dance between the represented and the real. This is *Bladerunner*'s lesson: the photograph is never an undeniable index of memory.[16] With the removal of the towers from the cinematic imaginary, we are reminded that memory is itself commodified, for sale in a future-present that might have been scripted by Phillip K. Dick. With the hyper-real back-and-forth between the appearance of the intact World Trade Center in the fictional cinematic narrative and its digital absence, perhaps all future films made with a New York set will be rendered strange, a type of science fiction. We will wonder as we compare the fictional world to our own, engaging in Simmel's "sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance", where this screen memory called New York actually was. Perhaps we will share the little girl's remark when she is shown images of the city's past in *Things to Come*: "what a funny place New York was… all sticking up and full of windows". Rather than SF's literalisation of metaphor then, removing glimpses of the World Trade towers from film is about the *obliteration* of metaphor, doubling the symbolic value of the tower as a focal point of the 9/11 attack and completing the cycle of violence.

After 9/11, filmmaker Alexander Kluge remarked that "in the future, there will be no more disaster movies". Yet as science fiction film continues to conduct its post-mortem on the anatomy of metropolitan life, we can only hope that despite a present where disaster is erased from cinematic view, we might renew our memories of past catastrophe in filmed images of the future.

NOTES

1. "Building in Excelsis", *New York Times*, 5/1/1931.
2. Andrew Ross, "Getting out of the Gernsback Continuum" in *Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits* (New York: Verso, 1991), 101-35.
3. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (London: Glencoe Collier MacMillan, 1950), 410.
4. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, Hannah Arendt ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 240.
5. Samuel Delany, 'The Semiology of Silence", *Science-Fiction Studies* 14 (1987), 147.

6.   Samuel R. Delany, "Generic Protocols: Science Fiction and the Mundane" in *The Technological Imagination: Theories and Fictions,* Teresa de Lauretis, Andreas Huyssen, and Kathleen Woodward eds. (Madison, WI: Coda Press, 1980), 178.

7.   Alexander Wilson, "Technological Utopias" in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92.1 (Winter 1993), 162.

8.   Donald Albrecht, "New York, Olde York: The Rise and Fall of a Celluloid City" in *Film Architecture: Set Designs from Metropolis to Bladerunner*, Dietrich Neumann ed. (New York: Prestel, 1996), 41.

9.   See Mike Davis' *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Vintage, 1999).

10. There are numerous other lesser examples – only two can be detailed here. In the animated *Final Fantasy*, set in a ruined New York, we catch glimpses of the deserted World Trade towers in the frame. Images of the partially submerged towers are also prominent in the post-apocalyptic coda to Steven Spielberg's *AI*. Interestingly enough, these images will be preserved in future releases of *AI*, though Spielberg has ordered the line "No, you're not going as a terrorist" cut from the Halloween scene in the upcoming 20th Anniversary edition of *ET: The Extraterrestrial.*

11. Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster" in *Against Interpretation* (New York: Dell, 1966), 213.

12. Scott Bukatman, "The End of Offscreen Space" in *The New American Cinema*, Jon Lewis, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 248-272.

13. Geoffrey Ammer, President of the Columbia Tristar Marketing Group, claimed that "we're human beings first, marketers second", a line that inadvertently reverberates with science fictional promise.

14. Nervous after US Congressional inquiry into game marketing and teen violence, videogame manufacturers have also been quick to respond to the urban disaster. Activision delayed its "Spider-Man 2 Enter: Electro" Sony Playstation game because some imagery "loosely resembled" the World Trade Center. And in the most famous instance, Microsoft delayed its launch date of "Flight Simulator 2002" in order to remove the towers from game scenes, especially after many speculated that the hijackers had used previous versions of the game to learn how to fly.

15. Phil LoPiccolo, "Anti-terror Technologies, Editorial" in *Computer Graphics World* 24. 11 (1 November 2001), 4.

16. After the attack, there was a well-publicised photo of a hijacked plane flying into one of the World Trade towers from the vantage point of a tourist whose camera was reportedly found in the wreckage. The photo was a hoax: a Budapest native allegedly had added the digital image of a Boeing 757 to an older photograph. Taken alongside Hollywood's desire to erase the Towers' existence, however, the *addition* of the disastrous referent via digital technology demonstrates a much less cynical way of dealing with the trauma of catastrophe. It is little wonder that the doctored photograph and the intricate, fake history of its retrieval became a global Internet phenomenon: yet another object lesson that Hollywood can learn from the street-level image pirates, perhaps.

Screening Injustice
Race, violence and media flows

B H R I G U P A T I   S I N G H
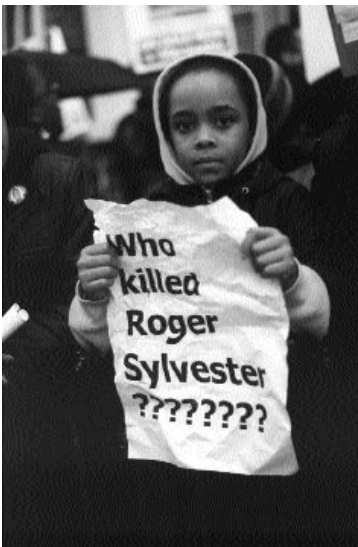
In his essay "Repetitive Beatings or Criminal Justice?" John Hutnyk writes about "Dog-Tribe", a music video released in 1994 by the radical British Asian music group FunDaMental which, according to him was "banned" – a term he uses to describe the lack of visibility, (or "silencing" as he later refers to it), of the video on MTV and ITV, the major television music video distribution outlets in Britain. As Hutnyk puts it, "the 'banning' seems to have been less a government decree than self-censorship in anticipation of such a decree". In order to explain this self-censorship on the part of the Television channels, he turns to the Criminal Justice Act according to which "publishing material intended or likely to stir up racial hatred" or showing videos which "present an inappropriate model for children" qualifies as grounds for censorship or arrest. It is left uncertain whether or not any of the channels involved ever actually invoked or referred to this Act in order to explain their

stand on the video, or if this is a connection that Hutnyk himself is making. What is clear is that in the case of "Dog-Tribe", the music video he describes in this essay, Hutnyk is talking about a flow, or the (lack of) circulation of a particular set of sounds and images.

For the purpose of this argument, let us look more closely at the concept of a 'flow'. According to Manuel Castells, "society is constructed around flows: flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organisational interaction, flows of images, sounds and symbols. Flows are not just one element of the social organisation: they are the expression of processes *dominating* our economic, political, and symbolic life" (author's emphasis). Castells is introducing a new concept (the space of flows) but he props it up on a very old crutch – "Dominant social practices are those which are embedded in dominant social structures. By dominant structures I understand those arrangements of organisations and institutions whose internal logic plays a strategic role in shaping social practices and social consciousness for society at large".[1]

Is there a relation between Hutnyk and Castells, particularly on the subject of flows of images, sounds and symbols? Castells correctly places such media flows with other simultaneous currents, as does Hutnyk, with the particular flow he describes. However, both seek to map the terrain of the social within a strong logic of domination. In the case of Hutnyk, following on from a Cultural Studies tradition of 'celebrating the marginal', he frames "Dog-Tribe" as 'resistance', an unfortunate metaphor permanently hypostatising its object under the shadow of its converse, the mainstream dominant. While not wanting to wholly invalidate such a framework (indeed, politically 'domination' is a crucially important concept), I want to add an element of contingency to media flows by pointing to the disruption of a flow as another kind of flow, one which need not necessarily be placed within a dominating/dominated relation. Thereby, I also hope to disrupt the singular logic of 'ban'=silence=state/legality=domination/resistance, which Hutnyk's and a lot of other Cultural Studies writing sets up, particularly in discussions of 'race'. Disturbing the comfortable linearity of this logic is important inasmuch as descriptions of media flows, especially narratives of disruption, have invariably been framed in these terms. Finally, I also point to how alternative mappings of media flows might be crucial to understanding discussions of race and urban violence, particularly in the context of contemporary Britain.

I start with a description of the unusual circumstances around *Injustice*, a recent film first screened on 5 April 2001 at the Ritzy Cinema (Brixton, London) as the closing night film of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival.

Injustice is: "the radical new film which documents the struggles for justice by the families of Black people that have been killed by the police. Police officers are trying to suppress the film by threatening legal action against cinemas. The filmmakers and families are resisting these attacks" (excerpt from a leaflet distributed by the United Families and Friends Campaign at a picket held outside the office of Russell Jones & Walker, solicitors for the Police Federation).[2]

Ken Fero, the co-director of the film, shot it over a period of seven years. In August 2001, I interviewed Ken Fero and Brenda Weinberg (chairperson of the United Friends and Families Campaign), also one of the main people in the film.

Following the Human Rights Watch festival, the next UK screening of *Injustice* was on

6 July 2001 at the Metro Cinema in Central London. This screening was scheduled for 6:30 in the evening. The same morning there was a short preview of the film on BBC London Live Radio covered by Helen Bart, the Community Affairs correspondent. At 5:15 on the evening of the screening, a strongly worded fax arrived in the office of the Metro addressed to Eva Tarr Kirkhope, the owner and Manager of the Metro cinema hall from the office of Russell Jones & Walker, solicitors for the Police Federation, threatening libel action against the cinema owner and her company if the screening went ahead. The screening was canceled.

Offices at Conway Hall (11th July, London), The Cornerhouse Cinema (17th July, Manchester) and The Lux (2nd August, London) each received a version of this fax about an hour before scheduled screenings and decided not to go ahead with the film. After the second time, the filmmakers and the UFFC started expecting cancellation and started arranging alternative venues. I finally saw the film at one of these alternative 'guerrilla' screenings on 16 August 2001 in London. People wanting to watch the film (having previously e-mailed Migrant Media, Ken Fero's production company) were invited to the Turnpike Lane underground station at a given time, where a representative from Migrant Media then took them to an undisclosed venue. The atmosphere at these screenings was electric. The screening of the film I attended was followed by a session where several UFFC members and people who had been in the film addressed the audience, thanked them for coming, handed out leaflets and announced various forthcoming demonstrations.

The aim of the fax and the consistency of its arrival at every cinema hall was, I think, singular – to prevent the film from being seen and to keep it out of the public domain. However, as it seems from the circumstances, this move on the part of the police federation backfired. During the months of July-August 2001, I tried to keep track of the media coverage of *Injustice*. I had a very hard time. The logic for the fax was 'common sense' media theory – there is a film, there are audiences. Stop the audiences from watching the film and it will disappear. What was not taken into account was 'inter-media' commentary (newspapers, radio, television, word of mouth) and even more intangible things such as gossip, rumour and sensation.

As Brenda put it to me in our conversation, "the police federation have shot themselves in the foot". Nearly every day there was some kind of report – in various newspapers, on the radio, the Internet, even in one instance on BBC's *Newsnight*, an extremely

'mainstream' television news programme. Usually framed as confrontations of 'good vs. evil', every article or report I could find was strongly in favour of *Injustice*, the UFFC and Migrant Media. The police federation was severely criticised and lines from the fax such as "Mr.Brian Douglas died of accidental baton injuries" were quoted (this line in particular was quoted on the BBC television programme) and ridiculed. A spate of press coverage followed the Conway Hall screening (11 July 2001), where after another fax, dramatically, the audience (including members of the UFFC) occupied the lights room, took over the premises and forced a screening for all 98 minutes of the film despite the Conway Hall management opening the skylight (making the screen difficult to see) and calling the police. Three separate reports appeared, exclusively on this incident on BBC Online. Other reports appeared in *The Guardian* and *The Evening Standard*.

Another interesting question arose in my discussion with Brenda Weinberg. The reasons publicly cited by the police federation for their threat of libel action against the cinema halls was that serving police officers were 'named' in the film, thereby making it defamatory. Brenda pointed out that in numerous newspaper reports during the course of the trials, these same officers had already been 'named' several times. Thus, such a strong reaction to the documentary was clearly inexplicable on these grounds. Thinking about it later, I figured out a possible answer to this problem. I realised that it wasn't just the fact that the police officers were being 'named'. That is only part of what they were objecting to. By their own admission, at the time of the Metro screening (and I now quote from the text of the fax) – "neither of our clients nor ourselves have seen this film". The fax goes on to mention the publicity – "very considerable publicity has been given both to the film and your screening". From the publicity they gather that the film tells the story of Brian Douglas and Ibrahima Sey among others. Further in the fax, they state that their client was "the custody officer at the time of that incident". From here they declare, "you will appreciate that the *portrayal* of Mr. Sey's death as murder will necessarily accuse our client Mr. Highton of being his murderer or at the very least [of] complicity in that murder" (emphasis mine).[3]

In my opinion, it is this 'portrayal' they fear – they are afraid not only of the fact of being 'named' but, more importantly, of the narrative of the film. What spurs them to action is the culmination and augmentation of the publicity with a particular type of media representation – one which deploys the affective dimensions of images and sounds to relay a narrative of injustice and victimhood. Based presumably on their assumptions of how documentary films work and assuming a certain notion of an 'audience' (in this case the 'Hypodermic Needle' media theory of audiences as gullible and passive consumers), they are frightened of the film, the story it will tell and how they think people will be effected by it. They presume that the narrative of the film will indict them more strongly than any number of strongly worded newspaper editorials can. Only that can explain the way in which the film was conscientiously followed and blocked at every public screening.

Thinking of these series of events as a 'flow', it is possible to argue here that a particular attempt at disruption instead caused an intense proliferation. This perspective further became clear in my conversation with Helen Bart, who was covering *Injustice* for the *Community Affairs* section of BBC London Live and had done a preview of the film, the morning of the Metro Screening. As per her account it was the attempt to stop the screenings of the film that made it a 'news-story' simply beyond a preview, both for her and for the other media which she commented on. Now this need not be taken in a negative sense.

Twice in our conversation Helen identified herself as part of the 'Black' press. Her remit at BBC London Live Radio is to cover matters related to African-Caribbean communities in London. She had genuine sympathy for the UFFC and as she described it, her commitment to bring what was happening with *Injustice* to the attention of her listeners had led her to each and every screening/demonstration/public event connected with the film and the UFFC. By the time I first met her at the picket outside the office of Russell Jones & Walker on 23 August 2001, she personally knew Ken, Brenda and several other people involved in the campaign.

To return to the problem I began with – it is important to think through the ways in which such a media flow can be framed as a description. It is further important to clarify this point in relation to our conception of a 'flow'. I do not want to suggest that there is never such a thing as 'domination'. Instead, what I want to point to is that mapping flows purely in these terms leads to two major problems. Firstly, it ignores a certain fragility inscribed into what can be better described as moments of domination, in what are more often than not, relations of representation. Secondly, the narrative of domination/resistance overwhelmingly privileges structure, leaving very little agency with the social actors it frames as 'marginal'. In my discussion with Brenda, I shared most of the ideas I had for my essay at that point in time, one of which was the relationship between the UFF Campaign and the media. I quote an excerpt from this part of the discussion:

Self: [...] I was thinking about the relationship between the media and your campaign as well as the film, in terms of creating a space which perhaps didn't exist before, where an issue like police violence can be discussed...

BW: [...] I suppose we are pushing that barrier. Deaths in custody is not a politically correct subject to be aired and yet, because we keep pushing and pushing at this barrier and courting the media then it is a topic of conversation that is out there. I mean, for instance,

Channel 4 were offered the film but wouldn't touch it because of its political ramifications, if you like. So they kept away from it. Yet, the news programme, I mean for a programme like *BBC Newsnight* to have done that interview and have named names, was I thought very radical. I was myself shocked when I saw it! [laughs].

While the news and other simultaneous media flows, as much as any other aspect of the social, do possess their own structures of power and institutional organisation, this does not necessarily preclude them from what Ernesto Laclau has called the "instability of the social" – these are equally spaces of conflicting articulatory practices where social struggles are constituted and not merely expressed as Castells would have it. Politically, these cannot be mapped on to a simple domination-resistance binary as most Cultural Studies writing would have it. Further, we must keep in mind Max Weber's fundamental point about the State's monopoly on legitimate violence within a specific territory. We can then see how the efforts of Ken, Brenda and others on the campaign, (as also the misfired efforts of the Police Federation to disrupt the flow of Injustice), contributes to the ways in which definitions of the state and civil society are circulated, inasmuch as it takes issue with the boundaries of what constitutes 'legitimate' violence. It puts this legitimacy within quotes, as it were, by placing an issue such as police violence as a "topic of conversation that is out there" (Brenda's words). These are often amorphous and extremely complex flows, which it is not always possible to track.

Let me move from here to the final part of my argument. Why have these media-tized flows become particularly important in the context of contemporary Britain? In order to answer this question, let us turn to the Macpherson Report released in February 1999, based on the inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, a Black British teenager. This is the first government report to acknowledge and indicate the widespread incidence of institutional racism in Britain, particularly in the police force. Following this report, a new definition of a racial incident has come into place, whereby a racial incident is that which is "perceived to be so by its victim or by any other witness". While this definition was envisaged as bringing a change in the way that the police are obliged to investigate racial violence, the stress on interpretation and perception makes the description of the act of violence a much more contentious issue.

Keeping this in mind, let us move to Laclau's point about representation – "no pure relation of representation is obtainable because it is of the essence of the process of representation that the representative has to contribute to the identity of what is repre-sented". Importantly, this points us both towards the process of representation and the process of representation. Representation is achieved through a process, or a series of contingent articulations, the result of which is never quite finalised, since to an extent it is always in process, depending on the context within which it is articulated. As regards acts of violence, the legislation following the Macpherson Report creates an institutional space recognising that openness, whereby the concrete content through which the particular act of violence is discursively constituted depends heavily on the descriptions generated around that event. It is for this reason, in my opinion, that media flows relating to acts of violence have become extremely important in contemporary Britain, since these flows are centrally constitutive of the conditions of visibility within which an incident will be framed and

seen. Importantly, the ways in which institutional and public practices attempt to frame and reframe a conflict-in-progress is always fraught with an element of contingency. In the course of this argument I have attempted a description of one such struggle. It is in understanding such conflicts and perhaps providing new frames within which these can be understood that academic practice can make a critical contribution.

NOTES
1. Manuel Castells, "The Space of Flows" in *The Castells Reader on Cities and Social Theory,* Ida Susser ed. (New York: Blackwell, 2002).
2. The UFFC is a coalition formed in 1997, which according to the same leaflet is "run by families and friends of those who have died in custody and include the campaigns for: Brian Douglas, Joy Gardner, Shiji Lapite, Ibrahima Sey etc.".
3. My sincere thanks to Ken Fero for providing me with a copy of the fax.

The Street Is The Carrier And The Sign

RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE

The things that need saying step out of people, just as people step out of houses and begin to walk the street. Messages find walls, images their imprints, bodies leave traces.

People and pictures, objects and subjects, machines and meanings, wires, cables, codes, secrets and the things that need saying out loud crowd the streets, become the streets, and move, overwriting old inscriptions, turning in on themselves, making labyrinths and freeways, making connections, conversations and concentrations out of electricity.

Intermittent surges of uninterrupted power supply the means to be mobile. Everything flows......
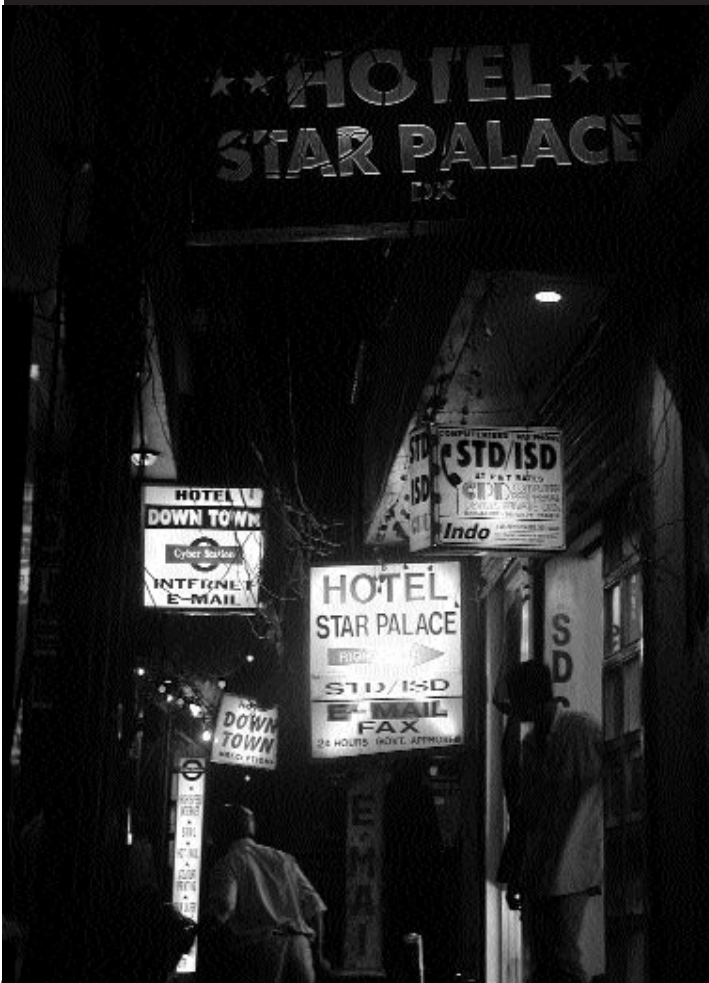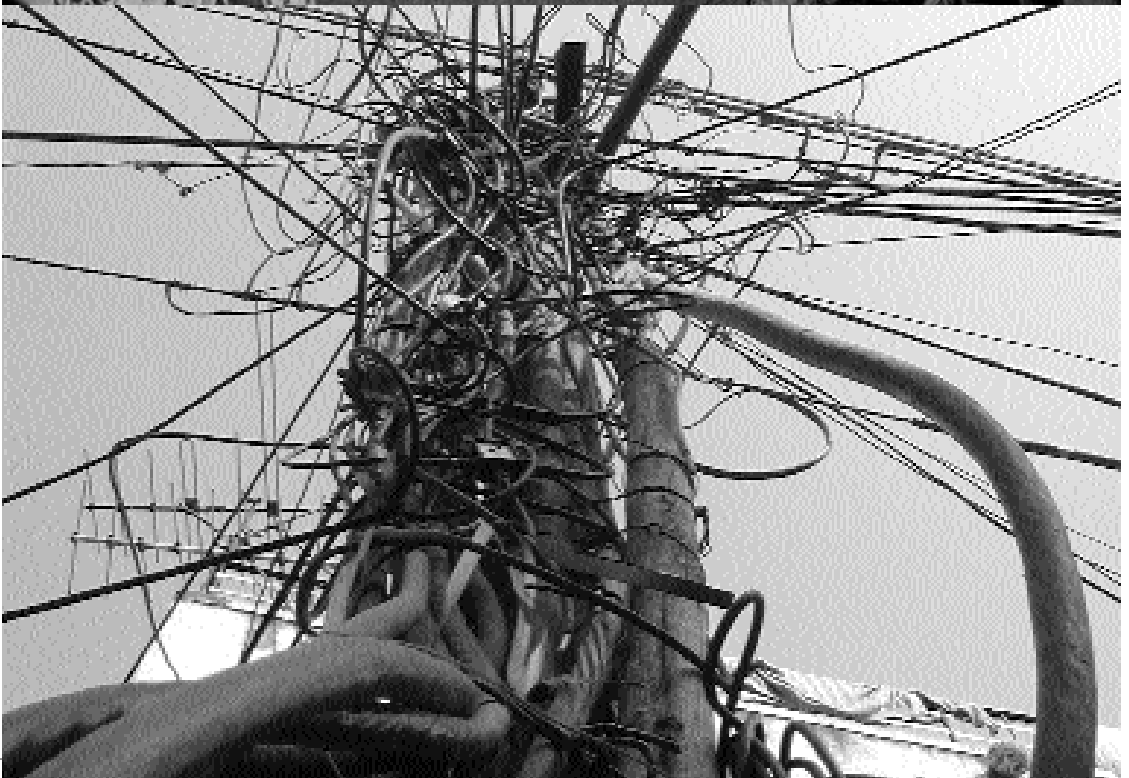
Data flows to destinations,
Traffic flows to a halt
Work flows to the plan.
Cash flows: Time flows: Commodity flows
Drains overflow.

Streets flow through the city.
The city slows down, the city speeds up.
The city stays awake to wires, to light, to phone calls, downloads, and announcements.

The city transmits the world, transmits *to* the world.

Channel 0 [Visibility]

0.1 ➔ The information ecology of a city does not emerge from a state of nature. The nature of a city is second nature.

0.2 ➔ A network of communication channels forms a mesh around and between city spaces when data is processed by acts of labour to create information-commodity clusters.

0.3 ➔ The pressure of high volume data flows continuously redraws the map of possible routes through the urban sprawl.

0.4 ➔ These flows are not without obstructions (gatekeeping devices, access anomalies, re-routers, traffic delimiters, filters, flytraps, firewalls, scramblers, censors/sensors).

FLEXI TIME

FIXED TIME ~

> 1 HOURS 10 RS
> MORE THAN
> 5 MINUTS
> 10 Rs Again
> Shakir
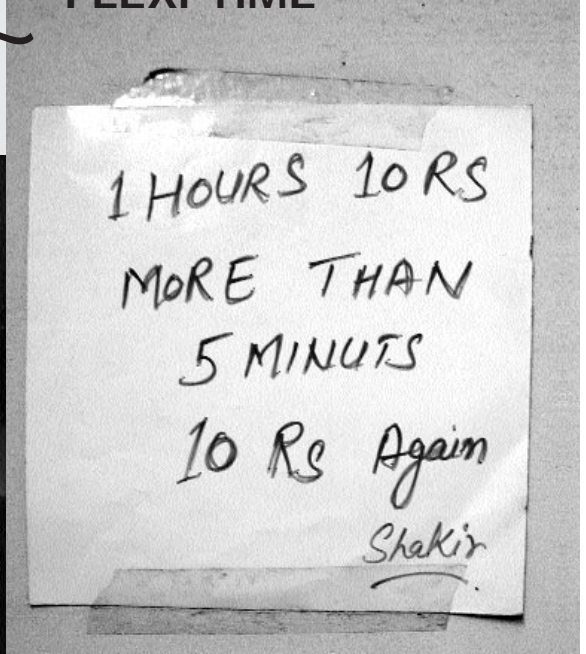
Media spaces are like railway stations and bus stands. They are provocations to effect (cognitive and affective) movements. They transport us to destinations even if these are just out of reach of the here and now.

We **see,**
hear,
read,
glance,
surf, so that our **'presence'** may get distributed across experiences, moments, information clusters.

To be in the city is to be in a state of perennial info-transience, between or in the midst of data transfers that we either solicit or that inveigle themselves into the field of our attention. There is no space bereft of a sign.

Buying a cinema ticket is a purchase of fixed time. The confines of a seat in the cinema, armrests, legspace, line of sight, screen distance and headroom represent a geometric configuration that also implies a transaction with a specified quantity of time.

The 'value for money' factor of a unit seat in the cinema is a function of the affectivity-time quotient of the film viewing experience. A viewer who leaves the theatre at the inter-val makes a judgement that says that the value of the space of the seat is worth only half the duration of the film viewing experience. Watching a film involves a cost benefit analysis based on an arithmetic of subjectivity and fixed time.

Becoming engrossed in a news-paper is a suspension of tempo-rality, as yesterday's world enters the precincts of today's headlines. The breaking news is always stale congealed reality.

REPAIR
SERVICE
REMOTES
AVAILABLE
COLOR T.V.
AUDIO
VIDEO CD
CONVERSION
MOBILE
PHONES
CORDLESS
PHONES
STEREOS

Switching channels on TV
Changing stations on the radio
Dialling destinations on the telephone
Working the night shift at a call centre
Following the roving footprints of satellites

To do any of the above is to enter zones of simultaneous trans-
mission and reception – of reality being processed even as it is
accessed through receiving devices. The processing of reality
into data may take the form of leisure or labour, consumption or
production, or a nebulous amalgam of both that characterises an
increasing proportion of daily life.

The two ends of such media transactions, the transmitting
end and the receiving end, are bound by simultaneity in a way
that makes whirlpools of concentrated time disperse across the
datascape.

Posters, banners, graffiti, official signs, municipal notices
and other inscriptions heighten the intensity of the cognitive
field of a city street. They layer and punctuate space, grabbing
attention on to their information matrices, just as transmissions
punctuate and thicken time.

The space-time coordinates of a city are a grid lain across
these media nodes. They plot combinatory variations of access,
usage and temporality which span the spectrum from the fixed
duration of a matinee show at the cinema to the flexible, by the
minute, individuated, log-in rate at a street corner cyber café. This
variation also encompasses a calibration of usage conditions,
ranging from the almost free access-free time end of the array
(hacks), to minimally commodified transactions of flexi-time (loose
cash changing hands in cyber cafés), to outright purchases at
fixed rates of fixed time (reserving seats at the cinema).

The media in a city may be surfaces on which we leave
messy fingerprints and tracks of all our navigations, but because
of the way in which time and space curve and fold as we switch
between media, it becomes possible, willingly or unwillingly, to
lose one's traces and to uncover one's tracks – to circulate, like
objects in the viewing glass of a complex multi-focal optical
instrument between zones of sharp focus, penumbras of incon-
sistent surveillance and shadow areas.

These slippages between (people) being known, and
(power) not-knowing, form public secret corridors and tunnels of
free space between citadels of bound time. Passwords travel
from hand to hand outside the city walls.

What is a space not?

A Cinema Hall is neither a Mass Rally nor a Home Theatre
A Public Call Office (PCO) is neither a Call Centre nor a Mobile Phone
A Poster is neither a letter nor graffiti
A TV screen is neither a command nor a request
A Cyber Café is neither a Public Place nor a Private Space

What can you not know about a space?

That which cannot be scanned,
digitised,
identified,
traced,
enumerated,
quantified,
scaled
or modelled.

You cannot know the <u>desire quotient</u> of the <u>person</u> in the <u>front stall</u>
of the <u>cinema</u> for the <u>third extra</u> in the <u>chorus line</u>
of the <u>second song</u> of the <u>current hit film</u>.

(fill in the blanks below)

You cannot know the _____ of the _____ in the _____
of the _____ for the _____ in the _____
of the _____ of the _____.

You cannot know the _____ of the _____ in the _____
of the _____ for the _____ in the _____
of the _____ of the _____.

SECTION 332, NEW DELHI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ACT, 1994
Licensing and control of theatres, circuses and places of public amusement: No person shall, without or otherwise than in conformity with the terms of a licence granted by the chairperson in this behalf, keep open any theatre, circus, cinema house, dancing hall, or other similar place of public resort, recreation or amusement.

Provided that nothing in this section shall apply to private performances in any such place.

WARNING

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LICENSED FOR PRIVATE HOME EXHIBITION ONLY. ANY PUBLIC PERFORMANCE, COPYING OR OTHER USE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

...**if**, information technologies imply an exponential multiplication of communicative acts, more people saying more things in more ways, **then**,

is communication freedom?

is communication freedom?

is communication freedom?

is communication freedom?

is communication freedom?

is communication freedom?

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is communication freedom?

is

communication

freedom?

Yes, if by communication we mean the free exchange of all signs in a network where all parties have potentially equal transmission capacities.

No, if by communication we mean the dictums of the state or corporations to obey, to agree, to contract, to prohibit, or to harvest information about a population for purposes outside their control.

Perhaps not, when communication is the sales pitch, the promissory note, or the fine print of a freshly cut deal.
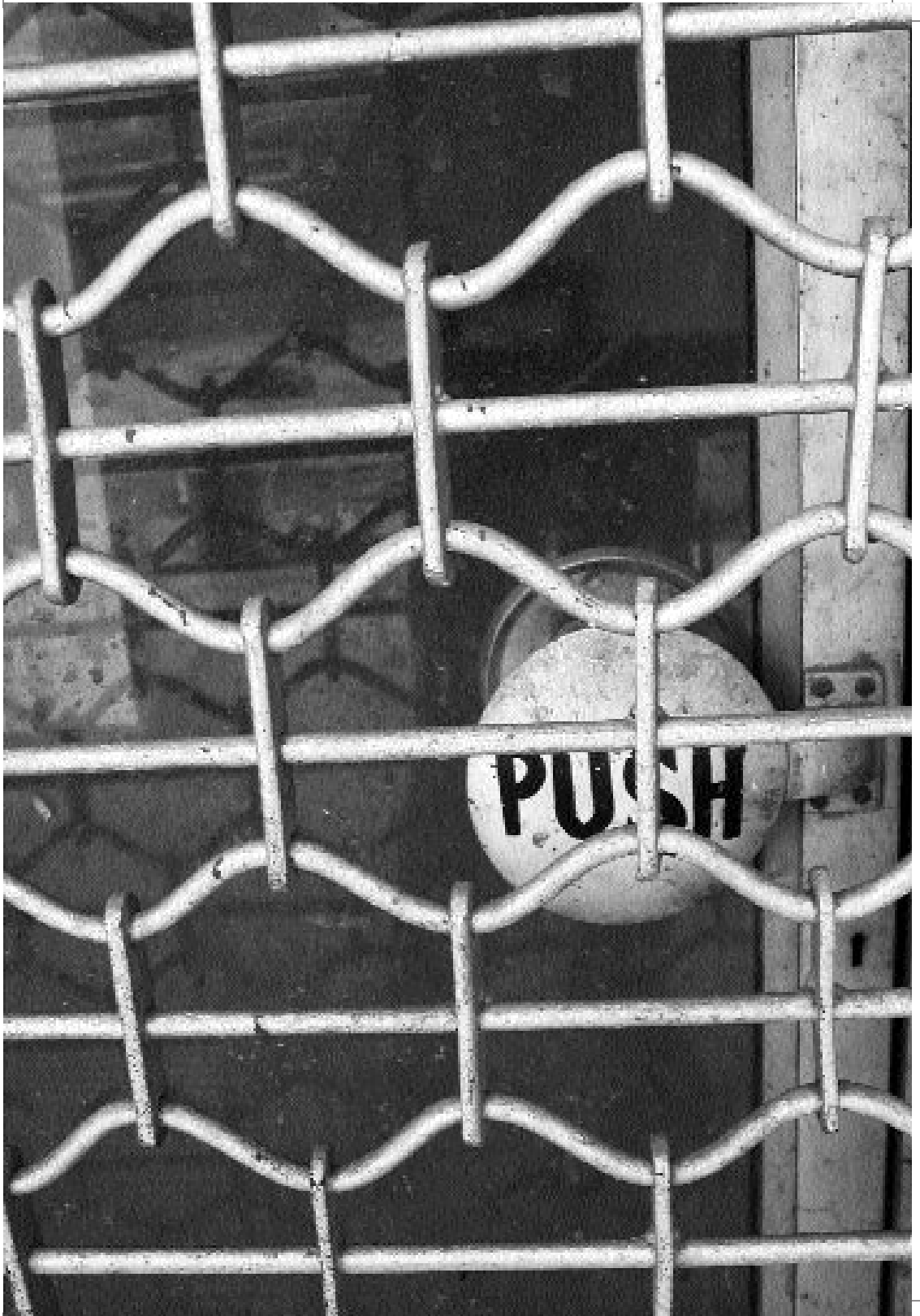
liquid media
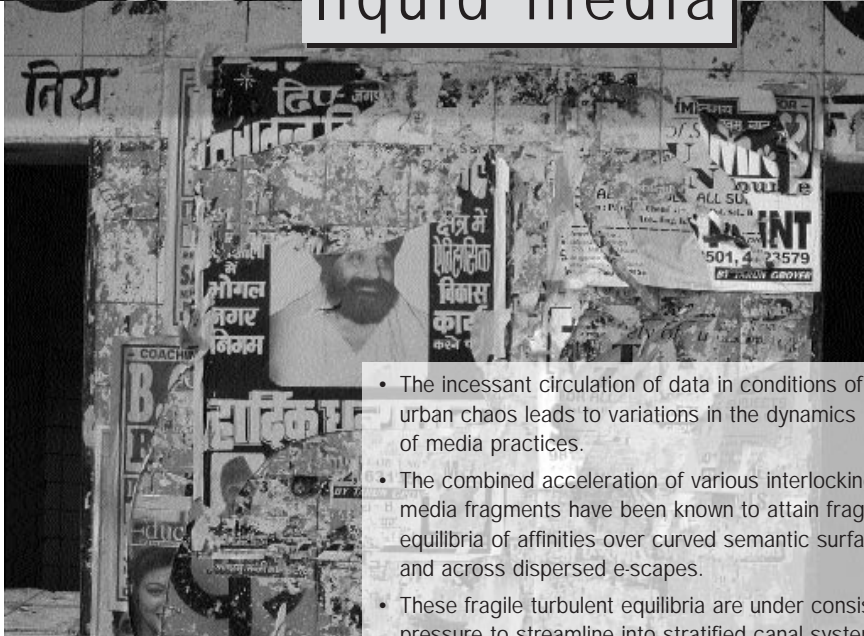
- The incessant circulation of data in conditions of urban chaos leads to variations in the dynamics of media practices.
- The combined acceleration of various interlocking media fragments have been known to attain fragile equilibria of affinities over curved semantic surfaces, and across dispersed e-scapes.
- These fragile turbulent equilibria are under consistent pressure to streamline into stratified canal systems and reservoirs engineered into place by high data dams.
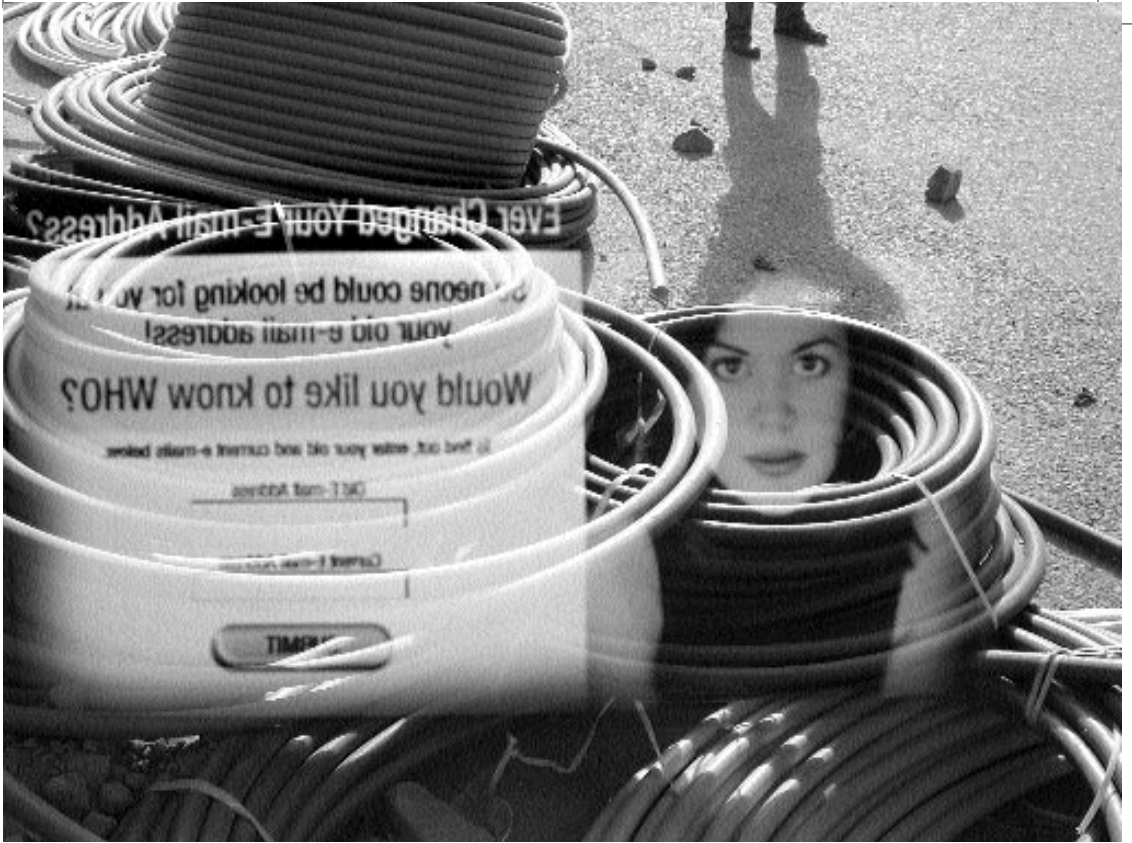
S I G N A L : N O I S E

The signal to noise ratio of daily life reworks its parameters in the marketplace of signs. Old data gives way to new data, radios switch stations; search engines change tracks, the network swells, ebbs and swells again to the pull of distant traffic. The city listens, notices, speaks.

At times such as these the media emergency and rescue services, spin doctors and node nurses go into overdrive. They send word across the networks that the images must be doctored, that redress must be done, and ensure that the things that need to be said are said, convincingly. The city is the emergency, the city is the rescue operation, and realities are wheeled into the casualty ward.

This is the daily life of the media in a city.

FOR

THOSE WHO LIVE IN CITIES

For those of us who live in cities, as inhabitants, travellers or neo-inhabitants, they are all we have. We imagine them, we experience them, we cannot run away from them. Life is not elsewhere. It is in the here and now. So we live it, live in our cities, and we think about how this is to be done.

How do we live the everyday; and how can we write about it? What can we say?

Being within the everyday of cities is to be in a state of constant movement between being *situated* and being *placeless*. Being within a world of the *familiar* becoming *unfamiliar*, a long continuum between *affinities* and *alterities*. Things that are, and are not, the same within and across cities. Within and across Beirut, Calcutta, Delhi, Lagos, London, Mexico City, Srinagar-Sarajevo – the cities that speak and are spoken to in this section.

The intensely subjective, everyday materiality of our expressions about the city are at all times in danger of being displaced by technocratic modes that articulate urban experience only to control it. These technocratic languages of control, of hygiene, of security, of scarcity, fall like shadows between us and our writing about our cities; they darken our forays into 'other cities'.

Cities leave us sleepless through violence. Our consciousness has to be attentive to the violence that cities bring in their wake. It is violence that forces us to look for signs of life in routines and textures of daily flows, and it is through violence that we consider the unfamiliar, and it is in the aftermath of violence that we awaken to our love for our spaces, and it is in the face of violence that we are constantly posed with the thought of other shared futures.

What can be the ethics of/for these times, and these places?

The act of writing all our cities works with this question by proposing an ethics of addressing our situatedness and placelessness.

For those of us who live in cities, the knowledge that orients us to them is not static or 'objective' but lived and practised through affirmations of the everyday. To write the city is to register these affirmations.

MONICA NARULA

LONDON

Seeing + Believing

LISA HASKEL

#01

#02

The camera appeared during autumn 2000, at the corner of Lawrence Way and Loughborough Road, at the top of this pole **(#01)**.

Highly visible to the slow moving and people using the bus stop on Brixton Road, this street corner was a gathering place for local (mainly black) young people.

I walked past this corner almost every day.

That summer there had been a series of street robberies.

I lived in a large block of flats at the end of the road **(#02)**. I am 36 years old, a woman and white.

On the street after dark I am alert, but don't want to be afraid.

#03

#04

My bag was stolen from me under the cameras of my own building's entrance **(#03)** by a group of boys, maybe 5 of them, all under 15 years old (I'm guessing). It was not a violent crime.

A few days later my friend, who shares my demographic profile, had her bag stolen from her right under the new camera.

The police ask us if we would like to talk to a counsellor from the 'Victim Support' agency.

The building that I live in was built by a charity in the 1950s – a utopian post-war social experiment for housing 'single people' cheaply; a block with 160 flats, one room each. In common with most 'social housing', the building is densely populated by people with a lot of problems. The elderly tenants tend to know each other and often go out in pairs. The building is unsuitable for children; families live in the local authority estate over the wall **(#04)** and we don't know them.

Generally speaking, young people are feared in this building.

LONDON

LONDON

#06

#05

A minute away is Myatts Fields. A lovely nineteenth-century park, originally the private grounds of the rich, but now a well used civic amenity. The houses around the park sell for a million pounds or more.

The residents around the park on Knatchbull Road **(#05)** have cars and back gardens. You don't see their (mostly white) kids. Mostly, they drive down Loughborough Road to reach their houses.

2000 was the height of the most recent property boom. House prices soared: now only well earning professionals can afford to own property in this area.

After the camera went up, the kids from the corner went to hang out across Brixton Road **(#06)**, around and about the 24-hour shop where food and drink is the least of what sells. Small packages traverse the counter and people lurking outside ask you if you have everything that you need.

The shop is much further from their homes, on a busy through-road where no one stops. The faces outside get younger and younger.

#07

The 'Crime Strategy Coordinator' for the local government, in the 'Strategy, Regeneration and Planning Department' sounded well meaning but jaded. She told me that they do get informed by the police when they put up cameras, and are some-times concerned about the displacement of people. But she didn't know of this specific case.

The corner **(#07)** stays empty, the young people stay milling around at the crack shop.

The camera casts the local population into polarised roles of potential victim and potential perpetrator.

The camera displaces the young and the black; mythical versions of safety are defined in favour of a privileged demographic.

The camera attempts to create an illusion of comfort, invisibility serving gentrification. The camera further fragments urban space, obscuring our shared social reality.

The camera is propaganda before it even generates an image.

LONDON

Shops on the Move

Sanjay Chaurasiya's *paan* cart is less than half a kilometre from my flat. Next to him is Ratanlal's tea cart. Sanjay came to Delhi from a village called Beesipura near Pratapgadha, and the tea *walla* Ratanlal from Sasaram. They both use pushcarts as shops for the simple reason that they can run away pushing their carts on first glimpse of the municipality worker. Although policemen patrolling on motorcycles often pass through the area, they do not pose such a danger because their *hafta* or weekly bribe is fixed. Ratanlal gives the police Rs. 500 per month and Sanjay Rs. 750...

Ten steps from them is Madanlal, who repairs punctures. Across the road, right in front, is cobbler Devideen, and some distance from all sits Santosh who repairs scooters and auto *rickshas*. Santosh came to Delhi from Sitamadhi some four years ago. Madanlal and Devideen come from a village in neighbouring Haryana. They have set up shop directly on the ground. By evening, the Kwality ice cream vendor, Brajender will also land up with his electronically illuminated, colourful fibre-body cart, names shining in English. In the evening also comes the boiled-egg seller Rajvati with her husband Gulshan and their three children. Behind her shop is an area cordoned off by a brick wall. The place is fairly secluded. The car *wallas* usually come in the night and ask Gulshan to get whisky or rum. Since all liquor shops are shut by this time, Gulshan picks up his bicycle and manages to buy in black a 'half' or a 'quarter' bottle from somewhere. Some customers also take chicken *tikka* in addition to the boiled eggs. That is available from Sardar Satte Singh's pushcart at the next red light. Gulshan gets that as well. He would sometimes be given a little liquor and a few bucks as a tip. Rajvati doesn't object to this, as English liquor for free is a million times better than buying local *tharra* from their own pocket. The pouch of *tharra* is adulterated, consumption of which can sometimes result in blindness or death...

This is also the space where the *ricksha* pullers stop to catch their breath or to pick up passengers. So the place witnesses a great deal of activity. Most of the *ricksha* pullers came from Bihar or Orissa. For some days, at a corner close to the wall, Tufail Ahmed who had come from Nalanda, Bihar had started sitting with his sewing machine. Since he had no fixed address, nobody would leave their clothes with him. So he would mostly repair the bags of schoolchildren or work on altering the clothes of *ricksha* pullers. He has not been coming for the last fifteen or twenty days. Some say he is ill, others think he has gone back to Nalanda, and yet others say that he came under a Blueline bus and died. His sewing machine is lying behind the police station. Similarly, Nattho and her husband, who sold *chhole-kulche* near Rajvati's cart, have been traceless for months now. Somebody said that Mangeram had cancer in his stomach and Nattho was completely ruined on account of his treatment and after his death she went off to live with a *kulcha walla* in the trans-Yamuna area.

This is the norm here. Almost a rule. The person who comes here every day can disappear all of a sudden, never to be seen again. Nobody will be sure about their whereabouts, so tracing them is not really a possibility.

Uday Prakash, "Shops on the Move"
(from *Hans*, December 2001)

PROHIBITED
Plucking of Flowers
Cooking, smoking
Pitching of tents, umbrellas
Loud speakers
Shooting
Washing of clothes
Swimming
Bathing, playing cricket
Sticking of bills
Cycles, football, hockey
Dogs except 8am to 5pm

Not to carry plastic bags in the garden

(Control room, Palika Kendra, Sansad
Marg, ND)
3348300, 3348301

DELHI

Spaced Out
A personal geography to México City

FRAN ILICH

The space of this city is basically not a rhizome, although it could have been, or it could become. This city is not a network is not a labyrinth is not a monster is not an octopus: this city is the only thing there is. Outside the city there is only life debris, human wastelands, accidental settlements that now call themselves citys, although in fact they could be called anything else. Use your imagination.

At once you have them all walking in the city: the pariahs and outcasts, the lonely writers coming from provinces and towns and small creepy citys which don't exist and which aren't contemplated by time itself. Maybe in their homeland citys which they already left in the past they could tune into the worst happenings of network tv: infomercials, telenovellas, propaganda and snow – there's always snow on tv. There are roaming tourists with guides in their hand, looking closely for things they will never find, following steps and instructions every moment only to find they will be forever a step too far. And bottom models from every miserable part of the country, trying to become top, but always missing that special something they could never become: sure sure sure, there's plastic reconstruction, genetic synthesis, but basically there is never a chance to find what it takes. This is a city that renews itself with every step, and still it's always the same – the only things that ever change are the faces among the masses, but even the masses are always the same. The map is fading and blending, and yet it's still the same. Everyone here is the replacement of a constant in the equation.

And what to say about bored entrepreneurs with the leisure magazine at hand, looking for the strip show of their dreams, the revolutionary tourists searching for a reality which is as much a fake as Big Brother or Real world, and which they might find if they try hard enough – and then they will be able to buy it, consume it: be happy for as long as the pay per view fits in the agenda of their dreams. Will the revolution be available for tourists?

This city is a mess. The mess is the biggest in the world (if this is still the biggest city in the world, which i really doubt). The city goes all the way till it ends. And it never ends. There's no life outside the city, and as far as the natives of the city know there will never be: "outside of México City everything is Cuautitlán". That is, they don't exist, because Cuautitlán is a city only as big as a couple of streets, people, the name of a city, but nothing else. That's it.

When you first arrive here you want to eat it all: the city. It's an attitude problem. Behave. A one-line command. Don't play games. The only one eating here is the city itself. You are only half a byte. And the worst part is you have to feel proud of being a byte here. Is as much as you will get.

Many people have tried the ABC, the XYZ, the subway at night, a night at the pyramids, the Zocalo square, Polanco eurochic. Think Burroughs with a gun in his hand, playing William Tell with his wife soon to be a casualty of life... or Jack Kerouac to unlock the key to Tristessa (that post-aztec prostitute on drugs). But it doesn't have to be that sweet, just look at the downtown streets: that California girl taking a nap on the sidewalk since who know when (completely wet on *orina*) probably dreaming of mexican nights and spanish knights: her wallet disappeared into a slum, the american passport already on sale, crowds walking past trying to take a glimpse of her body. She passed away on the forever street. Like that. Like the aztec guy who didn't find home and never will, and who just insists on coming day after day to cry pray and demand to the virgin what he must have: he's so immersed in this like nothing else mattered as people walk by and the city gets a day older. And still he will always be perceived as an indigenous person by a society as classist as this. And to have native origins here is like a dead end street, we are still giving our gold mines to the foreign conquerors for free. Colonialism really never left these streets.

One of the most important things in my daily life is geography. Geography as in vacuum space, worm holes, cyberspace, the persons mapping my social environment and the social tissue which keeps (virtual or material) communities together or apart. That is, as in choose your own, do it yourself. You get the point, the city is not a to b to c. It's a map where you can choose where exactly to land, and in which also you can set your own preferences. The city gives you a lot of options: so please don't go default. Create your own map.

Thinking D.F. (that is .mx city) as in plain geometry is a no no no, you have to forget maths, kill the facts. Do you connect the dots? One of the first thing you notice here, it's the traffic problems, the cars, the people, the smog, the never-ending streets. Sometimes i wonder if there is a browser to navigate this mess, and for sure there is, let's call it metro for now, even if it is not the only one which exists. But even the metro system, it's a class space, like in a plane, you have tourist and coach. Let's imagine the subway as the fastest speed, but still it will only take you so far, no matter if there are as much as a 175 stations,

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11 lines and almost 300 kilometres of rails. You can almost say the architects of the city are fans of Fritz Lang and his *Metropolis*, because basically the underground of the city belongs to the lower class, student, young professional, meanwhile the highways belong to the people with cars and a neurosis they can afford and nurture in style. This said, that is why the strikes and manifestations always happen on city streets, because the people coming from every possible town to complain know that the least thing to disrupt is city traffic. They know their target. And so they came from their own lands of poverty, to this capital city which was modelled as those capital citys of the past, where all the best had to be a single royal magnificent city, and they find another kind of poverty based less on the absence of material issues. And so they crucify themselves in front of buildings, and get naked in front of cameras; meanwhile the traffic jams, and *chilangos* curse god because of traffic, and taxi drivers say these people should go away because they will never find what they're looking for, they should return to their towns to work... Although the real target commutes on the sky, on helicopter taxis, private owned. They wouldn't care too much to ride streets but their own: the ghettos of fashion, business anorexia, and so on.

I remember George Shirk, editor-in-chief of *Wired News*, saying that maybe e-commerce might prosper here, because traffic was such a thing that people might prefer to stay home and shop online. i mean, even the air has so much traffic that the city airport will be moved to a nearby state. And the city is so big that many other citys from other states are part of the city map, this city wants to eat the country itself. Imagine crossing a street and being in another state... and i do wonder about the edge, what it means to live in the edge. Sometimes when i'm on a plane, about to land on mx, i see the absolute edge, the final street, the last house, the absolute wall of this monstrous cell. In parts of the edge they have a wall, maybe because they are afraid to be in touch with the wilderness, lakes, maybe there's some ancient aztec spell. Maybe it's just a wall saying this is the end: outside there's nothing left: this is the world: one step more and you'll fall all the way down till you see the elephants, and Atlas carrying the world for as long as he can.

And i remember Pit Schultz saying that this city has no centre indeed, there are centres everywhere, like in fractal geometry, where every couple of steps away you will find a centre with its own economy somehow depending on an upper level of the structure, yet independent on its own, even if by illegal means.

This is such a city. The city i choose to live. A place which can be transmuted into a rhizome by means of wormholes, internet, subways and a personal geography based around notions of cyberspace. If you search ok, you will find the link; if you try to swallow it, you'll get burned out. The city is the only thing there is. You don't exist.

Past Places/Future Spaces
Reconstructing post-war Beirut

YASMEEN ARIF

Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
Change plus vite, helas! Que le coeur d'un mortel);
(The old Paris is no more,
the shape of a city changes faster,
alas, than a human heart);
Paris change! Mais rien dans ma mélancholie
N'a bougé! Palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,
Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie,
Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.
(Paris changes! But nothing in my melancholy has moved!
New palaces, scaffolding, blocks, old, settled districts,
everything for me becomes an allegory
and my dear memories are heavier than boulders!)

Excerpt from Charles Baudelaire's Le Cygne

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This essay is an ethnographic fragment depicting a place and the alterities it nurtures when contoured around a spatial imagination. The place is called Saifi, a neighborhood in Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon. Framed in the context of post-war reconstruction, the spatial imagination that maps Saifi has two interlocutors – first is the imagination embodied in a Master Plan that blueprints a rationally produced vision of reconstruction in a war-scarred cityscape. The second is an embodied, lived experience of a place as it evolves from a benign past, followed by violent turbulence, to an ambiguous present of transformed geographies which will eventually develop into a future environment. In both, I have tried to fathom the sense and contingency of the present, one that is fleeting and transitory, in a rapidly shifting and changing spatio-temporal urban landscape.

Saifi is situated at the southeast corner of downtown Beirut, the city's erstwhile core. Saifi practically straddles the Green Line, the main wartime dividing boundary/interface that runs through downtown Beirut, between Christian East Beirut and Muslim West Beirut; however, Saifi's position on the eastern side of the line makes it a part of Christian East Beirut. Although actual warfare in downtown Beirut petered down to occasional shelling and rampant sniping after the first two years of the 15-year Lebanese civil wars, the Green Line continued to be a principal territorial marker of a divided city. Since 1989, when a formal ceasefire declaration bought an ostensible end to the cycle of violence (without any particular resolution of the underlying hostilities), this division is not protected or maintained by armed means. What has remained, nonetheless, is the habit-forming remembrance of hostile boundaries in a city space that no longer has ostensible barriers, caused by mappings of fear, suspicion and alienation.

By the time the ceasefire was declared, the built environment in downtown Beirut was and looked a war-scarred cityscape – abandoned, burnt, shelled buildings, dense undergrowth, frequent sights of squatter inhabitation in some ramshackle buildings. As a part of downtown Beirut, Saifi bore the same scarring, yet through the war years a few tenacious people, whether by choice or compulsion, continued to occupy, sometimes intermittently, their homes and businesses here.

Apart from Saifi's positioning within a divided and devastated city centre, its location interacts with the ongoing (since 1994) formal reconstruction of downtown Beirut – a mammoth project considered the largest of its kind to be undertaken by a private real estate company (REC). Downtown Beirut, an area roughly a square mile in size, is now owned, rebuilt, restored and developed by SOLIDERE (the REC), an effort that has unleashed a spatial imagination of the site as a controversial icon of political, economic and social rejuvenation for the city and, eventually, the nation. Reconstruction here is an imagination that the planners conceive and implement as an appropriate bridging of a destructive past with an emerging future in a built environment, a bridging that will blend in a traditional landscape to a state of the art city centre. Saifi's place in this plan has been that it was "chosen, to represent, in the Master Plan that blueprints the future city centre, a 'traditional urban village', thereby earning the attention accorded to a Special Conservation Area". The criteria behind this selection were ostensibly Saifi's continued existence as a coherent neighbourhood throughout the war years as well as its architectural language.

The architectural texture in Saifi was considered consistent with a traditional vernacu-

lar style of building – the quaint red tile roof, triple-arch windows, wrought iron balcony balustrades and so on which made up a streetscape rhythm and an intimate pedestrian atmosphere which the developers found appropriate to cull out and preserve as part of the authentic flavour in the new city centre. Apart from the conservation of this traditional environment, the Master Plan also proposes to transform Saifi into a Housing Project area whereby new apartment blocks will be built, matching the surrounding architecture – homes which will be aimed at young urbane professionals who will presumably be professionally involved in the new city centre or around. All in all, Saifi is to be showcased as a picturesque urban village, combining modern apartment facilities ensconced in a traditional Mediterranean environment. The SOLIDERE Information Office displays a miniature model (*maquette*) of Saifi with an exact reproduction of the buildings, the colours that will be used on the facades, the parks and its benches, and squares and walkways that will be laid down.

Michel de Certeau talks about the "voyeur-gods", i.e. the planners and technocrats whose projected inscriptions on a cityscape are a function of their aloofness, their distance

and separation from those whose daily intertwinings with the same spaces map out altered trajectories of city spaces. In Downtown Beirut, if the Saifi *maquette* images a planner voyeur's vision, the people of Saifi articulate an experience refracted through modes of intimacy that open up a different spatial and temporal cartography, one which is radically different than those of the planners'. I present below a few of these impressions. They are responses to our queries placed within the context of divided socialities produced by war or planned agendas of reconstruction, embedded in a 'present' landscape constituted by a surrealist assemblage of buildings continuing to bear marks of war damage, interspersed by gaps where structures have been torn down, or construction sites and scaffolding, as well as a few brightly painted facades of restored buildings.

Q: How do you remember the area before the war? How was Saifi before? What are the images and impressions that you still carry from then?
George Antoine: I wish that things would go back to the way they used to be – it was the

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alive centre. It was like the Champs Elysées – here was a whole world in this small spot. Small shops, *patisseries*, taxi stands, buses, everything was there in the centre. It was the *foyer*; everything was here in the beginning, the meeting point of everything. That does not exist now.

Rania: There used to be many more people then. Services (local taxis) used to come and go. Our house here used to be like a station – people we knew used to stop by for a drink, wait here if they have to go somewhere else, have a coffee, go shopping during breaks. [It was] *ahlan wa sahlan* and *maa al salame* [welcome and goodbye].

Farzy: Here it was full of life. You couldn't say day from night – all categories of people were here, all nationalities. If you are walking on the street, you brushed shoulders with the passers-by and you would get all languages. Now things have really changed. Life was really nice here. At 3:00 am, we would go and have breakfast – we would find shops open – people would be walking on the streets. There were people from all religions in this building and they used to intermarry. Today, they would have to calculate before doing that.

Almost every response to this query had a common intonation. For those living in Saifi, it resonated a sense of a core, the node, the heart from which the city and its life emanated. A word like *foyer* would suggest the hearth, the fireplace in the homestead. As a symbolic description of a city space, it would suggest that place in the city which served as the locus where everyday life would begin and move on. Many referred to the taxi terminal as an analogue of being connected as well as being the nodal point of the city's network of mobility. This clearly instilled the sense of being at the core of a city. There was a bustling, busy ambience, crowds and incessant movement – all of which created an atmosphere most obvious by its absence after the war. In addition, the isolation that the Green Line imposed on the area sharpened the contrast by rendering what used to be a core into an inaccessible island bounded off by hostile territorialisation. The remembrance of a surrounding, an ambience, and its subsequent loss also carries with it a retrospective reflection of the quality of community and urban life.

Flowing through many of the comments is the experience of an urban core which also conflates into an idea of shared space. For most, the sharing of a core also meant subversion of any separating identities, further leading to the idea that a conglomeration of diverse identities across a shared place captured a national spirit, one that reflected the authentic Lebanese disposition.

Q: How do you feel about the present? What are your feelings about your surroundings? How do you see your work and life now especially with reference to SOLIDERE?

George Antoine: We have to see what SOLIDERE will give us. We have to wait. But I hope it will be the way it used to be before. Like it used to be in the past – the meeting point of all Lebanese. And their reconstruction plan? Some flavour from the past and some modern ideas for the future. We will never have the old Beirut. The spirit is lost. Now Beirut is a new city. Even though we are trying to make it look like the way it was with the restoration, it is becoming a new modern city. An extra-modern city. They are building a new city while still considering it an old one. For me, things have changed. And I don't think we will ever go

back to the old way. It will still remain the centre, but this time it is going to be the business centre. It won't be the *centre de rencontre* (centre for meeting) for the Lebanese, whether we like it or not.

Abu Farid: It was breathtaking here. What can I tell you, it was very, very nice… Everything has changed here now, I don't know where is where. They were planning to wipe it all out. But there was a big protest about it. You know, SOLIDERE was trying to take advantage of the situation and trying to destroy everything. We stayed here when the destruction started. We were used to the shelling. So when they were blowing down the buildings that was nothing new for us – the same sounds. There is no future for me here, I am getting old. I do not care even if they build it in gold. Twenty-five years of my life vanished, gone. I used to be young and now I am old, whatever they do I will not benefit. We have spent all our time in this place – but what use it is for us? No, for me, earlier life used to be nicer, we were happier.

Mrs. Nabti: After they (SOLIDERE) finished the demolition we went down to look around and I stood there in front of the past and all I could see was the image even though it was empty. You know how one can be shocked? I was shocked.

While there are a variety of ways in which SOLIDERE or the processes of reconstruction permeate 'experience' in Saifi, Antoine's impression of the new rebuilt city centre as one which cannot replace or substitute the old one is an opinion which is echoed by most. His perceptions are clearly linked with the sociality that the area provided, something which has disappeared with the destruction and which a newly built environment cannot really achieve.

While SOLIDERE and reconstruction are a focal point of reference, one of the issues that Antoine does not mention (but implies when he talks about the loss of the old city), is the destruction that is attributed not only to the war but also to the reconstruction operation. Some were persuaded by our queries to trace a memory map of the buildings of Saifi and its surroundings. The memory map is of a spatial temperament – the intangible sensation of a built environment that does not always get identified by the structures themselves but rather an overall image of a space that has been embraced and nurtured by a remembrance. It is this sensation that appears to underlay the experience of disappearance and loss.

The destruction by SOLIDERE appears to have generated the impression of an erasure of the old downtown Beirut, one that appears to be more vivid and complete than the wartime devastation. It is expressed as a disappearance that has often resulted in a seeming lack of orientation, a sense of losing one's bearings in an unfamiliar place. However, it is the loss of one's bearing in the familiar that sharpens the feeling of disorientation into estrangement. This disappearance and estrangement do not seem to be consoled by the possibility of a retrieval of familiarity with the reconstruction of old neighbourhoods and surroundings. This irrevocability articulates the realisation for most of the older residents of Saifi that their time has passed, and if there is going to be a rebirth of downtown Beirut, it will be too far in the future, beyond their own lifetime.

Abu Farid: For us, the older generation who grew up together, no matter what will happen to the centre now we don't care. What we care for are the years that are gone from our

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lives. Now, after the war, we look back and we realise that all the places we remember are no longer there – they are desert land now.

Mrs. Jabber: During the war, I was alone in the apartment, alone, no food no water, no nothing. The *Kata'ib* also used to live here and they helped me a lot – they got me water, food, meat, butter everything. They were very nice and I started cooking for them. Now there is no one left in the neighbourhood. I am alone in the apartment, I am lost. I don't like it now, but they say it will be the best area. They have built this building here and all the surrounding houses here were demolished. We were happy earlier because we had neighbours. Sixty years with very nice neighbours. Some of them left, some died, there is no one here anymore.

The remembrance of a pristine, benign neighbourhood before the war provides a further contrast to the present. The disappearance of the environment, of a spatial familiarity and security is strongly connected to the loss of a neighbourhood quality that the environment is believed to have nurtured, in other words, a community life. The militias, (e.g. the *Kata'ib* for Mrs. Jabber), in spite of their disruptive influence had gained a sense of inclusion, perhaps on account of their long presence in the confines of a familiar neighbourhood as well as their role in protecting the area. Mirium once said "It was war, but we were safe" – an important statement that compares even the travails of war as 'safer' than the incursions of the present. Familiarity, the predictability of one's environment, socially and materially created the foundations of Saifi's remembrances even through the war, and this retrospectively provides a sharper sense of present disappearance and loss.

Q: What does the future hold? How do you think about it?

Antoine: For me this was the centre of the country. And I hope it will become better but I don't think so with this new system we are following. It is going to be centre for a rich majority. People who will pass by will be transient, curious just to look – it won't be the city that existed before – rich, poor, ministers, non-ministers, big, small, the medium – it was a mixture. Everybody used to come here. The whole city was a pedestrian area. Now we don't rely on the pedestrian traffic anymore. Earlier, they used to do the whole round of the city on foot. Earlier, we too used to go everywhere by foot.

Farzy: The future that is put on the *maquette* is very good and organised and would be developed but is this development reflected in the people? It is no longer for the popular class – the surrounding is of SOLIDERE, and SOLIDERE itself is not for the middle class. They tell me you need a million dollars to live here. Or get out. It says it all. If the cloning of people is successful and if they want to get people here after they own the palaces, it will be another world, a different world from ours.

André: This street with the funeral parlours will close down. You see, SOLIDERE is appropriating. Have you seen the *maquette*? Is it possible that such a nice and elegant *maquette* will have coffin makers in this street? One should be reasonable – they won't keep this kind of business here. They come and they create obstructions for us so that you say you want to leave. For example – if a property owner wants to come and recuperate, SOLIDERE says that you have to pay this and that...

When the frame of temporal reference is the future, experience enters the realm of the potential, the possible, the eventual, unknown yet but metonymically connected to experience so far. Antoine's observations here maintain the tone that he had expressed earlier when he talked about his impressions of SOLIDERE and the manner in which SOLIDERE was shaping the 'present'. He phrased the rebuilding of the city centre as the construction of a new Beirut, one in which the most prominent quality of the older city centre, its ability to nurture a meeting place for citizens without any social barriers, will be missing. He expresses a similar opinion here, but the interesting twist is his representation of this quality in a strongly spatial anchor – the pedestrian quality. He equates walking to a simple notion of spatial accessibility so as to represent a quality of familiarity and openness. It is as if walking is an intimate mode of negotiating with a space and with those who participate in that space, such that its lack indicates an alienation and a distancing, not only from the space itself but also from those with whom the walk brings into contact.

This distancing then lends itself to the idea of an exclusivity – downtown Beirut becomes Beirut Central District: a new, inaccessible domain which will not encourage intimate 'walking' contact but will allow only fleeting curiosity. The insular mode of approaching the city centre with cars cannot substitute for the physical contact of walking. The exclusive locale then invites only a few who are no longer the participants of a popular place but who are part of the exclusive ambience of a transformed space. Antoine calls them the 'rich' – those who have been able to retain their rights to the centre either by financial might or by qualifying as new participants of an exclusive business/social environment.

Farzy adds a category of outsiders to the rich as the favoured new denizens of downtown Beirut. Interestingly, his definition of the new users suggests that SOLIDERE has not only imposed a transformed, alienating and distanced space of a new Beirut Central District

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on to the domesticated, familiar and intimate downtown Beirut; it has also effected an 'othering' of this space by rupturing the link between a place and its genuine participants. It will no longer be the city centre of the Lebanese; it will be the business district for outsiders, most likely foreigners. Clearly, the intentions of the planners to evoke a pedestrian quality of intimate urban living in Saifi does not find resonance in these impressions; the new, potential pedestrians lack authentic belonging.

Farzy however, goes on to add another dimension when he talks, somewhat in jest, about the 'cloning' of people. It is perhaps a hint, a metaphoric verbal gesture which lies at the tip of a submerged consciousness about the artificiality and lack of authenticity that the reconstruction seems to evoke. For some of the older users of downtown Beirut, the potential of the new Beirut Central District is not interpreted without a sense of incredulity; its proportions of grandeur in technology, design, planning, the suggestions of superior business environments, the immaculate landscaping are all elements of places which are 'somewhere else' but not 'our own'.

A sense of disassociation for those who look upon the newness as alienating is inevitable; a point which is well emphasised by referring to the *maquette* or the architectural scale model which the SOLIDERE Information Services use to display a 'virtual' image of the future Saifi. In its potentiality to trigger a visualisation of the future, this model is a significant prop with which to embody a speculation about the future. In this portrayal there is no place for any artefact that does not fit, that does not work to add to the ideal. In André's interpretation of this ideal image, suggested to him by the model, he does not see a place for the artefact of a funeral parlour. His fear of erasure in the present has a visual prop – the *maquette*. In a purely tactile sense, it is a metaphor for a future which is 'clear' in what it represents and what it does not. His sense of impending disappearance has achieved a sort of a deification in the 'sculpture' (the model), so much so that he is an absence in its creation.

Life in Saifi in the present is about a dismantled neighbourhood. The sense of a disappearing sociality is intertwined with the apprehension of a new and imposed material surrounding. The nostalgic angst in Saifi is acute, not only because of a rapidly transforming environment but also because the future environment is uncannily close and visible. On the one hand there is a sensual remembrance that maps out an experienced environment, on the other there is a rationally composed spatial imagination that compiles an iconographic landscape in which Saifi stands as a contributing element. Both representations are mutual alterities. Their simultaneous presence marks the heterogeneity and multiplicity that a facet of my understanding of recovery seeks to undertake.

This essay has been extracted from a larger project of studying post-war reconstruction/recovery, which involves several ethnographic sites, documentation of narratives, their context and relevant theoretical anchorings. The fieldwork was conducted over 1997 and 1998. My attempt here is to present a sketch which suggests an impression, and thus not a resolute articulation of the given issues.

NOTES

See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

These conversations were conducted with the help of Zeina Misk, who at the time was a graduate student at the American University of Beirut. This and subsequent names have been changed.

George Antoine owns a Library/Publishing house; he is in his mid-fifties and appears to be comfortably off. Antoine has been living in Saifi since 1965-66, but he was not in residence during the war. However, his work and office remained operational throughout, except for a month or two when the front-line fighting had been intense. He had contemplated withdrawing his business from Saifi but with his offices and stocks still trapped in the building, he abandoned the idea. The comparatively modern building built in the style of the '60s, in which his offices are located, looked recently renovated.

Rania (about 50) and her mother, Mrs. Nabti (74), live in another recently renovated apartment in an adjacent building. Mrs. Nabti has been living in Saifi for over 50 years, ever since she was married. Rania had a job in a nearby office. Both mother and daughter said they had lived in their apartment throughout the war, except for brief escapes, especially when the fighting was intense, but never for more than two months.

Farzy runs a boarding facility located in a now ramshackle building. He was forced to leave his hotel in 1975, when it was taken over by militants and his hotel has served as their base ever since. He came back in 1994 to reclaim his tenancy and continues to run the hotel, although now it has become more popular as a temporary home for construction workers, a large number of whom stay and work within the Beirut Central District.

Abu Farid and Mirium are an elderly couple we met frequently in our visits to Saifi. Farid runs a makeshift shop in the stairwell of the dilapidated building in which they live, selling bread, candy, cigarettes etc. to the construction workers that frequent the area. Before the war, he had a flourishing business as proprietor of a photography studio in downtown Beirut. Without adequate resources, they could not move out of Saifi, neither during the war nor later when living conditions in their building became very difficult.

Mrs. Jabber, the oldest resident we talked to in Saifi, was a frail lady well into her eighties, living with a housemaid, in an apartment located in a recently renovated building.

The *Kata'ib* were one of the principal Christian militia groups involved in the wars. They had been a significant presence in protecting the eastern flank of the Green Line. Saifi appeared to have been under their protection and surveillance at the time.

André, an elderly gentleman, looks after a funeral parlour located off Said Akl Street, in an alley whose ground level was mostly occupied by funeral parlours which have now been closed down. André never lived in Saifi but he continues to come into the shop regularly, alone, awaiting no apparent business. The owners were negotiating with SOLIDERE and will soon give up the property.

BEIRUT

SRINAGAR-SARAJEVO

□ ═ ⊚ weather.com – LocalWeather – Srinagar, I... ═ ⊟ ⊟

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☐ 6

Current Conditions   ⊛ ⊜ ⓘ ⑦

Srinagar

Allstate.   Your car, your home, your choice.

[SMOKE]   Smoke

70°F   Feels Like: N/A

UV Index: 2 Minimal
Wind: From the Southeast at 9 mph
Dew Point: 48°F
Humidity: 46 %
Visibility: 2.49 miles
Barometer: 30.09 inches and steady

Averages & Records   Detailed Forecast   Hour by Hour Detail
Temperature Converter
Enter a number and click on the "Calculate" button.
☐ °F — ☐ °C [Calculate] [Reset]

10 Day Forecast   ⊛ ⊛ ⊜ ⓘ ⑦

Srinagar
Last Updated Sunday, February 17, 2002, at 10:40 AM Indian
Time (Sunday, 12:40 AM EST)

			Hi (°F)	Lo (°F)
Feb 17		Partly Cloudy	51°F	33°F
		UV Index: 4 Low		
		Partly Cloudy	48°F	34°F

⊚ Internet zone

□ ═ ⊚ weather.com – LocalWeather – Sarajevo,... ═ ⊟ ⊟

◀ Back   Forward   Stop   Refresh   »   e

Address ⊚ http://www.weather.com/weather/local.   ▸ go

☐ 6

Current Conditions   ⊛ ⊜ ⓘ ⑦

Sarajevo

Allstate.   Your car, your home, your choice.

[FOG]   Fog

34°F   Feels Like: 34°F

UV Index: 0 Minimal
Wind: calm
Dew Point: 34°F
Humidity: 100 %
Visibility: 0.12 miles
Barometer: 30.36 inches and steady

Averages & Records   Detailed Forecast   Hour by Hour Detail
Temperature Converter
Enter a number and click on the "Calculate" button.
☐ °F — ☐ °C [Calculate] [Reset]

10 Day Forecast   ⊛ ⊛ ⊜ ⓘ ⑦

Sarajevo
Last Updated Sunday, February 17, 2002, at 8:40 AM Central
European Time (Sunday, 12:40 AM EST)

			Hi (°F)	Lo (°F)
Feb 17		Mostly Cloudy	51°F	34°F
		UV Index: 2 Minimal		
		PM Showers	51°F	37°F

⊚ Internet zone

Imagining Srinagar-Sarajevo

ABIR BAZAZ

The City is the memory of massacres. I hope words grow out of Gowkadal, Hawal, Burzalla, Zakura – cancerous, as Genet's love of the Palestinians…

Srinagar is a city in mourning. Who remembers Srinagar in winter? *The winter sky is a Hiroshima sky.* The city is the martyrs' graveyard at Eidgah. The life of Srinagar is mourning. *To recover that memory, or to forget?* The brightness of the sky in Srinagar is cruel. The midnight soldiers demand forgetting… They promised us flags of Fatah, they tantalised us with Jerusalem? But where did the Palestinians go?

I am a Kashmiri Palestinian; Srinagar Sarajevan. I no longer live in Srinagar but I see Srinagar as the absolute present of freedom. Of Srinagar's singularities I can never forget the terrible Beauty of the Srinagar Intifada. Srinagar's Rivers of stones. *Why talk about this revolution? It too resembles a long drawn out burial, with me following the funeral procession from afar.*

Naipaul writes of Srinagar that it sleeps through winter… in the winter of 1990, Srinagar is Berlin-Budapest-Bucharest, Srinagar is Sarajevo. Naipaul's medieval city explodes the night of January 20th 1990… on the stroke of midnight. My mother and grandmother are indifferent; they go back to sleep. I put on my *phiran*. I cross over to my neighbour's; the women prepare *kehava* for the men while they are getting dressed. The women prepared *kehava* for the Sarajevans before they disappeared in the Hills. My neighbour is ecstatic.

"I take no chances. I am ready. The UN is coming. Tomorrow is Independence Day".

They call the Faithful to the mosques… *Khoon-e-Shahida Rang Laya/Fatah Ka Parcham Lahraya/Masjid-e-Aqsa Roti Hain/Kyon Yeh Tabahi Hoti Hain*… the loudspeakers speak to the Muslims. They killed more than a hundred demonstrators that night, the night of the Gowkadal massacre. The night of January 20th – the night of massacres.

"Srinagar, my friend, is the most dangerous city in the world", said the JKLF sympathiser. "Here the oppressor and the oppressed are too close to destroy". The intimacy nurtures Srinagar's first suicide bomber for 9 years. Afaq, the Jaish suicide bomber who blows himself up outside the Army Cantonment (the ancient Srinagar of King Pravarsena) is just 5 years old in 1990.

January 1990 to March 1990 Srinagar is Prague. The city of demonstrations. They march to the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan. There is a demonstration of Srinagar Chambers of Commerce, of students, of auto drivers, of Policemen… the incessant demonstrations last the winter. The March demonstration brings

SRINAGAR-SARAJEVO

more than 1 million Kashmiris to Srinagar. People offer food to the demonstrators on the roads to Srinagar. Kashmiris turned *azaadi* demonstrations into an *Urs* fair. The soldiers open fire on the demonstrators… kill 10,20,50 Kashmiris… as many as it takes to clear the streets… the downtown bylanes – the hecatombs of the slaughtered. The city is Curfewed for 17 days. There is no relaxation in the Curfew for 17 days in Downtown Srinagar, the nerve centre of the Kashmiri revolt. The Army is out in Kashmir, the schools and hospitals turn into barracks and bazaars into battlefields.

Everybody blames the government. I blame myself. I cross many military checkpoints on the way to school after the curfew days, fearless, in identification with the men behind the sandbags. You carry your identification on you. India's national emblem emblazoned on the ID card. Ashoka's Lions – the symbol of India's commitment to peace, the sole guarantee of your existence. There's also the vague assurance: Truth alone shall prevail. My grandmother blames Sheikh Abdullah for this permanent Revolution, the *Inquilab* (*Inquilab* in Kashmiri is destruction). My mother is overanxious, all Srinagar mothers are overanxious: *Hum Hindustan ka khate hain.* Always. I listen to Radio Azad Kashmir. I fight with my mother. I change. Spring is the season of blood. The JKLF militants hide in sewers or shrines before the city opens its doors. Buddhist monks fleeing persecution had sought sanctuary in Srinagar. Now the JKLF marches to Chrar-e-Sharief. They vow liberation. They fail. No one, nothing can put into words the six months, and especially the first weeks, in Srinagar in 1990.

Things get worse. The Pandits leave Kashmir. Srinagar lays siege to Jammu and Delhi as refugees. I am no longer in Green Vale, my school. The Green Vale School is miniature Srinagar; the experimental school humbled by its rival – the Muslim Educational Trust. Green Vale is Albinioni's *adagio*, the Romeo-Juliet Bridge in Sarajevo. We study the *Ramayana* in class. We speak of Yusuf's Beauty and Yaqub's Patience. *Inallaha ma'al Sabireen.* Allah is with the Patient. I remember my Srinagar… Tushar loves Muslim mythology (Friday sermons to bribe Tushar), Deepu roots for Pakistan in the India-Pakistan hockey matches, Vivek's father lends me the book on Dialectical Materialism and I lose my religion to Vishal's 25-paisa Hindu roti, my Kashmiri Shaivism… the city of absences. *I'm everything you lost. You won't forgive me.*

"Send him to Bombay with us. We can take care of him. He is quite talented. *Yeh yahan is mahool mein kya karega*", The Principal tells my mother. I change my school. My new school is New Era, New Era Public School. We dodge grenades for years to meet friends at Hideout Café where I exchange Poetry for coffee and the *azaadi* I carry with myself is the moment when I kicked the barricade outside a military bunker.

There is no news of us in the world. People tune to BBC Urdu every evening at 8:30 & 11:00… we become the children of news. *Yeh BBC London hain*… we lower the volume so as not to attract any attention and huddle over the radio as if it'd tell our truth to us. There is no electricity in Sarajevo, no electricity in Srinagar. Srinagar is deserted in winter. Blackouts. BBC London. No electricity for days. Before dying my grandmother looked out the window at the sky and said, "Now I want to be free".

You can choose your target in Srinagar-Sarajevo… kill the son and then shoot the mother in the stomach so that she can watch him die before her own death. They keep

firing… to even kill two people you end up firing for minutes. It isn't easy to kill people. People hear shouts from interrogation centres. Landmines tore bodies to bits and pieces, severed the limbs and peeled off faces as if they were masks. Five thousand years of Srinagar is ruins, the shatter of shrapnel. The ruins of Beirut. The ruins of the spirit. The spirit is Sabra, the spirit is Shattila.

The relatives of nearly 2,000 people who disappeared are still tracing their loved ones. "Please tell us whether they are dead or alive". They destroyed the memorial that the children of the disappeared had built for their missing fathers. They write slogans with the barrels of their guns, the seven-year-old boy's splattered brains their ink. The Sikh soldier confesses in the Crackdown… he pulls out this diary to read out names of localities where if attacked they must fire indiscriminately. To kill. "Here on the Airport Road we must be careful".

In spring as the almond trees bloom, the war tourists come to Srinagar. Journalists from Delhi. They occupy the Ahdoos Hotel on river Jhelum… in the restaurant at Ahdoos the air is thick with xenophobia that the journalists carry with them from Delhi. *Loss and suffering, just like the global debt, are negotiable and for sale.* Welcome to Sarajevo.

The ubiquitous TATA bus transports dreams to Lal Chowk. *Apoor, apoor* (across, across the Jehlum) to Lal Chowk. Srinagar-Sarajevo is the city of Border Crossings. Crossing over is quite common. The bus crosses Miljacka-Jhelum to *apoor apoor* Lal Chowk. Cross over to Srinagar-Sarajevo. The Land of Forgetting… Paradise on Earth. And then the boys of the border crossings also get killed… 73 on 5 May 1991… People in Srinagar mourn them in colourful wedding tents.

This then is the Imaginary of my Srinagar… the houses abandoned by Kashmiri Pandits, Pir-e-Rishiyan Nund Rishi, Lalla Ded, Nagarjuna, Abhinavagupta, Left melancholy, the fetishism of Kashmiri nationalists, the hyacinth roofs, *fin-de-siècle* bricks, the Jewish faces (I too am a bit of a Jew), the Aryan noses, Lal Chowk and other squares, Hideout and other Cafés and saints' shrines. The Space in my city is *a ribbon of bullets*.

Hind Bookshop no longer exists and there are no books in Kashmir Bookshop. Lal Chowk is set ablaze. Palladium cinema is destroyed. Only the facade of the foyer is left… the broken wall frames the singed Srinagar sky as the screen of the Palladium's past… countless Hindi films fade to flames. I see Dr. Guru's dead body. There is a hole under his neck… tears flow… this must be madness. My friend, how can I share your grief? They shot Dr Guru in cold blood outside his hospital. We move out with the funeral, they shoot at the funeral procession… I lie buried under people bicycles people… *La Illaha Illallaha Muhammada Rasul Allah*… this is Death. I run. *They killed everybody, they killed every-body*… and they killed just one man… *I follow him through blood on the road and hundreds of pairs of shoes the mourners left behind, as they ran from the funeral, victims of the firing*… "Who remembers who killed whom?"… I turn to psychoanalysis and Buddhism.

Maybe in the words of Fawaz Turki, I am too young to be Kashmiri. I am running away. How long do I run?

SRINAGAR-SARAJEVO

Sleepless in Delhi

— How does it feel driving the auto-*ricksha*?

— Auto is a difficult vehicle. It makes all kinds of noises all the time. It is all right for young drivers, not for old ones like me. Do you know people can die driving the auto? And then you have smoke all around you. I like it when passengers ask to be taken to open spaces...

— This cough of yours... Is it due to pollution?

— I don't know, really. Perhaps it is God's punishment! The only thing I know is that when I inhale the smoke, I shrink down to the bones.

— What would be your age?

— Can't say. Perhaps fifty. All I can tell you is that I was in class 5 in '62. And I joined school when I was eight...

I calculate. He should not be more than forty. Does it mean that all his years of fatigue have accumulated in his age?

— What is a good day for you?

As I say this I feel water welling up in my mouth. Fresh green leaves washed in rain, moist air, semi-wet paths – everything comes to life.

— I don't know what's a good day. I feel lucky the day I get two meals.

This is my first lesson. Although we live in the same city, we live in different weather zones. In the weather zones of food and hunger, of home and homelessness...

— Would you recount an interesting incident from your life?

— What of my life? There isn't anything that I can recall.

— You said yesterday that you lived in this auto.

— Yes, although my licence mentions a Connaught Place shop as my residence. But I do not sleep there. I always sleep in the auto. I eat at *dhabas*. I stop on the roadside to take a bath every 10 to 15 days. That is a holiday for me. I wash my clothes, dry them in the sun and when they are dry, I wear them and hit the road again.

— What is it like sleeping in the auto?

— You can't really sleep in an auto. I sleep for two to three hours. I am not able to straighten my back, can't even turn over.

— Do you feel like sleeping in a park? Or, simply on the road?

— No, I can't abandon my auto just like that.

— In that case you must be feeling sleepy all the time?

— My body has been awake for such a long time that I cannot sleep for long. And even if I get a sound sleep on an occasional night, the police comes... they wake me up and tell me to go sleep elsewhere. Such nights are difficult. I have to wander from one place to another...

— Do you pick up passengers at night?

— If somebody comes and I have the strength, I do.

Gagan Gill, *Dilli mein Uneende*
Rajkamal Prakashan, New Delhi, 2000
The text was written in 1994
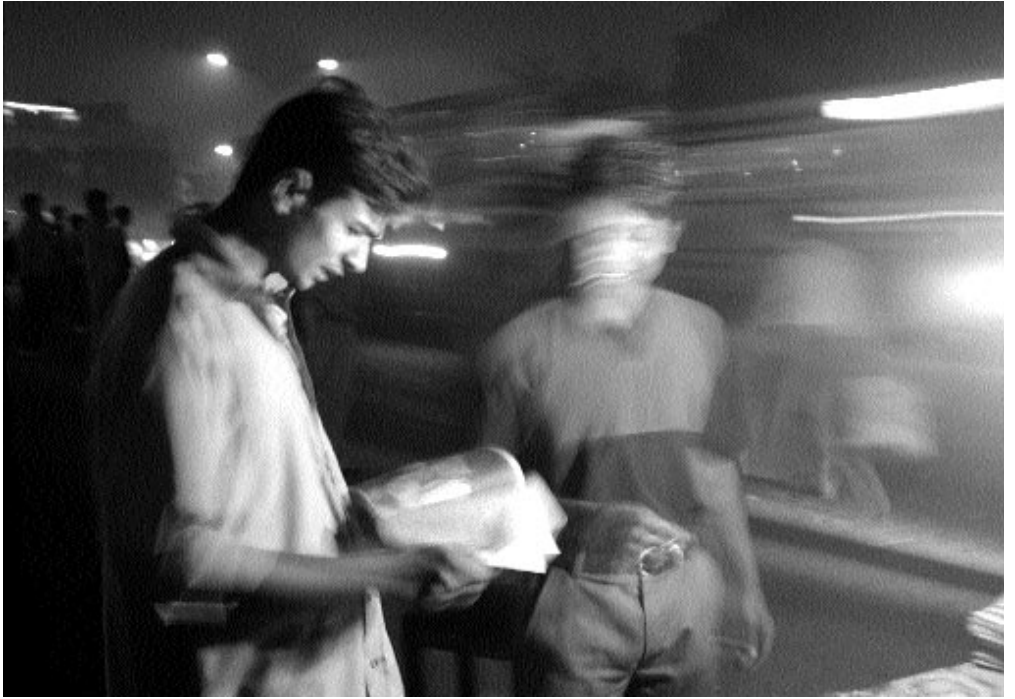
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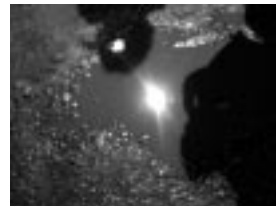
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DELHI

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Takes your call

when you can't

DELHI

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DON'TS

Do not allow:

1. Smoking in and around the Cinema Hall.
2. UN-Authorised Parking in Cinema Premises.
3. Storage of Inflammable material in and around Cinema Premises.
4. Use of Premise other than approved purposes.
5. Electrical installations in Cinema Hall without proper earthing.
6. Hawker in the Cinema premises.
7. Bag, Tiffin Box, Camera and other suspicious object inside cinema hall.
8. Keep LPG, Gas Cylinder, Kerosene Stove, Electrical Heater inside cinema premise.
9. Throwing of burning objects like Cigarettes.

DOS

PLEASE INFORM CINEMA MANAGER/LOCAL POLICE/DCP(LIC) IN CASE

1. Evacuation plan showing emergency Exit/Emergency gates not displayed.
2. Exit signs, Foot lights, Gangway lights, Seat Lights not functioning.
3. Toilets, Urinals not clean.
4. 'NO SMOKING' signs boards displayed prominently.
5. Fire buckets not filled with Water/Sand.
6. No provisions of Drinking water.
7. Gate keepers/ Ushers not present/ alert on duty.
8. Any suspicious objects come to notice.
9. Any eventuality like fire/mishap etc.

DELHI

BERLIN

Walls
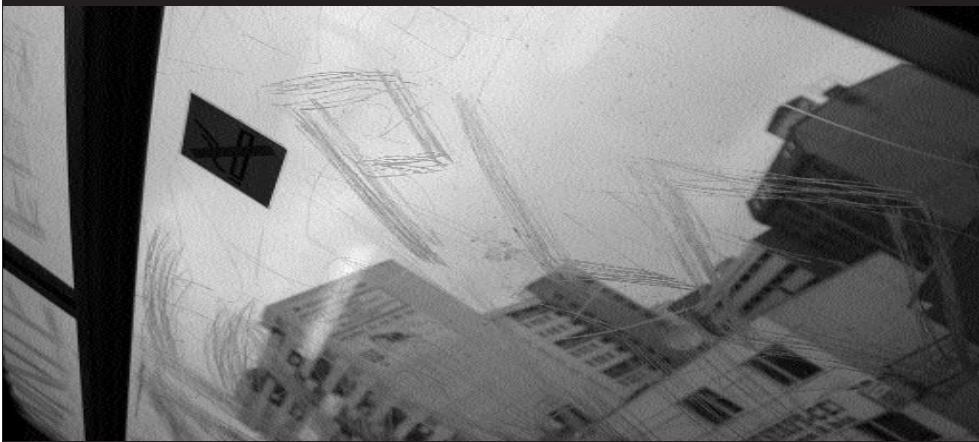
BERLIN

MONICA NARULA

Mechanicalcutta
Industrialisation, new media in the 19th century

DEBJANI SENGUPTA

Clean streets, garbage-less, lit by rows of gaslight,
The full moon has come out, it's no longer night.

Flour mills, jute mills, cloth and brick mills,
Machines that dig out water and make landfills,
Elephantine machines make a road a day,
Pranam at the feet of machines,
Town and country – have become twins.

Kolkata Barnan

These lines from the pen of a nineteenth-century poet Rupchand Pakshi (1814-?) describe the city of Calcutta as a city of machines. The growth of the city as an economic and political centre in the heyday of the East India Company is implicitly connected to the advent of Industrialisation in the last quarter of the 19th century, and its impact on colonial Bengal's cultural, social and political life. The expansion of the 'informal empire' of trade, investment and influence resulted to a large extent in pushing forward the frontiers of political involvement. This last meant the introduction of a network of transport and communications to ensure a smooth flow of raw materials, investments in industries to process the raw materials into commodities, and the establishment of institutions of administration, commerce and education.

Calcutta's geographical position was largely favourable to a brisk trade in cotton, silk and sugar. The growth of English businesses, educational institutions and offices brought along their added mechanisations that radically altered the "structure and organisation of occupations" in the traditional economy, although this modernisation "is an artificial graft on the body of the traditional economy [rather] than a metamorphosis of the latter through its own innate compulsions".[1] By the 1880s, Bengal had been industrialised to a large extent and over 20 percent of its workforce was engaged in making and selling industrial goods. Calcutta, by virtue of being at the centre of this 'informal empire', saw the fruits of industrialisations – her first printing press, her first steamer, her first motorcar were important cultural markers of the age. Nineteenth-century Calcutta was also marked to a large extent by the industrialisation of cultural expressions. Books, handwritten and illustrated on palm leaves, now gave way to print ones. *Palkis* and horse-drawn carriages were no longer in

CALCUTTA

use; bicycles, trams and steam engines changed the face of transportation.

The shift in taste that followed the introduction of some of these mechanical innova-tions in the middle ranks of the populace and the market opportunities that opened up is a fascinating history of how the colonised mastered some of these 'alien technologies' and how often imitation gave way to invention to foster a new sense of national identity. New media such as print books, newspapers and the theatre were marked by multi-applicability and accessibility for all; theoretically, anyone could buy a book or a newspaper. But at the same time only a handful of the urban elite could access them. The rate of growth of lite-racy among Hindu and Muslim males was slow during the years 1881-1891 and the Census of 1901 reported that "the slow rate of increase in the total number of literate persons in the city is partly to be accounted for by the fact that there is annually an increasing admix-ture of illiterate immigrants, who are attracted to Calcutta by a higher rate of wages and find employment as artisans, menial servants and labourers".[2]

The spread of the written word through the early printing presses in the city introduced a new hierarchy amongst common people. The literate and the semi-literate were held in awe by the unlettered members of the city, the "artisans, menial servants and labourers". Although the habit "of listening to the reading out (by literate neighbours) of books, scriptures or mythological stories [was] fairly widespread in Bengal",[3] the low literacy level created a new pecking order as far as the new media were concerned.

In 1860 Calcutta, nearly thirty-six people out of every thousand died of cholera, *kalazar* and malaria. In the Chowringhee area, where most Europeans lived, there were plenty of reserved ponds and freshwater lakes. The rest of the population, however, lived on stagnant pond water or wells. In the reminiscences of Mahendranath Dutta (*Kolikatar Puratan Kahini O Pratha*) we learn that before the advent of tap water their house boasted of three wells. Apart from that, many houses would have a 'water room' where huge earthen jugs would be filled with water from the Ganga (Hoogly) that would be used for

drinking and worship because of the belief that Ganga water was free from all impurities. During the years after the Mutiny, the English started to seriously plan clean drinking water for the city. By 1870, a water treatment plant at Palta and two pumping stations in Tala and Wellington Square were established, supplying water to predominantly European areas. Throughout the city four hundred odd taps, iron columns with lion heads, supplied water to the rest. In the beginning there was enormous resistance to tap water because it was considered 'impure', and orthodox Hindu women, particularly widows, refused to touch it, because according to some, taps sported leather washers.[4] As this satirical poem from *Sulabh Samachar* (1870) makes clear, the resistance to this new invention was also against the levelling of a society that had its hierarchies clearly marked out. The real impact of urban water supply was to break class barriers and create a society where seemingly the rich and the poor would be the same, although in effect it was not so. Urbanisation brought along its own dialectics where new classes came into being – those who enjoyed accessibility to these new forms of media and those who belonged to the periphery.

> Motorcar, water tap, are unloosening bonds,
>> *Kaliyuga* is near, my brethrens,
> The poor, the ignorant, the labourer,
>> The worker drink this water,
> The king and his subjects have
>> Been made the same by this water.

The city's relationship with urbanisation that had begun with its first roads (Circular Road built in 1742) and gaslights (in 1857) was well under way.

Calcutta's first steamer was not used for transporting passengers or material but for dredging soil from the river Hoogly, and the first steamer used as a ferry was the *Diana* in 1823. One important Calcutta resident who realised the potential of the steam ship was Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846). He had a long-standing business relationship with the British and had been deeply influenced by the processes of industrialisation. In his lifetime he was to witness the whole of the country coming under British rule. The Calcutta he knew was already on the road to urbanisation with splendid palaces mushrooming not only in the European areas but in the native part of the city as well, with Dwarkanath's own house at Jorasanko. His Carr, Tagore & Co. was among the first large-scale entrepreneurial ventures by a Bengali that had business interests in such diverse products as coal-mining, indigo and tea production, as well as steam ships.[5] Dwarkanath was an active patron of the Calcutta Steam Tug Association, to help promote navigation from the dangerous mouth of the Hoogly to Calcutta, and the Steam Ferry Bridge Company which was to provide necessary communication between the two banks of the river. His first visit to Britain in 1842 was accomplished halfway on his own steamer, *India*, that took him sailing to the Suez.

Dwarkanath's grandson Jyotirindranath Tagore (1849-1925) reflected that same vision and interest in technology. Jyotirindranath's first steamer was called *Sarojini*. He owned four other ships that plied between Khulna and Barisal and directly competed with a British company called Flotilla. This competition fuelled the already charged atmosphere in Bengal with ideas of *swadeshi*, and helped create public opinion to resist British companies and their products. Jyotirindranath has himself left an account of this: "Every day at the crack of dawn

CALCUTTA

our ship carried passengers from here to Khulna. The Flotilla Company's ship also left at the same time. To prevent the passengers from taking the Flotilla ship, a band of school-boys and gentlemen got up at four in the morning and waited at the jetty with enthusiasm and if anyone went towards our competitor's ship they immediately prevailed upon them to change their minds, sometimes cajoling them with extremely humble pleas" (*Barisaler Patra*, 1895). Ultimately, however, the British won and Jyotirindranath was forced to sell his company. This *swadeshi* endeavour was remarkable as Rabindranath, his younger brother, has explained: "The people of the country worked their pens and their tongues, but they had never worked a ship before – perhaps that had been a source of dissatisfaction in his mind... The desire to run a ship with *swadeshi* effort suddenly made him buy an empty hull once, but that was soon filled, not with engine and cabins but with debts and despair" (*Jibansmriti*, 1912).

> Chandidas's Uncle has devised a grand machine:
> They've praised it the highest terms wherever it's been seen.
>
> I've been to see the contrivance – it's quickly understood.
> Just handle it five hours or so, you'll get its hang for good.
> But words can scarce describe the work the learned world has praised:
> It's fixed on your shoulder, with a rod in front upraised,
> And there you hang the kind of food you find the most enticing –
> A pie or pasty, fry or roll, or cake with almond icing.
> The mind aspires to reach the food, the lips move forth to swallow,
> The dainty flies before your gaze, and you perforce must follow.
> Thus spurred along by gluttony, you walk without a heed:
> The more you see the dangling bait, the more your turn of speed.
> > *The Inventor*, Sukumar Ray (trans. Sukanta Chaudhuri)

The advent of printing presses not only resulted in a change in the form but also in the content that went inside the two covers of a book. This is best seen in the works of Upendrakishore Ray (1863-1915), and Sukumar Ray (1887-1923). The nonsense verse of Sukumar Ray gives ample testimony to the influence machines played in his own life. The father-and-son duo symbolised the way mechanisation was changing the culture of the city. Both shared an interest in new inventions and wrote numerous essays for young readers explaining scientific phenomena as well as the natural world. Both had done pioneering work in the technology of printing. Their essays on print technology as well as on astronomy, physics, biology and technology show a clear relation between the promotion of a spirit of scientific enquiry and the advent of print technology. Upendrakishore's *Sekaler Katha* (a detailed description of prehistoric species) and Sukumar's essays *Shanir Deshey* (about Saturn) or *Bhui-fhor* (about metro rails) are essays that promote a rational view of the world and were the result of strides in technology and science that were the spirit of the times.

The medium of print changed the way they wrote about the world. Their narratives were beautifully extended by illustrations that were often executed by them, and then print-

ed at their own printing press, U Ray Co., established in 1895. Between 1897 and 1912 Upendrakishore published a number of articles in the *Penrose Pictorial Annual* on process cameras that were used to create half-tone blocks. He invented a "screen adjustment indicator" which, he suggested, might make people "take more kindly to half-tone photography". The editor of *Penrose* acknowledged that "Mr. Ray… has reasoned out for himself the problems of half-tone work in a remarkably successful manner".[6] The revolution that Upendrakishore initiated in Bengali book illustration was a culmination of the tradition that had started with Gangakishore Bhattacharya's (publisher) *Oonoodah Mongul* (1816), the first illustrated book in Bengali. Like Jyotirindranath before him, Upendrakishore lived in Calcutta and had come under the influence of the reformist *Brahmo* movement. Both belonged to well off *zamindar* families and both exhibited the courage and aspirations of visionaries. The easy way in which they wandered through the terrains of the new media was remarkable, as in the case of Jyotirindranath who was a popular dramatist and composer as well as an exceptionally skilled artist whose forte was the portrait.

Bengal's printing industry had begun in 1778 with English owned presses that employed traditional artisans like ironsmiths, silver and goldsmiths as well as carpenters and carvers as printing assistants and draughtsmen. The import of labour from old professions to the new medium was accomplished over a number of years. The Bengali artisans were required to learn the new technology, and thus to put traditional knowledge to new use. More importantly, as colonial subjects, they were constantly viewing a vast number of art objects that were trickling into Bengal with the establishment of a sizeable European settlement in Calcutta. These etchings, engravings as well as paintings must have created a great impression on their minds, so that an art historian has correctly claimed that much more than any direct influence by any single European artist, printmaking in Bengal was largely a result of indirect influences.[7]

John Lawson, the first European printmaker to use wood engravings and woodcuts was associated with the Serampore Mission Press run by William Carey from 1812-1816. Carey's press gave new direction to the development of Bengali prose and the man who helped cast the first chiselled Bengali type was Panchanan Karmakar. His son-in-law Manohar Mistry is credited with carving the complete scripts of fifteen Oriental languages, including Chinese. Manohar established his own printing press and his son Krishnachandra took over the Chandrodaya Press on his father's death. Krishnachandra was an enthusiast for the new medium and exhibited a great deal of inventiveness in its use when he began to publish "almanacs in a special style and books and pictures of various kinds in English, Bengali and Devanagari alphabets". Krishnachandra's almanac *Natun Panjika* began with a circulation of four to five thousand copies and mainly catered to a rural population. He was the first in a long line of printmakers who was self-taught, and until the introduction of the half-tone process block for letterpress used for printing of designs and images by Upendrakishore in 1903, its importance remained unabated.

By the second half of the 19th century, the new book publishing industry was growing at an enormous rate due to growing demands. The expansion of Calcutta as a centre of trade and administration was also responsible for the growth of a class of petty administrators, small traders, agents, retailers and workers in the new civic and commercial

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bodies. The demand for printed books grew with the rising number of this new urban bourgeoisie. A huge number of publishers and presses came into being in Calcutta, particularly around the area of Battala (in the northern part of the city). Books printed here were cheaply produced and cheaply priced, catering to the entire range of semi-literate and neo-literate masses. They formed an integral part of the early expressions of the new medium and were an important source of subaltern culture. The golden age of the Battala press was from 1840 to 1865, and these publications had an important role in transforming the orality of Bengali cultural tradition to a literary one.[8] The Battala area extended from Kumartuli, Ahiritola, Simla, Baghbazaar as far north as the Maniktala canal. This part of the city already had a sizeable population with the mansions of Raja Nabakrishna Deb, Ramdulal Dey, and the houses of other smaller and bigger gentries. The first public theatres of the city also began in this part of Calcutta. Bazaars and hutments, where the poor of the city lived, surrounded the palatial mansions of the very rich. The Battala press was just as vibrant as the city that gave it birth.

The Battala books (around 322 titles appeared in 1857 alone, the year of the Mutiny) offered in popular styles stories of romance, like Vidya and Sundar, as well as religious texts, biographies, satirical sketches about contemporary topics, farces, mysteries and erotica, and were illustrated mostly with woodcuts. It is notable that the printing press changed not only the cultural content of the literary medium but also the form of many of the traditional entertainments. The *jatras* and the *khemta* dances, the *panchali*'s new emphasis on spectacles and elaborate music can be directly traced to the influence of the Battala books.[9] This change also caused the books to be misinterpreted among the English educationists and reformers who saw no merit in these publications as they were "filthy and polluting". This antagonism spread even to upper-class Bengalis, so much so that Amritalal Basu had to comment in his biography (*Amritlal Bosur Smriti O Atmasmriti*): "O, learned men, where would be your Bengali knowledge, Bengali literature, language, religion, Bengali prose and poetry if the Battala books didn't sell *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* in fourteen *annas*!".

The Battala audiences of artisans, daily-wage earners and industrial workers who had settled for a livelihood in the city harboured a class animosity towards the English-educated *bhadralok*. The satire found in many Battala farces were a critique of urban elite Bengalis who had been co-opted: the *zamindars*, the East India Company agents and traders, the *dewans* and *banias* who had made a fortune in the last century, as well as various middle-class professionals and government servants. These delicious farcical sketches held up a mirror to contemporary society, poking fun at the preposterous ways of the *babus* and *bibis* and their anglicised self-projections (*Premer Lukochuri*, *Pash Kara Maag*, amongst other titles). A close parallel to the satirical sketches of the Battala books were Kaliprasanna Sinha's *Hutom Pechar Naksha* (1868), Bhabanicharan Bandopadhyay's *Naba Babu Bilas* and *Naba Bibi Bilas* (1825 and 1832) and Pyarichand Mitra's *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (1858). These satirical writings were by a section of nineteenth-century Calcutta "*bhadraloks* that came closest to the culture of the city's lower orders".[10] It would perhaps not be remiss to suggest that the former were influenced by the popular urban imagery of the Battala books just as these literary works spawned numerous imitations among the latter. In the second

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edition of *Hutom*, Kaliprasanna remarked: "The Battala presses have come out with about 200 cheap books in imitation of *Hutom's* sketches".[11] This is a clear example of the multi-plicity of the new medium where both high and popular literatures forged a close link through the advent of print.

The new class of *babus* and their hangers-on had an ostentatious lifestyle, which craved newer entertainment. Under Western influence, they slowly began to reject tradi-tional entertainments and to take an interest in the theatre, imitating the patrons and the playhouses of the European quarters. This new interest was reflected in the numerous advertisements for plays that the Battala artists engraved, designing handbills and posters as well as the furled up theatre curtain which the Battala artists used to frame their woodcuts.

The growth of the *Sadharan Rangalay* or the Public Theatre in Calcutta can be traced to the complex cultural relationship between the colonists and western-educated urban Bengalis. English education had thrown open the doors of social, economic and cultural emancipation to this new class of *nabyashikshita*, and one of the ways in which colonised Bengalis could become Macaulay's 'anglicised subjects' was to emulate the Europeans in their theatre. Western playhouses like the Calcutta Theatre, the Chowringhee Theatre and the Sans Souci Theatre (all in the 'white' part of town) had sensitised the native population to aspects of British theatricals. Amateur performances of Western classics were pre-sented in the sprawling houses of the *zamindars*, and the elite flocked to them as theatre came to be increasingly seen as an edifying and fruitful pastime. Some of these early amateur theatres were the Belgachia Theatre (of Raja Ishwarchandra Singha) and the Pathuriaghata Theatre (of Jyotindramohun Thakur).

In their amateur theatricals, actors and directors mainly chose to stage adaptations of Sanskrit plays, farces, or a few scenes from Western classics like Shakespeare. The following reminiscence of a performance of *Ratnavali* about "The graceful stage, the superb sceneries, the stirring orchestra, the gorgeous dresses… suited to the taste of an advanced age",[12] suggest that their performance style and stage were derived from Western playhouses. Like the Belgachia nobility, other *zamindars* took a keen interest in drama by holding performances in their houses to "afford a rare and rich treat to the elite of our Calcutta society, from the Viceroy down to the latest newcomer".

Theatre was a new medium in that it involved the import of a new technology – the proscenium stage, the emphasis on illusionism/realism that meant elaborate stage set-tings, the introduction of actresses on the public stage; all these were radical departures from traditional modes of performance. Under the influence of this new technology, the form as well the content of theatrical presentations changed. The early dramatic perfor-mances were the *jatras*, the half-*akhrai* and the *kabi-gaan*. The new theatre brought in Western classics, pantomimes and 'opera'-style musicals. Where the content remained the same, as in plays with mythological themes, the use of technology gave a new lease of life to the old subject. The new medium explored the possibilities of using varied ways of pre-sentation and one of the ways in which European playhouses could be emulated was to hire actresses. They were women who came from the red-light districts of the city, daughters of prostitutes who looked at theatre as an alternative livelihood. The raging debate that took

place about this highlighted the ambiguous tone of the theatre people. Even Amritalal Basu, who trained many of the actresses, was hesitant and expressed his doubts whether they would be able to do "justice to the roles of superior women". In order to change the early antipathy of common people to the theatre as a place of licentiousness and exhibitionism for the rich, celebrity endorsements were necessary. The noted religious reformer Sri Ramakrishna was an ardent fan of the theatre and often termed it an important instrument of *Lokshikshya* or public education. His admiration for the famous actress Binodini playing the role of Chaitanya in the religious play *Chaitanya Leela* (1884) was important in helping the theatre gain acceptability among the masses.[13]

A few advertisements from the second half of the 19th century amply demonstrate the far-reaching influence of machines on stage. The Bengal Theatre, the Great National Theatre and the Star Theatre had experimented with elaborate stage settings, and from the 1870s onwards (when theatre went public) they staged plays that were innovative in their treatment of mythology and history. In 1877, the National Theatre advertised in *The Statesman* a revival of *Vidyasundar*, a popular romance that had been made immortal by the Battala press. This is a clear example of the move of content from one medium to another that mechanisation of cultural expressions made possible. The Battala press had also cashed in on contemporary scandals like the adultery of Elokeshi with a priest that spawned numerous titles in prose and verse as well as a popular play called *Mohantor Ei ki Kaj?* (by Lakshminarayan Das) that was Bengal Theatre's first commercial success.

> This Evening
> Saturday, the 14th April, 1877
> Revival of the WELLKNOWN OPERA
> VIDYASOONDARA
> FULL GRAND PANTOMIME IN TWO ACTS
> Fisherman and Genii
> The grand illumination Sceneries

The Bengal Theatre was responsible for showing "A Live Railway Train on the stage" for its play *Uvai Sankat* in 1876. The mechanical innovations of the Star Theatre were even more spectacular. Under the able stewardship of Girish Ghosh, theatre actor, manager and playwright, it staged a series of mythological plays that became extremely popular due to the use of technological marvels. The plays performed were *Dakshya Yajna*, *Dhruvacharitra* and *Nala Damayanti*, all in 1883. For the first play, the *Indian Daily News* advertised that it would comprise of a "wonderful Illusion by an Amateur Electrician: Innumerable ghosts going round in the air". In *Dhruvacharitra*, staged in October, the same newspaper carried an advertisement that ran thus:

> GRAND SCENERIES
> Lightning, Thunder and Rain
> By the aid of Mechanics and Science.

Nala Damayanti staged in December was advertised as "Baboo G.C. Ghosh's New/MYTHO-LOGICAL DRAMA/NALADAMAYANTI/FULL OF INCIDENTS, EVENTS/Love, Humour, Pathos,

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Songs/By a Mysterious Scientific process/Fairies will appear from within the petals/Of a Small Lotus". The *Indian Daily News* marvelled at this exhibition of "THE PHOTO-ELECTRIC LOTUS/Never before exhibited on any stage/THE MECHANICAL GOLDEN BIRD, GRAND AND ROMANTIC". In 1884, the Star Theatre performed *Kamalay Kamini* for which the advertisement read "Grand Spectacular and Romantic Play/Scenes, Mechanism, and Scientific Appliances/SHIP IN STORM, SUN RISES AT SEA/Grand Transformation Scene/DIORAMA/ Chandi and Padma in the air without the aid of/wire, string or any other support/Magical Protean Performance/Instantaneous Transformation from Chandi/to Kali and old woman to Chandi".[14] In 1881, *The Statesman* praised the National Theatre by saying "the native stage has made rapid improvements in scenic arrangement and mechanical effects". It is interesting to note that all these plays using mechanical effects were mythological in nature, and magical effects made the myths more real to the people.

The conventions of mechanical contraptions, illusionist techniques, the use of light and sound were all a part of the need to present the new medium as a creator of magic in the popular imagination. The public playhouses thus attracted huge audiences, both native and European, who flocked to see the night-long performances. The prices of tickets for the second class fell from eight *annas* in 1873 to as low as one *anna* in 1890. From being only an elite pastime, theatre became an integral part of Calcutta's urban cultural scene.

All translations by the author except where otherwise stated.

NOTES

1. Nirmala Bannerjee, "Working Women in Colonial Bengal" in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid eds. (Delhi: Kali for Women, rpt. 1999), 270-1.
2. *Census of India*, Vol. VII (1901), 57.
3. Sumanta Bannerjee, *The Parlour and the Street: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1989), 122.
4. Radhaprasad Gupta, *Kolkatar Firiwalar Dak ar Rashtar Awaj* (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1984), 45.
5. Other businessmen who had gained prominence during this time were Motilal Sheel, Anandamohun Pal, Ramdulal Dey. See Atul Sur, *Kolkatar Chalchitra* (Calcutta: Sahityalok, 1992).
6. Siddhartha Ghosh, *Kaler Sahar Kolkata* (Calcutta: Ananda Publishers, 1991), 228.
7. See Pranabranjan Ray, "Printmaking by Woodblock up to 1901: A Social and Technological History" in *Woodcut Prints of Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, Ashit Paul ed. (Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1983), 89.
8. Sumanta Bannerjee, *Unish Sataker Kolkatar Anya Sanskrita O Sahitya* (Calcutta: Anushtup, 1999), 54.
9. Sumanta Bannerjee, *The Parlour and the Street*, 140.
10. Ibid. 178.
11. Ibid. 179.
12. Gour Das Basak, "Reminiscences of Michael Madhusudan Dutta" quoted in Kiranchandra Dutta, *Bangiya Natyashalar Itihaas*, Prabhat Kumar Das ed. (Calcutta: West Bengal Theatre Academy, 1996), 33.
13. See Sumit Sarkar, "Ramakrishna and the Calcutta of His Times" in *The Calcutta Psyche* (India International Centre Quarterly, 1991).
14. All these advertisements are quoted in *Source Materials for the History of the Bengali Theatre 1872-1900*, Vol. I, Shankar Bhattacharya ed. (Calcutta: West Bengal State Book Board, 1982).

decoded+delhi+denuded=Google+Search

PARVATI SHARMA

…decotum decode decoded decoder decoders… Delft delfts Delgado Delhi deli delia… denouements… denounce denounced denouncement denouncements… denude denuded denuder…
www.orchy.com/dictionary/bigdic-d.htm

Results from the search string: http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=delhi+ decoded+and+denuded&btnG=Google+Search

A search engine is a little like an oracle, a fortune teller, the three witches: the connection, a code, the request, the wait, the result: a cryptic, encoded, multidimensional answer that could mean almost anything –
[Delhi Dreams: sheher.com: new delhi: horoscope: dreams: pay close attention to your dreams… your dreams are a little on the dramatic side… your dreams will be of assistance to you… dreams are fuzzy and hard to remember… dreams can be a big help in the ideas department… a dream sequence should be of help to you as you receive some warnings that will help you through the week]
– but seems always to contain a cryptic, encoded, multidimensional truth, a logos that awaits the right seeker. For the rest, truth is information, information truth and what you get is what you see. The search result, based on keywords, is at best a probable approximation of the request, outside the boundaries of temporal and spatial organisation. Entirely useless in many hands, it demands intuition and luck in the user, (so Google has an "I feel lucky" button that connects to a single, random site that might otherwise be hidden in the 17th page of an ordinary search) as well as the ability to adapt what has been sought to what has been found.
There are two sides to a search: the real and the virtual, or almost-but-not-quite-and-perhaps-more. Real Delhi online is Delhi off-line copied and pasted on an html document. The parameters are complaint, anger, pathos, film reviews, personal reminiscences, alternative perspectives. The central lock is that Delhi exists for those who exist outside it; for the rest it is nothingness, and its descriptions thrive by virtue of its dearth.

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The Rediff Diary: Amberish K Diwanji
(http://www.rediff.com/news/2000/jun/09diary.htm)
    "In an earlier diary, I had complained that Delhi is not really fit to be India's capital. Two summers in Delhi… my conviction has been strengthened by the way it treats its lesser citizens. It is shocking. This city is wonderful if you are rich, terrible if you aren't… Delhi is fast becoming a truly Marxist land where the state is withering away and the denizens of the *Rajdhani* have increasingly turned away from the government to other means… to get their work done. The extremely positive aspect of this is the gainful employment it has generated. For instance, the constant power shortage has led to a massive market in the production of inverters and generators. And while the rich buy the brand names, dozens of 'grey markets' have cropped up, selling inverters and generators at a far lesser price".
    The thought might then meander lazily to "jets of crimson beetle-nut spittle sail[ing] through the air, briefly catching the sunlight before splattering anonymously into dusty corners, in Lala Lajpat Rai Market" (Jeff Greenwald, http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/ 1.02/dishwallahs_pr.html). More tenacious, it may open Kamran Shafi's column (http:// www.jang.com.pk/thenews/columnists/kamran/article-kamran.htm), "The city has a chronic electricity problem, the power switching on and off, dipping and surging at will, such as we have never seen; its telephones are most erratic… While I can get on the Internet from

"On May Day, in the year that the Manifesto of the Communist Party turned 150, a man stopped his pick-up on a Los Angeles freeway overpass, sat in it for an hour drinking beer, patting his dog

my village home via my server in Taxila in twenty seconds flat, you can sit for hours in Delhi trying to log on… Its roundabouts are used as badly as ours incoming vehicles forcing their way in… And yes, when the traffic police are not looking, Indians too run the red lights".
    Foreign views, usually tinged by a Gulliveresque bafflement-cum-smugness at being able to connect with such difference, written, like everything on the net, with keywords not words, make clear how Delhi's chaos is nowhere near as 'exotic' as even foreign views may try to persuade. The chaos is no lights, no water, no phone, bad driving, too much noise: like walking into a house with a TV blaring in every room. "Other than the train being 1 hour and 15 minutes late, little else went amiss in New Delhi" (http://www.frankjamesmd.org/ diary/friday.htm).
    Delhi looks at itself with more simulated surprise, unwilling to concede its self-awareness. Four members of the Fair Trade Survey post a report on child labour in the jewellery workshops of Shakoor di Dandi. "The entire locality is divided in small narrow lanes… The smell of chemicals makes one sick… There are around eighty small workshops… with average number of eight workers working in the area of 5x6 feet room without ventilation… It

was sad and also amazing… in those squalors the little craftsmen were working without sufficient light and seemed as if they were content with their fate. The darkness or heat, the skin diseases hardly mattered! Their eyes told the story of no hope and dreams… They came to the city to glorify their life… There was not enough to eat. The life was dull".

and talking on a cell phone. Then he shouted something unintelligible, waved a flag, set the truck on fire, left the dog burning like a torch, skipped to the edge of the overpass, wondered whether to jump, and finally killed himself with a knife…

Articulate Delhi distances itself from those for whom it tries to speak, and the surprise provokes little beyond good deeds for the day. Jamila Verghese, part of Leela Shukla's Tourist Escort, established in the 1950s and guide to, amongst others, John Kennedy, and self-admittedly responsible for putting Delhi on the tourist map, writes that her joy was "when rustic bystanders would find themselves included in our tour regardless of which celebrity we were currently showing around. We spoke to them in Punjabi or Hindustani… translating it for our foreign tourists. This was the first time the lower income Delhi *wallas*… had entered their own monuments without being bullied and browbeaten by the liveried guards at the gate. They gaped unbelievingly, breathed wonderingly, '*Behnji*… were these really our *rajahs* and *ranis*?' There was always a heart lift in our answer".

The point here is not to analyse the text – "sad and amazing", "little craftsmen", "hope and dreams", "gaped unbelievingly", "heart lift" are less than subliminal codes for 'not us' and 'thank god' – but to show how the control of knowledge and the means to knowledge also allows the control of information. The net does not encourage textual analyses, but it does turn information into a view/perspective. A search bombards the seeker with a glut that turns, almost unconsciously, into an image. It is almost impossible to follow just one link in a search; the lack of physical discipline – the scroll bar, the 'Find' box, hypertext that deliberately cuts any argument short, cutting and pasting – the difficulty of reading long passages on-screen, multiple windows, composing e-mails while surfing psychedelic sites, the hypnotic glow of the screen all turn a search into an experience, and the result into an impression.

An equally valid Delhi, then, exists where it is presented as impression – tangentially and undescribed. For example:

Spate of Violent Crimes Rocks Delhi

(http://www.delhiindia.com/News/spate_of_violent_crimes_rocks_delhi.htm)

"The National Capital Region of Delhi convulsed under a spat of violent crimes… Four members of a family, including two children, were brutally killed at their home, a college-campus feud went way beyond the usual fisticuffs and ended with the murder of a student leader… Rs. 10 lakhs was looted from a van in Faridabad, an industrialist's son was shot

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at in Gurgaon after a protection demand was ignored, and two school-bound children were forced into a van and driven away in South West Delhi, apparently by their estranged father".

Extract from "The Buddha Smiled", co-winner of the NYU press prize for hyper-fiction
(http://www.nyupress.nyu.edu/hypertext/moulthrop.html)

"On May Day, in the year that the Manifesto of the Communist Party turned 150, a man stopped his pickup on a Los Angeles freeway overpass, sat in it for an hour drinking beer, patting his dog and talking on a cell phone. Then he shouted something unintelligible, waved a flag, set the truck on fire, left the dog burning like a torch, skipped to the edge of the overpass, wondered whether to jump, and finally killed himself with a knife… In Delhi, a teenager tested positive for HIV. She had been to the cinema two weeks earlier, had felt a little pinprick on her back. Her fingers came away smeared with blood. On her back was a small sticker: 'Welcome to the world of AIDS'".

Extract from *The Man who Turned on the World*
(http://www.psychedelic-library.org/holl5.htm)

"Before Tim and Nena left for New York to catch the plane to New Delh… there was a receiving line and we all filed past with our presents… Some gave hashish, some gave bags of excellent grass. Some gave mushrooms. A snuff box of cocaine. A quantity of LSD. The entire range of mind-expanding substances were proffered to the newly-weds… When Tim and Nena left we carried on with the celebrations into the dawn and watched the sun edging over the horizon as the earth heaved over and took us into another day… Tapes would arrive at New Delhi via American Express and would be delivered to Tim and Nena, about a mile away in Almora. 'Dear Tim and Nena, We're missing you very much… We've… been reading Rene Daumal's *Mount Analogue* and our souls are climbing the mountain. Our bodies too: we've built our own mountain from chicken wire and plaster of paris, and we've painted routes and markings on this mountain, a metaphoric statement of where we're at… We are sending you some LSD by next mail, to c/o American Express, New Delhi. Enough for 40 trips. Love from Millbrook'".

Delhi as capital (both city and currency, a code and an impression) and, mainly, located. In the diffuse world of the net, Delhi, as much as Los Angeles and more than Almora, is an undeniable space in which murder happens, AIDS is a problem, where people go to and come back from. "If hypertext means anything to our emerging, expanding information culture, it might find its significance in passing along the dual memes of diversity and connection" (Stuart Moulthorp: http://www.nyupress.nyu.edu/hypertext/moulthrop.html).

The psychedelic experience is set in Delhi, hyper-fiction needs Delhi to establish itself as fiction. Without this tangential reality, writing and thought are lost in the interlinked intangibility of cyberspace. Delhi implies connections outside cyberspace, acknowledges that the reader/viewer also exists outside the login and the nickname, abstractions of the self. Delhi (along with 'crime', 'AIDS', 'American Express', 'LSD') is amongst the anchors that tie these documents to search strings, without which there might not be any difference between reality and virtuality.

This is not a theory specific to Delhi – although given the tremendously unequal distribution of information and technology, it is most apparent in the region; nor to hypertext – most off-line discourse is located similarly. However, while an off-line text incorporates the awareness of its environment (fictional or real) as an essential part of its creation and consumption, any online narrative recognises its off-line 'source' (here 'Delhi') as, say, a snatch of conversation overheard at a party. The whole conversation exists as information in a linked database, but the snatch only establishes one's presence. In an alternative world where the self cannot act except through representation, it becomes perhaps vital to state that in another dimension, it is (anodyne, linear, cricket-loving) present.

Conclusion

#delhi fondly remembers aYeSha… attained immortality on the 19th of January 2001 "Ayesha iam very sorry for being so late noone even told me u died it was desi only u k u were something which cant be expressed in words… and we wanted to stand b4 u for ur sorrows and everything has a time period with it today iam here maybe tomorrow i join u too God knows… don't worry iam coming soon to give u company upstairs u see me very chipkoo types bhee kaise aapko akela chod doo dar lagta hai akele bachhe haan willl join ya very very soon promise".

Etymologically, 'articulation' is the movement of limbs in action, very bodily, organic. A dislocated articulation is, in some ways, a dislocated limb, a broken body – so that most attempts to control articulation begin, logically, by controlling the body. In a place where the body does not exist, however – in NCR Delhi, #delhi, New Delhi, c/o Delhi, Delhi on a tourist map, Delhi Diary – articulation, until it completes a process of transformation, is hesitant, touching, and absurd.

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M O R N I N G

7.30: Stood in the long 'Q' at the factory gate. Showed the 'document' to the Contractor and Security guard and got the pass made.

7.40: Reached the office. Replied with a silent smile to the hoarse "Asshole, Why are you so late?" of the arrogant and uncivilized President. Attended with all my might to the collective orders of the Staff (Do the cleaning, Give me cold water, Take this file, Take that dispatch, Get the stationary, Fetch the electrician... and This and That) amid growls, whispers and threats.

8.30: Entered the Computer Room on orders from *Bade Sahib* (Boss). Started working on the order of preparing three faxes and twelve lists by 12 o'clock.

9.30: The meeting began in *Bade Saheb*'s room. Brought and served tea and snacks from the canteen. Served cold water to the staff. Distributed the dispatch.

10.00: Began work on the computer.

10.45: There was a power cut.

11.00: Went to the bank to deposit a cheque for *Chhote Sahib* (Junior Boss), and to the Post Office to send a registered letter for the President.

11.30: The Power came back.

11.35 - 12.30: Worked on the computer.

A F T E R N O O N

12.40: Sat for lunch.

12.55: The Boss came running to inform about the urgent meeting at 3 o'clock and yoked me into making a presentation.

2.45: Prepared the biodata of the marriageable daughter of the Boss In-between (*Manjhale Sahib*).

3.30: After a round each of water and despatch, made three trips to the shop-floor, with the instruments in a trolley.

E V E N I N G

4.25: Went to the tap to wash before leaving. On return, Boss told me about the report to be sent to Head Office. Have to stay beyond office hours.

4.30: Fetched 'courtesy snacks' from the canteen and served on Boss's table. Snacks looked delicious – bread-jam and butter-toast, patties, vegetable fries, biscuits, apples and bananas. Sat at the computer to make the report.

6.15: Took the final printout of the report to the Fax Room. The Boss uttered a thank you, with a smile and asked to come early next morning.

6.20: Junior Boss stopped me and handed me a heavy packet of snacks, with a loving gesture. The packet contains the fries and bananas.
Were the vegetable fries too hot, or... anyway, wiping off tears I polished off everything because the bananas were sweet, even if somewhat rotten and disfigured.

Shrinath, "Office Days"
(*Hans*, December 2001)

Long Bus Rides

JOY CHATTERJEE

Dhomtola – Pak Stit – Gorihat – Dhakuia – Jaoppur;
Dhomtola – Pak Stit – Gorihat – Dhakuia – Jaoppur.

Conductors are shouting from the gates of the mini and private buses. Taxi and auto *ricksha* horns, and the gentle sound of tram bells in a series of traffic jams. Mid-1970s Calcutta roads were busy and noisy. On the other hand, Delhi roads were like drawings by a lazy kid. Empty spaces and roads. Perhaps one car in the middle of the road and a Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus, painted green and yellow standing in front of bus shelter with a few passengers. Delhi conductors used to be quiet and cool, in the '70s. A few motorcycles turned into carriages (*phatphatis)* could occasionally be heard faintly calling *Paharganj – Naidilli – Canaught Palace.*

Most of the '70s I used to live in the Safdarjung and Nauroji Nagar areas, and my movement was limited to the All India Medical Institute at one end and Moti Bagh on the other. We used to travel by buses and occasionally by *phatpati.* For me Delhi used to end at Moti Bagh as I could only see hills and scrub beyond. Longer journeys started when I joined school, which was in Lodi Road. I don't remember much about those journeys other than the long old-fashioned buses, which used to break down quite frequently.

In 1977, I shifted to Chittaranjan Park. Though at that time there were many buses, along with two mini-buses, plying through C.R. Park, the only bus we used was route number 444, + or –. This bus had a circular route, starting from Kalkaji and back to Kalkaji, so it used to ply in both directions, clockwise and anti-clockwise, i.e. + or –. As far as I remember, this bus used to come every half-hour, and we at the bus stand would speculate looking at oncoming buses whether there was a 444 or not. Initially I could surprise my companions with my perfect predictions, as the 444s were old TATA buses whereas the others were Ashok Leyland buses.

Gradually, as I started travelling further, more buses were added to my list: 430, 440 and so on. There were only four flyovers in South Delhi area at that time. They were located near Safdarjung Airport, Defence Colony, Ashram and Bhogal. All of them were built over railway lines. But at the end of the '70s and the beginning of the '80s we could see more bridges growing, this time not on railway lines but over road crossings. It was the beginning of a new configuration of Delhi roads.

Then came 1982, and New Delhi hosted the IXth Asian Games. Actually those flyovers were built for this, and roads were made wider and smoother for the faster movement of vehicles. More accidents began to happen. DTC buses began to be called killer buses. As

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the conductors in the buses sat at the end of the bus and gave minimum attention to happenings at the bus stand, the driver rushed the bus and the public had to run after to board.

Till 1982 Delhi didn't have any private bus operators. During the Asian Games, for the first time, a private bus appeared on Delhi roads. The Luxury bus had a Rs. 1 ticket, whereas normal bus tickets cost 30 *paise*, 40 *paise* and 50 *paise*. These luxury buses used to ply on very few routes. Another special bus service started at the time was the Green Line (GL), which used to ply between bus depots and the railway stations. These GL buses were ordinary DTC buses, but with a Rs. 1 ticket.

By the end of the '80s, Delhi roads were full of private buses. And the other phenomenon that happened was 'Maruti, the middle-class car' and Hero Honda Motor Cycle, the 'Fill it and forget it' motorbike. Delhi drivers thus acquired high 'pick-up' vehicles to squeeze through the traffic and slip under buses and trucks. This new driving style was complemented by the new private bus drivers who competed with each other to pick up some passengers and kill others. For most of the '80s and the first part of the '90s, these private buses were painted white and red and were called Red Line buses. These began to be called Blood Line buses for their embarrassing number of accidents. By the mid-'90s, the government had to withdraw these buses, but they returned afresh, painted blue and called Blue Line. In the meantime the cost of the bus ticket was revised thrice. By now, tickets cost Rs. 2, Rs. 4, Rs. 6.

After the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the Sikh massacre of 1984, Delhi roads started looking different with barricades installed at every corner of the city. Bombs were found in the form of transistors, dolls, briefcases etc. Almost all public information systems cautioned us not to touch these things if found lying unidentified or unclaimed. Public buses being public also carried these messages of caution imprinted on the back of every seat. They said, "*kisi anjaan vastu ko na chuye, yeh bomb ho sakta hai*". "Don't touch any unidentified object, it can be a bomb". Initially it was frightening to see those messages – people actually looked under their seats. But with time the print faded, and so did the fear. Other than these messages, there were other messages as well. "Beware of pickpockets", "Owners are responsible for their luggage", "Please leave seats for ladies and old citizens". But all these messages were hardly readable as printing quality was very bad. Passengers were hardly aware of these rules. Another important text one could see on the back of almost every seat was a declaration of love. "Sonu loves Sunita", "Monu loves Munni" were written, engraved, painted in many styles and formats on the back of almost every seat. The third kind of text was and is stickers. Whether for sexologist or tutor, Amarnath *Yatra* or shadi.com, one can still see many small stickers pasted on the walls and windows of buses. People who talk of the shaping of Indian culture by big advertisement firms should have a look at these advertisements as well!

Whether it is the DTC or a private bus, the interior design of both the buses is the same. The bus is divided into a 2×2 sitting arrangement, with the conductor's seat just in front of the rear door. Passengers are supposed to board from the rear door and alight from the front. This rule is more or less strictly followed in DTC buses but private bus operators cannot afford the luxury of regulations. They don't dare refuse any customer boarding from the front. But they won't stop the bus for anyone who wants to get down from the rear door,

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if there is no one to get down from the front door. They will ask you to go to the front door even though by that time you might have reached the next stop. Then you need to take another bus to go back. Generally, operators are very generous while picking up the customers and equally absent-minded while dropping them.

However, even though I say that they are generous picking up passengers, this does not hold if there is only one passenger standing at the bus stand. Where's the economy of that? They will, however, stop for 10-15 minutes (which to a passenger feels like hours) at some bus stands if they feel that the bus is not full enough. Different bus drivers have different strategies to avoid public rage for such long stoppages. Some drivers constantly start and stop the bus to give a feel of 'about to launch' the bus on the road. Some get down and go off for a while, and some play the radio. But if they realise that another bus of the same route is coming behind them, the driver will start blowing the horn madly, the helper will furiously bang the body of the bus and the bus will take off like a rocket. Sometimes the public opposes this, and sometimes enjoys this mad rush. After all, everyone wants to reach their destination as soon as possible. No wonder in the year 2001 the number of deaths by accident had crossed 1,600 by the middle of December!

I have mentioned how silent Delhi roads were in the 1970s, and this includes the sound of music. DTC buses are not allowed to play music. But with private buses, music became an integral part of the bus journey. To reach college I had to change two buses – 490 to reach Jantar Mantar and then 70 or 187 to reach Patel Nagar. In the morning I would often take a DTC bus and it would be relatively silent, although as it would start nearing the centre of the city, it would fill up with middle-class office goers who would discuss everything from politics to cricket. Everyone had an opinion, and almost everyone could solve India's problems!

While coming back from college, I enjoyed the luxury of being able to listen to music and relax. Route number 70 and 187 used to ply between Palika Kendra near Connaught Place to Naraina in West Delhi. Since the partition, West Delhi has been a place for migrants from Punjab. I don't know if it was due to this or something else, but the drivers of 70 and 187 always played Punjabi songs. They also had an inclination for the T-Series produced film songs, which are basically cheap tapes of cover versions of popular songs. In contrast, when I took 490 it would mostly play songs of Kishore Kumar, Mohammad Rafi etc., mainstream Hindi film songs that are popular amongst cosmopolitan urban citizens.

Gradually, other forms of music also began to be played in almost all kinds of buses. There are now Bhojpuri songs as well as Haryanvi songs (with dialogue). But the most popular audio stream is the All India FM radio. I have noticed that they switch off the radio when it starts playing English songs but they often don't mind the English commentary that comes between Hindi songs. Music is being played not only for fun, but also to control the temperaments of the passengers. From the IT factory to the bus, almost every worker listens to music to get rid of the monotony of the work…

Passengers of public buses are constituted from mostly the lower and lower middle class, with a pinch of the middle class. There are routes which are classified as 'gentlemen' routes but the middle class mostly prefers to use chartered buses. (Chartered buses are specially hired only for travelling between residences and offices). Since they generally

avoid public buses, cars and auto *rickshas* are very popular in Delhi. Almost every middle-class family has at least one car in the house. Even then, getting a public bus after office hours is very difficult in Delhi.

Recently DTC has reduced the number of buses on the road. So at night, since most buses are filled with tired and exhausted working people, private bus operators tend to exercise power on them. Very often they ask for more than the actual ticket cost. If the distance should cost a Rs. 2 ticket, conductors very often end up taking Rs. 4 or even Rs. 6. For newcomers, conductors are a nightmare. The other day an old man seated next to me asked, "When will Tughlaqabad come?". I told him that the bus would not go to Tughlaqabad. He said "But the conductor told me it will go to Tukhlaqabad!". I had to convince him that he would have to get down at Kalkaji and then take another bus for Tughlaqabad. Another time, a passenger fell asleep and woke up after crossing four or five stands beyond where he was supposed to get down. He shouted for the bus to stop, but not only did the bus not stop, the conductor charged him more money for travelling the extra distance.

Very often, the bus owner or some associate of his sits with the conductor, and they are usually more violent than the drivers or conductors. They not only charge the passengers, they also charge the conductors if they find conductors are not shouting properly for passengers when the bus is at the bus stop. Another important job these associates do is to tackle the competition. If two buses are plying on the same route then there should be enough of a time-gap between the buses so that both of them can get a good number of passengers. Too often the first bus gets late, and as a result the next bus suffers due to a lack of passengers. Somewhere in the middle of the route the second bus will catch up with the first bus, and then they begin a 'fight' which is often like a chase scene in a film. Sometimes they come to the compromise that the second bus will have to wait to increase the time-gap, even if this is at the cost of the passengers' time. Recently a new phenomenon has started. If the bus operator finds that there aren't enough passengers, the bus is stopped and the passengers moved to another bus of the same route, even though it is already comfortably filled with passengers.

Today, Delhi roads are manifold busier than Calcutta. With many more cars, bikes, buses and auto *rickshas* Delhi looks like a painting of an artist who doesn't know when to stop. Every bus stand looks like fish market, where each call is louder than the other.

Gobinpuri – Nehru Palace – Central school – Deface Clony – Pragti Madan – Kanat Palace
Gobinpuri – Nehru Palace – Central school – Deface Clony – Pragti Madan – Kanat Palace

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Cancer Wards

S O P A N   J O S H I

It was a typically crowded day at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences. The queue at the OPD was long, the patients restless. The aggressive security guards were failing to keep order. The bedlam extended inside. In the passageways, insouciant ward boys noisily carted patients on stretchers with an apathy that is the hallmark of Delhi's auto *ricksha* drivers. In front of the cardio-thoracic centre, a large family was laying out a picnic on a small patch of green. Groups of people were all over, talking loudly. Construction work was adding to the noise and airborne dust. The next building was the Institute's Rotary Cancer Hospital.

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Entering was easy. The security guards didn't ask too many questions; one of them even attempted a half-smile. Inside, the halls smelled of cement, disinfectant and a range of odours associated with sick bodies, but difficult to identify. Everything was absolutely still.

More than 150 people were sitting on the benches. Some of them were trying to hide their disfigured faces. There were women with woollen caps on, concealing the loss of hair due to the measured poisons of chemotherapy. A woman stopped a doctor in the passage-way and spoke to him. The conversation was inaudible, despite the silence. A hospital attendant called to the next patient on his list, and waited for a response. The clerks were seated behind the reception counter, and they were actually working. Inside the boardroom, about ten doctors attended to several patients, simultaneously. The only sounds were the low murmurs, rustling paper and the occasional spell of coughing.

Everyone was either waiting, patiently, or doing their job with a quiet efficiency. It was like having walked through a warp, from pandemonium to a freeze. At one stage, the only visible activity in the hall was in the saline drip close to a patient on a stretcher. From the inverted bottle into the intravenous plastic tube, the drops fell with the regularity of a sand clock. It was measuring time, and so were many of the patients. This is what they mean when they say: Once a cancer patient, always a cancer patient.

This was my first close encounter with cancer. I had never been in a public space in Delhi where so many people could wait so silently – not even at the cremation grounds. But here, the burden of cancer had brought about a civilising influence that was startling, a respect for life and death that is invariably missing in the city. I had heard of people who had cancer, but somehow I had seldom spoken to a cancer patient. Statistics showed that the disease was increasing, but I never knew how much. How do so many remain hidden from the public eye? Where do they live? Would they talk? *Do* they talk?

A thin young man with a receding hairline stood nearby. Perhaps he'd be a little more forthcoming than the older people, I thought. Just as I addressed him, an old woman got in the way, a little like a mother protecting her brood. "What do you want?" she said. After ruling out any threat, she moved away a little and started talking softly. Her son Mukesh had leukaemia, but he'd been made to believe that he had tuberculosis. She said he was a bus conductor before he fell ill two years ago. I took her address and decided to pay the family a visit.

Nand Nagari was always a place that existed only on the signboards of overcrowded buses. It took more than an hour and several enquiries to reach the run-down neighbour-hood on Delhi's north-eastern fringe. Mukesh was known in the locality as the boy who fell ill. Sitting in the one-room house in which his sister had died a few years ago after the kitchen stove exploded, he began to recount his healthier days.

Seven days a week, he would conduct a Blue Line bus plying on route 281 (Nand Nagari to Central Secretariat). He used to make four-five trips every day. He was able-bodied, and would never allow students to travel free even if they said they were 'staff'. Yes, leaning out of the window, shouting and beating the body of the bus were part of his duties. Had it not been for tuberculosis, he might've become... a bus driver. It was unnerving to see that bus conductors – vanguards of villainy and mistreatment in Delhi buses – could talk like ordinary human beings.
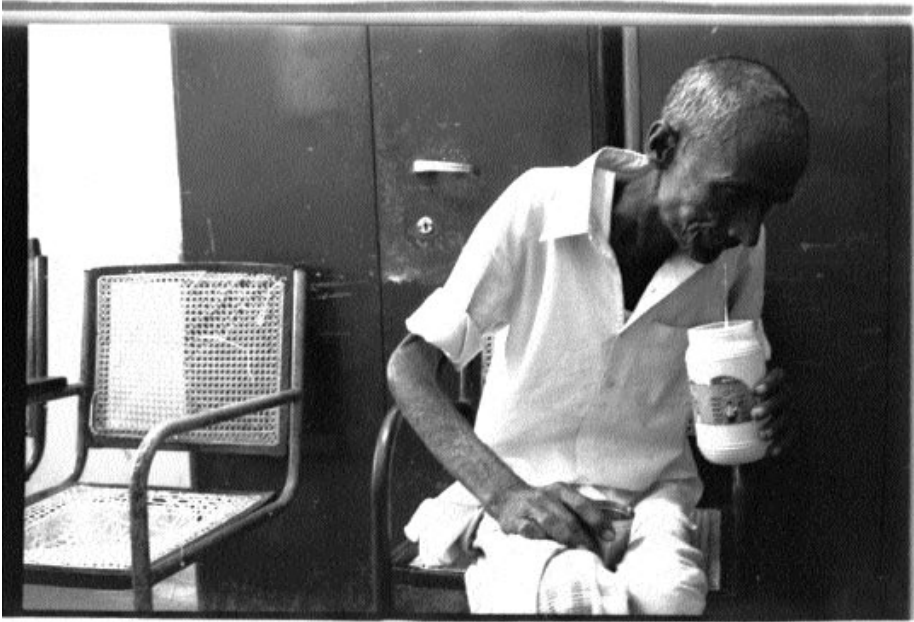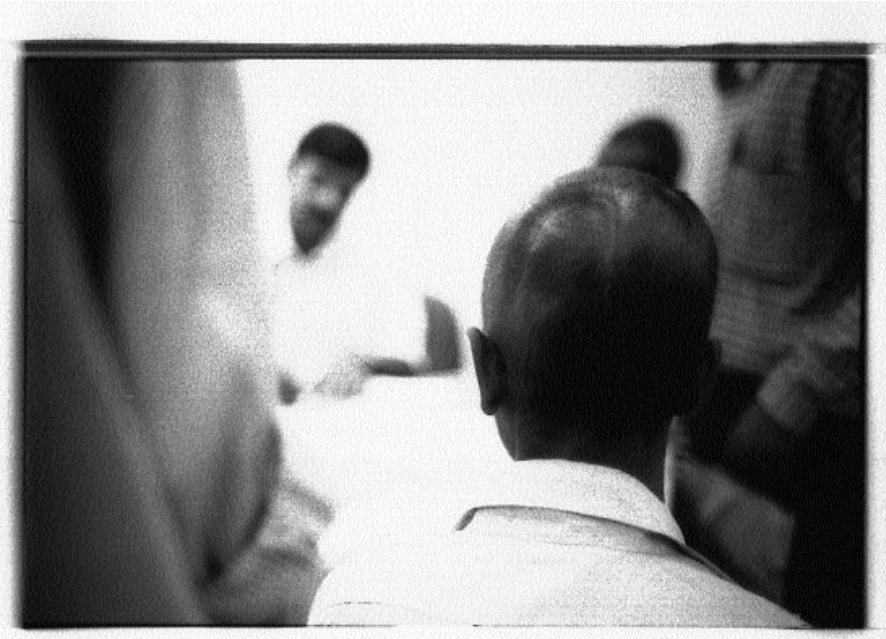
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No, he hadn't heard of benzene. He didn't know that it is a potent carcinogen. That it is known to cause leukaemia. That it was present in copious amounts in Delhi's air, especially after the city's environmental regulators triumphantly introduced green-labelled unleaded petrol that has a lot of benzene to help it burn. Mukesh did remember some awful evenings when it was difficult to breathe. In vivid detail, he described the taste and smell of diesel fumes, the burning sensation that he could feel in his chest.

On the inside, his own cells were eating him up. On the outside was a consuming city. The Supreme Court order on moving Delhi's commercial transport fleet to compressed natural gas was too late to affect Mukesh's employment or health. Moreover, who would scientifically establish that his condition was due to Delhi's toxic air? The Indian Council of Medical Research did not want to share recent information on cancer. And the doctors at AIIMS are too busy trying to keep patients alive.

They seemed likely to fail in the case of Amarnath Tiwari. At a young age, Tiwari started taking the appropriately named Shramjeevi Express train to Delhi. He came upon employment, and became a porter in the crowded Naya Bazaar area of the Walled City. Leukaemia struck in 1992, and he faced the dilemma of concealing the ailment to retain employment or allowing his body to rest. Like hundreds of cancer patients, AIIMS was the last resort. There, he found humanity in doctors who arranged some treatment money for him from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. Some relatives living in Dwarka on the southwestern margins of the city gave him shelter, but for a price. He remained alive, thanks largely to regular treatment, sundry bottles of Bournvita and Horlicks that he could buy with the treatment grant, and the prayers of his three daughters and six younger siblings in Bihar. He did not know exactly what Delhi meant to him. Once, it was employment. Later, it was the reason for his disease. Still later, it became his only hope.

Not everyone is as fortunate. The city treats every poor cancer patient differently. Most cannot reach the overworked AIIMS doctors. There are other hospitals, but they are mostly too expensive or too inefficient. The handful of cancer support groups in Delhi, struggling to raise funds, point out that a large number of patients simply disappear. Some leave their loved ones to avoid being a burden. Some are turned away by their loved ones. Then there are those who find their way to Shanti Avedna Ashram, not very far from AIIMS. It is a hospice for terminally ill cancer patients. It is in the heart of the city, but on the fringes of society. Here, I saw Christian nuns provide the dignity to cancer patients that their relatives denied. The smell of Death lingered in the corridors, as if the Grim Reaper had a branch office here. But he wasn't ugly. And he definitely wasn't in a great hurry to reap his harvest, unlike the relatives of the patients who lie inside.

Outside, there was heavy traffic on the Ring Road, not far from the ashram. Mangal Das, 50, was dodging the impatient vehicles, trying to cross the road. On his shoulders sat his 14-year-old son Sadhu, recently operated upon for a brain tumour at AIIMS. They were trying to get to a tent house godown, where some relatives from their village had provided free shelter and food. Sadhu's chances of surviving cancer were not bad. But surviving Delhi's traffic was a different proposition.

Photographs by Pradip Saha. First printed in Down To Earth, *15 November 2000.*

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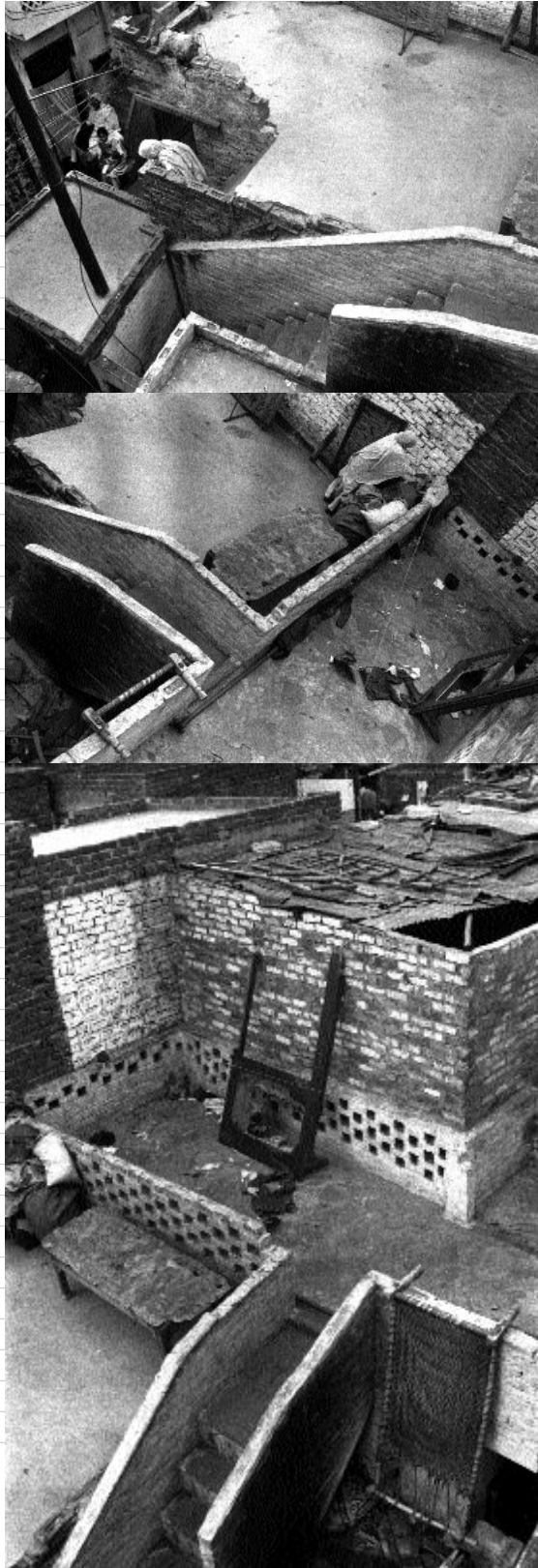
cybermohalla diaries

Mohalla in Hindi and Urdu means neighbourhood. Sarai's Cybermohalla project takes on the meaning of the word *mohalla*, its sense of alleys and corners, its sense of relatedness and concreteness, as a means for talking about one's 'place' in the city, and in cyberspace.

One can approach the Cybermohalla project from many directions. One can begin with a critique of the technological imagination and the expressive universe of the dominant mediascape, and then go on to map a counter strategy which grounds itself on access, sharing and democratic extensibility. One can see it as an experiment to engage with media technologies and software 'tactically', and create multiple local media contexts emerging within the larger media network that the Internet seems to engender. Still further, one can see it as an engagement with local history, experiences, modes of expression and creativity.

In its broadest imagination, one can see Cybermohalla as a desire for a wide and horizontal network (both real and virtual) of voices, texts, sounds and images in dialogue and debate. 'Public'-ation modes are and will be as diverse as wall magazines, books, posters, stickers, web pages, audio streams, animation etc. The present technological juncture provides a possibility – the point is to actualise it.

The present selection of writings is culled from the diaries maintained by young people working at the Compughar in the LNJP *basti*, Delhi. A working-class settlement constantly threatened by dislocation, the *basti* is in the heart of the city though invisible to Delhi's many millions. Compughar, started in May 2001, is a small media lab running on free software and low-cost media equipment. It is a collaborative effort between Sarai and Ankur, an NGO experimenting for the last two decades with alternatives in education.

The young people (mainly young women) who come to the Compughar are between the ages of 15 and 20. Most of them are school irregulars and dropouts. Their writings can be seen as a database of narrative, comment, observation, wordplay and reflection. To us this selection evokes a sense of the everyday that gestures towards an intricate social ecology.

We invite you to enjoy and engage with this specific mode of writing the city.

JEEBESH BAGCHI

> 6.00: There is quite a crowd at the tap, people are screaming. Five or six children and three to four women are standing there, each with three to four utensils in their hands.
> 6.15: Now there are many young children and two women whose children are hurriedly carrying the filled utensils to their homes.
> Time: When there is no water in the tap, time halts for many people. For instance, work stops. The movement of people into, and out of, the lane stops. Household chores stop. Without water, the time for taking a bath stops. Etc.

A Z R A

Time stands still when water runs out and the tap is dry. Time stands still when electricity goes. Time stands still when one sleeps in the afternoon. Time stands still when one sits in class in school. Time stands still when you can't afford to go out and have a good time.

A Y E S H A

A window has four eyes. Two eyes on the inside, and two on the outside. The window looks at those inside. For instance: The house, you, guests, she listens to what they say. And watches their work. And watches the utensils, the cupboard, the refrigerator, the television, the stove, children, foodstuff, machine, cot, chair. She watches food being eaten, people sleeping, dancing, children and husband and wife fighting. She also watches marriages, as also death. Watches children being fed. Watches them being hit. She sees pictures. She sees the clock. She sees people studying, people teaching. The door is visible. Can be seen the light, the fan, the cooler, the earthen pot. She sees cleanliness and filth. Many people working.

S H A H J E H A N

The electricity went. He said, "Oh!" and looked up towards the fan. My eyes also strayed towards it. We removed our gaze from it and looked at each other. I smiled and got up. First I opened the door. It was made of iron. When I unbolted it, there was a loud noise. The sound happened, and then suddenly ceased. But when I opened the door, it seemed a jumble of sounds came into the room from the outside.

The sound of cars. The sound from the cluster of six to seven houses opposite ours, where some 35 people live together. Seven rooms huddled around a tiny courtyard. At this hour, the men had all gone out to work. But 10-12 children were sitting in front of the houses, some on a cot, others on the floor. From among them, some were sitting near their mothers, crying, while the mothers themselves were busy with their handicraft chores. The children sported nothing on their bodies other than shorts. Maybe one or two did.

The main gate of that cluster was right in front of the door to Shabeena's house (where we were). I opened the door. Then opened the window. When there was electricity, and the fan and the cooler and the light were on, I didn't feel the need to open the door and the window. But without the light, the room was dark. Only a little light was streaming in from where the stairs were. After opening the door and the window, I moved towards the bed, looking all this while at the stairs...

A Z R A

Sometimes our eyes get fixed at one point so that even if we want to see something else, we can't!

It happened once that one of the daughters of my neighbours and her family members were going to attend someone's wedding. When that girl got dressed and stepped out of her house, I couldn't get my eyes off her! She was looking so beautiful! I just couldn't see any of her family members. My eyes were firmly fixed only on her. Her father also got ready and came and stood outside, because everyone else was still getting ready. As soon as he came, the girl covered her head properly with her *dupatta*. This shows she had shame (born of respect) in her eyes.

N E E L O F E R

The window sees many things on the outside. For instance, plants and trees, fights, some donkeys, electricity cables and poles, birds in the sky. She sees lanes. She sees a park, roads, dogs and cats. She sees people coming and going. She sees houses being constructed, people on roofs, kites being flown, pigeons flying. She sees water coming into the tap. She sees the tap run out of water. She sees rain. The moon and the stars. A street lamp being repaired. Men walking around in a drunken stupor. Children returning from school. Things displayed in shops. The ice cream vendor. The juice vendor. The shops selling biscuits.

The window sees on the outside two women fighting over water. And one is pulling the other's hair. And the window also sees two children walking past, singing songs. They are singing this song: *yeh dosti hum nahin todenge.* The window laughs out loud. Then she keeps singing this song. Then she sees, suddenly, four to five girls are going somewhere.

S H A H J E H A N

It was five in the evening. Time for water to start flowing from the tap. There was quite a crowd at the tap. After some time, the water came. Everyone started filling water. Just then one woman threw the utensil of another woman who was filling water, and started to fill water herself. When the woman brought back her utensil, she asked, Why did you throw it away? The other woman replied, It was my turn, how were you filling water? On hearing this, the first woman got really mad. She also threw away her utensil and said, It's my turn. Then said, Let me see who fills water when it's my turn. And started filling her utensil. Meanwhile, some other woman put her utensil there. Seeing this, the first woman slapped her. This started a fight between them. But the water was flowing from the tap into the drain nearby. Already, something in the drain was obstructing its flow and causing water to fill up in it. The water was filling up, but their fight was not coming to an end. It went on, and finally it was time and the tap ran out of water. And in this time water overflowed from the drain onto the lane. That was the only path people could use to move around. It got blocked with the water. In the end, they themselves had to suffer because of their fight. For two or three days, walking in the lane proved to be a hassle. Nobody cleaned the drain. Later a sweeper came and pulled out the garbage from it and unclogged it. Then water came in the evening and that day everyone filled water without any trouble. If one filled two buckets, then another filled another two. Everyone filled water that day...

S H A M S H E R

the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **money falling** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **boxes** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise **the kut kut of tube lights switching on**
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **handicrafts** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **pearls being strung together** noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a whistle being blown** noise noise noise noise noise
noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise **the dhud dhud of spoons on plates** noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **rocks breaking** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a slap** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise noise **a cupboard opening** noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **children screaming** noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **someone selling fruits and vegetables** noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise *chana* **being sold** noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise noise **spices being ground** noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **clothes being stitched** noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise **cooler** noise noise noise noise
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noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise **stove** noise noise noise noise noise
noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise **etc.** noise noise noise noise
noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise **etc.** noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **things being made** noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a stove being lit** noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **people attending a wedding** noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a nail being hit** noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **the pages of books being turned** noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **the whistle of a cooker** noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **houses breaking** noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a door or window being made** noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **people around** noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **clothes being washed** noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **utensils being cleaned** noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **bangles and anklets** noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a box being opened** noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **songs** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a television and a deck at seven in the morning**
the noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise **a television at two in the afternoon** noise noise
the noise noise noise noise noise noise **of** noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise
noise noise noise noise **t.v. sets that are switched on in every home at five in the evening**
noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise noise **SHAHJEHAN**

Lanes there are several in our colony. The lanes in our colony are narrow. Scooters and cycles don't pass through easily. And also, the lanes stay very dirty. Sometimes they are cleaned. We were told this by a woman. She said she didn't like these lanes. That's because they have become narrower as people have constructed houses along them. So it's a problem for everyone. No cars can pass through these lanes...

Actually, I'm not scared to go into the lanes. But one thing that frightens me is men who get high on drugs. I feel very scared of them. And in my colony during Ramzaan I'm scared. This is because cats move around at night.

S H A H J E H A N

Morning: From every house can be heard the noise of children screaming. And on the tap, the noise of buckets and utensils.
The sound of utensils being washed *sur sur sur*...
Of clothes being washed *ghar ghar ghar*...
Of televisions being switched on and channels being changed *tuk tuk tuk*...
Of clothes having been washed and being swung in the air to be dried *jhut jhut jhut*...
From motor cars *suur suur suur*...
Of stoves being lit *tun tun tun*...
Of water being drunk *gutuk gutuk gutuk*...
Of walking *chut chut chut*...
Of *rotis* being made *thup thup thup*...

S H A H J E H A N

Many travellers come on this road, go on this road. And travellers of all kinds. For instance, poor people, rich people, very poor people. All kinds of travellers come on this road. You can hear the sound of brakes and horns. On this road are the sounds of all kinds of cars. Here the smells of petrol, smoke and the scent of perfume from humans can be smelt.

S H A H J E H A N

> Turkman Gate: Here accidents mostly happen on roads. What I am about to tell you happened eight years ago. There is a school near Turkman Gate, G.G.S. Sec. School, Bul Buli Khan, Asaf Ali, New Delhi. A terrible accident occurred here in which one *ricksha walla* and three to four school children were injured and one child died as well. On seeing the accident, one woman had a heart attack and she also died. People stopped sending their children to school. Fear had filled their hearts.
> Gandhi Market: Here there is a place where if there weren't a red light, people would become used to seeing accidents. But one happened here as well. Many years ago, the daughter of our *pradhan* Roshan met with an accident that shook everyone's heart. This accident happened with a bus. People say that on coming under the bus, she died, but pieces of her brain lay fluttering, jumping around. Even today people tremble when recounting the accident.
> Opposite here: This road asks for one sacrifice every year, people say. Ten years back, there was a woman who was pregnant. She was crossing the road with her daughter when

a bus came and the girl was run over. She came under the tyre of the bus. She pulled hard at her mother and she fainted, screaming. And why wouldn't she have, I saw this with my own eyes. When I saw the girl, she didn't have eyes and her head had become flattened against the road. I can still see that face clearly and then the whole incident gets replayed in my head. Then police arrested the bus driver and friends and relatives of the woman broke the bus.

A year back, two boys were listening to music while driving their car. They too met with an accident with a car. They lived in Turkman Gate. This had caused quite a sensation.

It was during Ramzaan, before Eid. A young man was going towards Delite (cinema hall) after his evening prayers when he got run over by a truck. Lots of blood flowed out of his body. My younger brother had gone to see it. He told me.

Whenever there is an accident around here, silence descends upon the colony and for many days, it is all that is discussed.

A Z R A

The bus came. I got in.
   The bus was crowded.
      Buying the ticket proved to be a problem.
        Bought it while being pushed around.
          Couldn't get a seat.
           Travelled standing.
            A boy pushed me.
              I collided with the girl standing next to me.
                You scoundrel! Stand properly.
                  Again someone pushed me.
                  The woman didn't say anything.
                    "It's okay, son".
                      I apologised.
                  The bus stop arrived.
              Some people got off.
            I got a seat.
            I heaved a sigh of relief and sat down.
          Looked out of the window – Wow! India Gate
      I saw...
     An ice cream vendor.
    Children playing with balloons.
   Children playing badminton.
  Some people were rowing boats.
It was nice to look out.
   The bus picked up a little speed.
    I was sitting on my seat.
      Chin on hand, I started to think.
      Wish I had a car.
        Then I wouldn't have to go through all this trouble.
        Would have gone out, some, with family.

To India Gate as well.
My wife and kids would have played there.
I would also have been with them then.
I was lost in my thoughts.
A girl came up to me and said.
"Ladies' seat, please".
I snapped out of my thoughts.
Got up without saying anything.
But in my mind the thoughts stayed.
Car, India Gate, children, wife, me.
Then I heard the conductor's voice.
And realised...
I have reached my destination.
I got off the bus.
And took a *ricksha* to office.
I looked around while sitting in the *ricksha*.
Looked at the *ricksha walla* and thought...
How hard this man works.
He must also have dreams.
But he doesn't even have proper clothes.
And thought of other things as well.
Looked at the people on the road.
But I couldn't get the *ricksha walla* out of my head.
Or the other *ricksha wallas*.
Wish I could do something for them.

MEMORY GAME #16, PLAYED BY ALL

I was on my roof today. I heard many types of noises. Of birds, songs from a deck, children crying, laughing. Then I climbed down. I heard the water running in the tap, someone was taking a bath. Someone slapped a boy. I heard the slap. The sound of the television could also be heard.

SHAMSHER

There was a boy who had taken to frequenting our lane. He would come whistling and singing, and peep into our house while passing by. This had been going on for several days.

A man was distributing *sharbat* in our lane. The boy also took one glass from him. And started gesturing (with his eyes) to the girl who lives opposite our house. It looked like he was asking her to drink some *sharbat*. I found this very funny and laughed. I showed this to my elder sister and she also laughed.

Seeing us laugh, Mohataram *bhai* asked us what we were finding so funny. We pointed towards the boy, still laughing. He saw the boy, and went to him and slapped him really hard. Seeing this, the girl, who had been standing in the lane opposite us, disappeared. Mohataram *bhai* gave the boy a good beating. But in another two to three days, he was

back to his antics.

An elderly man is our neighbour. He goes out to work in the morning and comes back in the evening with his food. He is from Pakistan. His name is Mirajo, but we call him *chacha*. The people here really trouble him. And boys make so much fun of him that... Once the boy I was just telling you about brought some more boys with him. They had two eggs in each hand. They passed by our lane. *Bhai* Mirajo had just returned from work. He washed up and was sitting down to eat when those boys started pelting eggs at him and his house. Poor *bhai* Mirajo didn't do anything. Yesterday when he came to our house, he was weeping as he was saying, "If I do something wrong, you can all hit me. But I haven't done anything. Why do all of you needlessly bother me?" He had tears in his eyes. Seeing him, we also wanted to cry. Then he left.

After this conversation, my mother spoke with *bhai* Syed and he asked *bhai* Mirajo to file a complaint with the police. But *bhai* Mirajo refused. He said, "It's no use. I have gone to file a complaint many times. But they reduce everything to a laughing matter". But when *ammi* asked *bhai* Syed to go and file a report, he played his role as a brother. (Actually every one calls *bhai* Syed '*bhai* Syed', but we call him *mamu*).

When *mamu* accompanied *bhai* Mirajo to the police station, the complaint was lodged. But there was no follow-up from the police. Our *mamu* also let the whole thing pass.

Some days later, I saw from the roof, *mamu* coming towards our house. He was saying to a woman, "When will you return my money? It's been so many days. Will you return it after I die?" That woman replied, "Why do you speak this way? Am I not your sister? I'll give you back your money tomorrow". The woman went to her house. *Mamu* was coming towards our house when he saw the same boy sitting on the cot that was lying there. He said, "You scoundrel, you've been at it again!"

Hearing this, the boy pulled out a knife from his pocket and stabbed *mamu* in his stomach. *Mamu* was only slightly hurt. So the boy stabbed him again on his arm. Seeing this, I got scared. I was sitting there, writing. The pen fell from my hand. Lots of people came and grabbed the boy. Police came and took him away. Suddenly the lane was alive with noise and activity and women pulled their children off the lane into their homes. One could also hear a lot of male voices. If I had a camera, I would have clicked a snap.

All of *mamu*'s relatives came and took him to the hospital. The incident upset everyone. People said unkind things about the boy. They wondered, "If a sixteen-year-old boy can do this, then, oh god, so can our children! Will our children also behave like this?" *Bhai* Syed became the talk of the colony.

M E H R U N I S S A

There was a boy whose name was Sonu. Even after the show was over, he refused to step out of the cinema hall because he had seen in the film that acid rain was pouring outside. This had got entrenched in his heart. And even though people tried to explain to him otherwise, he refused to leave the hall. Everyone thought they should force him out now. But he wouldn't budge. His parents were distressed. Finally, people used physical force to get him out. Incidentally, it was raining outside. The boy was mortified and started howling. Everyone decided it was time to find a solution to this.

His uncle explained to him and said, Son, come, otherwise Kilwish will come. On hearing this, the boy got even more scared. Then one man thought, if this boy is scared of Kilwish, then perhaps if Shaktimaan were to appear before him, maybe our problem could be solved. One man was made to appear before him dressed up as Shaktimaan. The boy did reach home, but the thought of acid rain wouldn't leave him.

One day, all of them (mother, father and Sonu) went out. Suddenly, the sky was overcast with clouds and it started to rain. The boy was visibly shaken and he started to run. He reached the same hall where he had seen the film. Everyone was struck by his reappearance. The boy felt safe on seeing them all. But he was so scared of the rain... as if it was going to eat him up. When it stopped raining, Sonu's parents took him to a doctor. The doctor asked for some medicine to be brought, and asked him what he was scared of. The boy said, Acid. The doctor asked, And are you scared of water? The boy said, No. The doctor said, What rainfall has is water. Why don't you go out and see for yourself? Shaktimaan will be right there.

The boy went out. At first he was very scared. But then, all his fear vanished. His parents were very happy.

S U R A J

What is today this beautiful Haathi Park used to be a colony. In that colony lived my best friend Rukhsana. I used to go often to meet her. But I don't know where she will be now. I had asked her where she would go. Now I think maybe I'll run into her in a market. The colony was pulled down a year ago. No one knows where everyone was sent away... At that time we had heard they were being shifted to NOIDA. Everyone was cursing [those responsible] for sending them so far away. So far away, now what will happen to our men's jobs? How will they come so far? We lived a life of comfort here, now we'll always be scared.

A Z R A

I saw the frame of a door being made, a window being made. **Thuk... thuk... thuk...**

Then I saw a shop. Just then a motorcycle sped past. It looked brand new. A man was sitting on it. **Grrr... grrrrrr...rrr...grrrr.**

Here a man was starting his two-wheeler. The motorcycle had gone far away so I could hear it much less. And the sound of the scooter starting could be heard. **Turrak... turrak...kkk...kkk...**

I was passing by a lane when I heard the sound of water. **Jhur... jhur...** Up ahead, some people were speaking with one another. I could hear them talk. I went ahead a little and saw two or three people buying things from the sweet shop. Just then, a bottle of cold drink slipped out of a child's hand and broke. **Kun... nnn... tus...** So the boy has to pay the shopkeeper the cost of the bottle. In the shop also sat its owner, whose name is Ramdas, whose age must be 40. In his shop you get flour, pulses, rice, oil, soap, painkillers and also cold drinks etc.

S H A M S H E R

— — — — — — — — — — — basti... stone — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — line — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — you — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — children — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — computer — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — mad — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — medical — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — — sound — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — imagination — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — electricity — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — cupboard — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — incident — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — man — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — filth — — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — school — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — living — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — shop — — — — — — — — — — — —
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— — — — — — — — — — — gutter — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — report — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — children — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — lanes — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — water — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — playing — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — lines — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — tap — — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — relationships — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — drains — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — pipes — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — honesty — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — house — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — memory — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — neighbour — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — woman — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — elderly — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — employee — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — wire — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — barking — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — tap — — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — dishonesty — — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — carelessness — — — — — — — — —
— — — — — — — — — — — you — — — — — — — — — — —

M E M O R Y   G A M E   # 0 7 ,   P L A Y E D   B Y   A L L

But there was one person whose death had really saddened me. This person, who was very old. Don't know if she had any relatives. This happened during days that were ordinary. That is, it was neither too hot, nor too cold. I was going to the Arvind Hospital with my younger sister. When, on the way, where there is a bus stop where no bus ever stops, and where no one even waits for one, there lay the dead body of a very fat woman. She had probably died due to lack of food. When I was walking past, I smelt a horrible stench, a stench quite different from all the others that lingered there. I couldn't stop myself, so I decided to go closer and see. What I saw made my hair stand on end. I saw a woman, without any clothes on, lying there, dead. There were maggots all over her body. And flies were sticking to her...

We were asked to come back [to the hospital] after three days. I was waiting to go back. I hadn't told anyone about the dead body. I was getting impatient. I wanted to see the body again. I wanted to ask the people around there about the woman. I wanted to get the body buried, or cremated. Instead of going to the hospital, I walked towards the bus stop. My sister implored me to come straight to the hospital, or we'd get delayed like the other day. I told her to quietly come with me, that I had something important to do. I returned to the same place, but the woman wasn't there. I was distressed and ran up and down looking for her...

Nearby was a barber's shop. The barber was very old. (Maybe he too has died. Now I see some other man at the shop). That old man was fair skinned; he had white hair, short stature and was wearing a *kurta pyjama*. I ran up to him and asked him, Till a day back there was a woman lying here who was dead. Where has she gone? He said, A government vehicle carried her away with the garbage...

A Z R A

I was going to my friend Tanzilla's house. Because she had called me up the day before and said, "It's been so many days since you came to my house. Does it never occur to you to come? You've forgotten me". I said, "No, that's not true. Fine, I'll come day after tomorrow". So Tan said, "Yeah. You'll come on invitation, not otherwise. You're very selfish".

I: Don't you lecture me. It's been so many days since you came to my house.

Tanzilla was silent. After some time she said, "You'll come, won't you?"

I: Yes my dear, I will come.

My younger sister was with me. Tanzilla's house is towards Ajmeri Gate. If I wanted, I could have taken a bus. But I wanted to take a *ricksha* because the buses were quite crowded. So I asked a *ricksha walla*. When he asked for too much money, I asked another, and then several *ricksha wallas*. But either they would ask for too much money, or they would outright refuse to go that side. I got angry. I started to walk. It was around 11 in the morning. I climbed onto the footpath in front of the shops. I saw the shops were closed. I wondered why. My attention shifted from the *rickshas* to the shops. After walking a little, I saw written on a shop: "Sunday Close". I suddenly remembered, Oh! It's Sunday today! Tanzilla's father and all three brothers will be at home. I feel a little hesitant speaking with Tanzilla in front of them.

My first thought was to return home. Then thought, Tanzilla will be waiting for me. I got off the footpath. The sun was beating down on me now. My sister said, "Let's take a

ricksha". I stop a *ricksha walla*, settle a price and we sit in it. The *ricksha walla* seemed old. But this man, he really speeds! Whenever there was a pothole, the *ricksha* would jump and along with it, the two of us would too. I told the *ricksha walla*, "*Baba*, move a little slower". He was looking at his watch repeatedly. Maybe he didn't even hear me. A huge pothole comes, the *ricksha* jumps violently, the gift I was carrying for Tanzilla falls from my hand. The three-wheeler from behind us moves over it, and the gift turns to dust. The *ricksha* stops. I say in a slightly high-pitched voice, "*Baba*, I told you, didn't I, to move slowly. Now see, you've broken my gift". The *ricksha walla* looks a little ashamed, says, "*Beti*, I didn't hear you. I'm in a rush because I have to pick up children from a school, and I am a little late". Then we move at a slower (right) speed.

Ajmeri Gate comes. I get off near Tanzilla's and start to pay the *ricksha walla*. He says, "Let it be, *beti*. You suffered a loss because of me".

I: *Arre baba*, what had to happen, happened. Now take the money".

After much argument, he accepts the money. Then takes off, the *ricksha* moving at a great speed, as if flying in the air, because he had to reach the children to their homes from their school.

I ring Tanzilla's doorbell. It's Tanzilla herself who opens the door. She says, "So madam, you have arrived. I have been waiting for you so long". I step in...

N E E L O F E R

Sadia's friend, 14 years: Yes, once it happened with me. I was going to a doctor's to get my sister's check-up done. It was nine at night. There were four to five boys, don't know whether from this colony or another. There was no electricity in the whole colony that night. The boy I knew was right in front, followed by two others. They were walking very slowly. I wanted to quickly walk past them, so I increased my speed and overtook two of them. The ones in front of me turned around and saw me. They reduced their speed to a crawl. And the boys behind me were very close to me now. My heart was beating violently. I cursed the street for being so narrow that not more than one person can walk in it at a time.

A Z R A

It was five-thirty in the evening. I climbed onto the roof. My younger brother Rehan was flying a kite. Our roof is the lowest in our colony, and everyone else's is quite high. And some even have two to three storied houses. I spread a sheet on the roof and sat down. Our neighbouring house is two-storied. On its roof, a boy was doing his work from school. He is Raju and studies in the eighth class. I didn't use to speak much with him. And he also used to stay aloof. Because in my house, they are very strict about such things. Sometimes, when it couldn't be helped, or when we had some work with one another, we would speak, but he always addressed me as his elder sister.

My brother's kite was flying in the direction of his roof. A wind was blowing. Many people, boys, children, were on their roofs. The sound of decks playing in different places could be heard. Also could be heard the sound of girls chatting and laughing.

N E E L O F E R

Almost on his death bed. > > > > But an evergreen heart. > > > > And in love. > > > > Meaning, oldie saw old woman. > > > > The heart fluttered. > > > > Song: *tumhe dekha to yeh jaana...* > > > > *Dekha hai pehli baar...* > > > > He winked. > > > > Song: *aankh maare...* > > > > Writes her a letter. > > > > She can't read. Off to a friend for help. > > > > The friend's eyes also open to a whole new world. > > > > The beginning of yet another love story. > > > > Meanwhile, the oldie is bread winner for his family no more. > > > > For he is busy fulfilling his lover's heart's desires. > > > > The old woman is crazy with love. > > > > She dyes her hair black. She's young again! > > > > The lovers go roaming around, beaming with delight. > > > > The woman runs into a friend. > > > > Her glasses were broken. She sees the oldie. > > > > Thinks it is the woman's husband. > > > > The oldie buys her (the friend) glasses. > > > > Eyesight back, she gets the shock of her life. > > > > *Arre*, this husband is MINE! > > > > She faints. The woman (lover) is troubled. > > > > Oldie picks up his wife. Lover is jealous. > > > > Thinks to herself: "Oldie, a young woman in front of you, and an old one in your arms!! > > > > "Oh, okay, she can be the sister-in-law. > > > > "Oh no! A sister-in-law is half a wife!" > > > > Oldie sprinkles water on the old woman's face. > > > > The old woman comes to, and says, with a heavy heart, "*jijajee*". > > > > The woman is happy. > > > > The other is heart-broken. She sings a song. > > > > *Is dil ke tukde hazaar huwe.* > > > > *Dost dost na rahaa.* > > > >

MEMORY GAME #23, PLAYED BY ALL

It was summer. We were all feeling hot. Shabeena pulled out a *punkha* and started to fan herself with it. She handed me the bottle. I said, "I want only half of this". But she said, "There are four of us. If we all take only half a bottle, who will we give the rest to? It's hot. Just drink up".

Their backs were to the door. So there was very little light on their faces. We thought every person passing by the door was going to come in. So at every slight sound, we would look in that direction. When they would turn their heads, the light from the door would sharply define their profiles.

Light was streaming in from the window as well. But very near the window was a wall, which is made of bricks, which was made only recently. It was the light reflected from this wall of bricks that was coming in through the window. So the light near the window looked red.

They finished drinking their bottles. Then chatted, reminisced over their school days, talked about their teachers and friends. I was sitting right there, unable to force the cold drink down my throat.

They said they should leave. Shabeena and I asked them to stay a while longer. They stayed another two minutes, then the woman said, "We should go now. We have to go visit a relative as well".

As soon as they left, the house seemed empty. As it is there was no one else in her house. Within a minute of their leaving, I told Shabeena, "I should also go now". Once again, she asked me to stay. But I left.

Our houses are not far from each other. When I stepped out of her house, there was no electricity. I cast a glance at the house opposite and walked on. Right up ahead was the

road. Vehicles were plying on it. I was looking at them as I turned towards my house. Two minutes before my house is a tap where I saw yellow and green utensils, buckets etc. lined up to be filled in the evening. I saw them and thought, if water doesn't come in the evening, so many people will be troubled.

Right in front of the tap is my house. It has yellow walls and a green door. The room right in front is four yards wide. And on the door is a curtain. I removed the curtain and entered. *Ammi* was sewing clothes on the sewing machine. (*Ammi*: dark skinned, parrot green clothes, thin lips, big eyes, reading glasses, a black *dupatta* around her neck). I went in the door and started to take my slippers off. *Ammi* looked up at me from over her glasses and said, "What happened? What took you so long? If you're given a little freedom, you start misusing it. Why have you come back? You should have stayed there. Why don't you take your clothes with you?"

A Z R A

To dream is to imagine. Dreams are of two kinds. One, that we see when we're awake. And the other, which we see while asleep. The world of dreams is an altogether different world. For instance, I once dreamt I was at India Gate, playing with balloons. And I got tired. So I sat down right there, on the grass. There was greenery all around me.

All of a sudden, the weather changed. A cool breeze began to blow, and with that it started to rain. The rain drops on my face felt like dew drops on leaves in winter. I felt like I was in heaven. My heart felt at peace, calm. Oblivious to reality, I was lost in a world where I even forgot myself.

Just then my sister shook me and said, "*Nanhee*, when will you get up? It's eight. Till when will you sleep? Now get up. Wash your hands and face. I'm making tea". I was livid with my sister and started to fight with her. "Why did you wake me up? I was dreaming such a beautiful dream. You shook me awake and shattered my dream".

My sister replied, "Silly, a dream is a dream. Dreams shatter when you awaken. Why mourn them?" I thought, that's also true! Dreams are after all dreams. I apologised to my sister and went to wash up.

Y A S H O D A
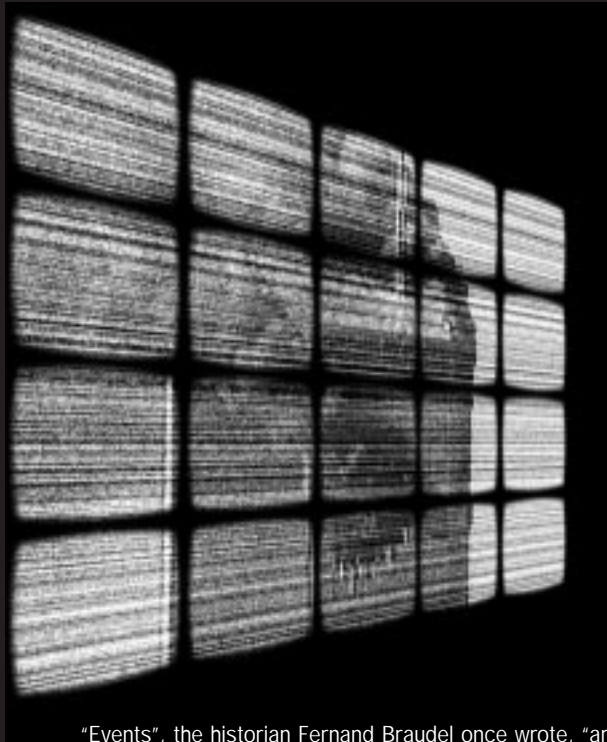
9/11
MEDIA CITY

"Events", the historian Fernand Braudel once wrote, "are dust". Braudel's contempt, measuring the event against longer cycles of historical time offers little help in understanding *catastrophe*, when a constellation in time throws into relief death, ruin and the storms of a terrible future.

In this sense when the two aircraft crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York on the 11th of September, we had all the elements of a catastrophic event, marking time and intimating a transition, recalling similar moments: the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in 1914, the Reichstag Fire of 1933, the fall of the Berlin Wall. As catastrophe, 9/11 was also *simultaneous*, when the experience of a city on that day was rendered public for the world through the media. The wounds of a global city, the fragility of an empire, were relayed through the Internet, through phone calls, and above all by global television. As *repetition* (how many times were the towers destroyed on the television screen?) overwhelmed the sorrow of the dead, it also rehearsed a new war. "All efforts to render politics aesthetic", wrote Benjamin, " culminate in war".

The essays in this section open up a discussion of the catastrophic event, from a memoir of that Day, to the branding of the Event that followed, and philosophical reflections on issues of war, revenge, mourning and justice. There is also a selection of powerful postings from the reader-list, an electronic discussion forum on media and the city, hosted by Sarai. And as markers of time, the discussions begin with 9/11 and end with 13/12, signalling the opening of a new South Asian crisis.

Memory in the media-city is ephemeral; the experiences of Beirut, Sarajevo and Mogadishu have long vanished. To *remember* is to challenge the overexposed surface of the Media-city.

RAVI SUNDARAM

A Day That Will Live In…?

PATRICK DEER + TOBY MILLER

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By the time you read this, it will be wrong. Things seemed to be moving so fast in these first days after aeroplanes crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the Pennsylvania earth. Each certainty is as carelessly dropped as it was once carelessly assumed. The sounds of lower Manhattan that used to serve as white noise for residents – sirens, screeches, screams – are no longer signs without a referent. Instead, they make folks stare and stop, hurry and hustle wondering whether the noises we know so well are in fact, this time, coefficients of a new reality. At the time of writing, the events themselves are *also* signs without referents – there has been no direct claim of responsibility, and little proof offered by accusers since the 11th. But it has been assumed that there is a link to US foreign policy, its military and economic presence in the Arab world, and opposition to it that seeks revenge. In the intervening weeks the US media and the war planners have supplied their own narrow frameworks, making New York's 'ground zero' into the starting point for a new escalation of global violence. We want to write here about the combination of sources and sensations that came that day, and the jumble of knowledges and emotions that filled our minds.

Working late the night before, Toby was awoken in the morning by one of the planes right overhead. That happens sometimes. I have long expected a crash when I've heard the roar of jet engines so close – but I didn't this time. Often when that sound hits me, I get up and go for a run down by the water, just near Wall Street. Something kept me back that day. Instead, I headed for my laptop. Because I cannot rely on local media to tell me very much about the role of the US in world affairs, I was reading the British newspaper *The Guardian* online when it flashed a two-line report about the planes. I looked up at the calendar above my desk to see whether it was April 1st. Truly.

Then I got off-line and turned on the TV to watch CNN. That second, the phone rang. My quasi-ex-girlfriend I'm still in love with called from the mid-West. She was due to leave that day for the Bay Area. Was I all right? We spoke for a bit. She said my cell phone was out, and indeed it was for the remainder of the day. As I hung up from her, my friend Ana rang, tearful and concerned. Her husband, Patrick, had left an hour before for work in New Jersey, and it seemed like a dangerous separation. All separations were potentially fatal that day. You wanted to know where everyone was, every minute.

She told me she had been trying to contact Palestinian friends who worked and attended school near the event – their ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds made for real poignancy, as we both thought of the prejudice they would (probably) face, regardless of the eventual who/what/when/where/how of these events. We agreed to meet at Bruno's, a bakery on La Guardia Place. For some reason I really took my time, though, before getting to Ana. I shampooed and shaved under the shower. This was a horror, and I needed to look my best, even as men and women were losing and risking their lives. I can only interpret what I did as an attempt to impose normalcy and control on the situation, on my environment.

When I finally made it down there, she'd located our friends. They were safe. We stood in the street and watched the Towers. Horrified by the sight of human beings tumbling to their deaths, we turned to buy a tea/coffee – again some ludicrous normalisation – but were drawn back by chilling screams from the street. Racing outside, we saw the second Tower collapse, and clutched at each other. People were streaming towards us from further downtown.

We decided to be with our Palestinian friends in their apartment. When we arrived, we learnt that Mark had been four minutes away from the WTC when the first plane hit. I tried to call my daughter in London and my father in Canberra, but to no avail. I rang the mid-West, and asked my maybe-former *novia* to call England and Australia to report in on me. Our friend Jenine got through to relatives on the West Bank. Israeli tanks had commenced a bombardment there, right after the planes had struck New York. Family members spoke to her from under the kitchen table, where they were taking refuge from the shelling of their house.

Then we gave ourselves over to television, like so many others around the world, even though these events were happening only a mile away. We wanted to hear official word, but there was just a huge absence – Bush was busy learning to read in Florida then leading from the front in Louisiana and Nebraska. As the day wore on, we split up and regrouped, meeting folks. One guy was in the subway when smoke filled the car. No one could breathe properly, people were screaming, and his only thought was for his dog DeNiro back in Brooklyn. From the panic of the train, he managed to call his mom on a cell to ask her to feed DeNiro that night, because it looked like he wouldn't get home. A pregnant woman feared for her unborn as she fled the blasts, pushing the stroller with her baby in it as she did so. Away from these heart-rending tales from strangers, there was the fear: good grief, what horrible price would the US Government extract for this, and who would be the overt and covert agents and targets of that suffering? What bloodlust would this generate? What would be the pattern of retaliation and counter-retaliation? What would become of civil rights and cultural inclusiveness?

So a jumble of emotions came forward, I assume in all of us. Anger was not there for me, just intense sorrow, shock and fear, and the desire for intimacy. Network television *appeared* to offer me that, but in an ultimately unsatisfactory way. For I think I saw the end-result of reality TV that day. I have since decided to call this 'emotionalisation' – network TV's tendency to substitute analysis of US politics and economics with a stress on feelings.

Of course, powerful emotions have been engaged by this horror, and there is value in

addressing that fact and letting out the pain. I certainly needed to do so. But on that day and subsequent ones, I looked to the networks, traditional sources of current affairs knowledge, for just that – informed, multi-perspectival journalism that would allow me to make *sense* of my feelings, and come to a just and reasoned decision about how the US should respond. I waited in vain. No such commentary came forward. Just a lot of asinine inquiries from reporters that were identical to those they pose to basketballers after a game: Question: 'How do you feel now?' Answer: 'God was with me today'. For the networks were insistent on asking everyone in sight how they *felt* about the end of *las torres gemelas*. In this case, we heard the feelings of survivors, firefighters, viewers, media mavens, Republican and Democrat hacks, and vacuous Beltway state-of-the-nation pundits. But learning of the military-political economy, global inequality, and ideologies and organisations that made for our grief and loss – for that, there was no space. TV had forgotten how to do it. *My* principal feeling soon became one of frustration.

So I headed back to where I began the day – *The Guardian* web site, where I was given insightful analyses of the messy factors of history, religion, economics, and politics that had created this situation. As I dealt with the tragedy of folks whose lives had been so cruelly lost, I pondered what it would take for this to stop. Or whether this was just the beginning. I knew one thing – the answers wouldn't come from mainstream US television, no matter how full of feelings it was. And that made Toby anxious. And afraid. He still is. And so the dreams come. In one, I am suddenly furloughed from my job with an orchestra, as audience numbers tumble. I make my evening-wear way to my locker along with the other players, emptying it of bubble gum and instrument. The next night, I see a gigantic, fifty-feet high wave heading for the city beach where I've come to swim. Somehow I am sheltered behind a huge wall, as all the people around me die. Dripping, I turn to find myself in a media-stereotype 'crack house' of the early '90s – desperate looking black men, endless doorways, sudden police arrival, and my earnest search for a passport that will explain away my presence. I awake in horror, to the realisation that the passport was already open and stamped – racialisation at work for Toby, every day and in every way, as a white man in New York City.

Ana's husband, Patrick, was at work ten miles from Manhattan when 'it' happened. In the hallway, I overheard some talk about two planes crashing, but went to teach anyway in my usual morning stupor. This was just the usual chatter of disaster junkies. I didn't hear the words, 'World Trade Center' until ten thirty, at the end of the class at the college I teach at in New Jersey, across the Hudson River. A friend and colleague walked in and told me the news of the attack, to which I replied, "You must be fucking joking". He was a little offended. Students were milling haphazardly on the campus in the late summer weather, some looking panicked like me. My first thought was of some general failure of the air-traffic control system. There must be planes falling out of the sky all over the country. Then the height of the towers: how far towards our apartment in Greenwich Village would the towers fall? Neither of us worked in the financial district a mile downtown, but was Ana safe? Where
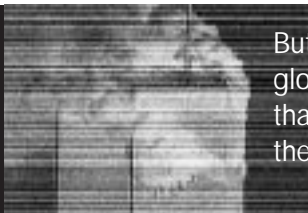
But learning of the military-political economy, global inequality, and ideologies and organisations that made for our grief and loss—for that, there was no space

on the college campus could I see what was happening? I recognised the same physical sensation I had felt the morning after Hurricane Andrew in Miami, seeing at a distance the wreckage of our shattered apartment across a suburban golf course strewn with debris and flattened power lines. Now I was trapped in the suburbs again at an unbridgeable distance from my wife and friends who were witnessing the attacks first-hand. Were they safe? What on earth was going on? This feeling of being cut off, my path to the familiar places of home blocked, remained for weeks my dominant experience of the disaster.

In my office, phone calls to the city didn't work. There were six voice-mail messages from my teenaged brother Alex in small-town England giving a running commentary on the attack and its aftermath that he was witnessing live on television while I dutifully taught my writing class. "Hello, Patrick, where are you? Oh my god, another plane just hit the towers. Where are you?" The web was choked: no access to newspapers online. E-mail worked, but no one was wasting time writing. My office window looked out over a soccer field to the still woodlands of western New Jersey: behind me to the east the disaster must be unfolding. Finally I found a web site with a live stream from ABC television, which I watched flickering and stilted on the tiny screen. It had all already happened: both towers already collapsed, the Pentagon attacked, another plane shot down over Pennsylvania; unconfirmed reports said there were other hijacked aircraft still out there unaccounted for. Manhattan was sealed off. George Washington Bridge, Lincoln and Holland tunnels, all the bridges and tunnels from New Jersey I used to mock, shut down. Police actions sealed off the highways into 'the city'. The city I liked to think of as the capital of the world was cut off completely from the outside, suddenly vulnerable and under siege. There was no way to get home. The phone rang abruptly and Alex, three thousand miles away, told me he had spoken to Ana earlier and she was safe. After a dozen tries, I managed to get through and spoke to her, learning that she and Toby had seen people jumping and then the second tower fall. Other friends had been even closer. Everyone was safe, we thought. I sat for another couple of hours in my office uselessly. The news was incoherent, stories contradictory, loops of the planes hitting the towers only just ready for recycling. The attacks were already being transformed into 'the World Trade Center Disaster', not yet the historical singularity of the emergency 'nine one one'.

Stranded, I had to spend the night in New Jersey at my boss's house, reminded again of the boundless generosity of Americans to relative strangers. In an effort to protect his young son from the as yet unfiltered images saturating cable and Internet, my friend's TV set was turned off and we did our best to reassure. We listened surreptitiously to news bulletins on AM radio, hoping that the roads would open. Walking the dog with my friend's wife and son we crossed a park on the ridge on which Upper Montclair sits. Ten miles away a huge column of smoke was rising from lower Manhattan, where the stunning absence of the towers was clearly visible. The summer evening was unnervingly still. We kicked a soccer ball around on the front lawn and a woman walked distracted by, shocked and pale up the tree-lined suburban street, suffering her own wordless trauma. I remembered that though most of my students were ordinary working people, Montclair is a well off dormitory for the financial sector and high-rises of Wall Street and Midtown. For the time being, this was a white-collar disaster. I slept a short night in my friend's house, waking to hope I had

dreamed it all, and took the commuter train in with shell-shocked bankers and corporate types. All men, all looking nervously across the river towards glimpses of the Manhattan skyline as the train neared Hoboken. "I can't believe they're making us go in", one guy had repeated on the station platform. He had watched the attacks from his office in Midtown, "The whole thing". Inside the train we all sat in silence.

Up from the PATH train station on 9th street I came onto a car-less 6th Avenue. At 14th, street barricades now sealed off downtown from the rest of the world. I walked down the middle of the avenue to a newspaper stand; the Indian proprietor shrugged "No deliveries below 14th". I had not realised that the closer to the disaster you came, the less information would be available. Except, I assumed, for the evidence of my senses. But at 8:00 am the Village was eerily still, few people about, nothing in the sky, including the twin towers. I walked to Houston Street, which was full of trucks and police vehicles. Tractor trailers sat carrying concrete barriers. Below Houston, each street into Soho was barricaded and manned by huddles of cops. I had walked effortlessly up into the 'lockdown', but this was the 'frozen zone'. There was no going further south towards the towers. I walked the few blocks home, found my wife sleeping, and climbed into bed, still in my clothes from the day before. "Your heart is racing", she said. I realised that I hadn't known if I would get back, and now I never wanted to leave again; it was still only 8:30 am. Lying there, I felt the terrible wonder of a distant bystander for the first-hand witness. Ana's face couldn't tell me what she had seen. I felt I needed to know more, to see and understand. Even though I knew the effort was useless: I could never bridge that gap that had trapped me ten miles away, my back turned to the unfolding disaster. The television was useless: we don't have cable, and the mast on top of the North Tower, which Ana had watched fall, had relayed all the network channels. I knew I had to go down and see the wreckage. Later I would realise how lucky I had been not to suffer from 'disaster envy'.

Unbelievably, in retrospect, I commuted into work the second day after the attack, dogged by the same unnerving sensation that I would not get back – to the wounded, humbled former center of the world. My students were uneasy, all talked out. I was a novelty, a New Yorker living in the Village a mile from the towers, but I was forty-eight hours late. Out of place in both places. I felt torn up, but not angry. Back in the city at night, people were eating and drinking with a vengeance, the air filled with acrid, sickly sweet smoke from the burning wreckage. Eyes stung and nose ran with a bitter acrid taste. Who knows what we're breathing in, we joked nervously. A friend's wife had fallen out with him for refusing to wear a protective mask in the house. He shrugged a wordlessly reassuring smile. What could any of us do? I walked with Ana down to the top of West Broadway from where the towers had commanded the skyline over Soho; downtown dense smoke blocked the view to the disaster. A crowd of onlookers pushed up against the barricades all day, some weeping, others gawping. A tall guy was filming the grieving faces with a video camera, which was somehow the worst thing of all, the first sign of the disaster tourism that was already mushrooming downtown. Across the street an Asian artist sat painting the street scene in streaky black and white; he had scrubbed out two white columns where the towers would have been. "That's the first thing I've seen that's made me feel any better", Ana said. We thanked him, but he shrugged blankly, still in shock I supposed.

On the Friday, the clampdown. I watched the Mayor and Police Chief hold a press conference in which they angrily told the stream of volunteers to 'ground zero' that they weren't needed. "We can handle this ourselves. We thank you. But we don't need your help", Commissioner Kerik said. After the free-for-all of the first couple of days, with its amazing spontaneities and common gestures of goodwill, the clampdown was going into effect. I decided to go down to Canal Street and see if it was true that no one was welcome anymore.

So many paths through the city were blocked now. 'Lock down, frozen zone, war zone, the site, combat zone, ground zero, state troopers, secured perimeter, national guard, humvees, family center': a disturbing new vocabulary that seemed to stamp the logic of Giuliani's sanitised and over-policed Manhattan on to the wounded hulk of the city. The Mayor had been magnificent in the heat of the crisis; Churchillian, many were saying – and indeed, Giuliani quickly appeared on the cover of *Cigar Afficionado*, complete with wing collar and the misquotation from Kipling, "Captain Courageous". Churchill had not believed in peacetime politics either, and he never got over losing his empire. Now the regime of command and control over New York's citizens and its economy was being stabilised and reimposed. The sealed-off, disfigured, and newly militarised spaces of the New York through which I have always loved to wander at all hours seemed to have been put beyond reach for the duration. And, in the new post-'9/11' post-history, the duration could last forever. The violence of the attacks seemed to have elicited a heavy-handed official reaction that sought to contain and constrict the best qualities of New York. I felt more anger at the clampdown than I did at the demolition of the towers. I knew this was unreasonable, but I feared the reaction, the spread of the racial harassment and racial profiling that I had already heard of from my students in New Jersey. This militarising of the urban landscape seemed to negate the sprawling, freewheeling, boundless largesse and tolerance on which New York had complacently claimed a monopoly. For many the towers stood for that as well, not just as the monumental outposts of global finance that had been attacked. Could the American flag mean something different? For a few days perhaps, on the helmets of firemen and construction workers. But not for long.

On the Saturday, I found an unmanned barricade way east along Canal Street and rode my bike past throngs of Chinatown residents, by the Federal jail block where prisoners from the first World Trade Center bombing were still being held. I headed south and west towards Tribeca; below the barricades in the frozen zone, you could roam freely, the cops and soldiers assuming you belonged there. I felt uneasy, doubting my own motives for being there, feeling the blood drain from my head in the same numbing shock I'd felt every time I headed downtown towards the site. I looped towards Greenwich Avenue, passing an abandoned bank full of emergency supplies and boxes of protective masks. Crushed cars still smeared with pulverised concrete and encrusted with paperwork strewn by the blast sat on the street near the disabled telephone exchange. On one side of the avenue stood a horde of onlookers, on the other television crews, all looking two blocks south towards a colossal pile of twisted and smoking steel, seven stories high. We were told to stay off the street by long-suffering national guardsmen and women with southern accents, kids. Nothing happening, just the aftermath. The TV crews were interviewing worn-out, dust-covered

Could the American flag mean something different? For a few days perhaps, on the helmets of firemen and construction workers. But not for long.

volunteers and firemen who sat quietly leaning against the railings of a park filled with scraps of paper.

Out on the West Side highway, a high-tech truck was offering free cellular phone calls. The six lanes by the river were full of construction machinery and military vehicles. Ambulances rolled slowly uptown, bodies inside? I locked my bike redundantly to a lamp-post and crossed under the hostile gaze of plainclothes police to another media encampment. On the path by the river, two camera crews were complaining bitterly in the heat. "After five days of this I've had enough". They weren't talking about the trauma, bodies, or the wreckage, but censorship. "Any blue light special gets to roll right down there, but they see your press pass and it's get outta here. I've had enough". I fronted out the surly cops and ducked under the tape on to the path, walking on to a Pier on which we'd spent many lazy afternoons watching the river at sunset. Dust everywhere, police boats docked and waiting, a crane ominously dredging mud into a barge. I walked back past the camera operators on to the highway and walked up to an interview in process. Perfectly composed, a fire chief and his crew from some small town in upstate New York were politely declining to give details about what they'd seen at 'ground zero'. The men's faces were dust streaked, their eyes slightly dazed with the shock of a horror previously unimaginable to most Americans. They were here to help the best they could, now they'd done as much as anyone could. "It's time for us to go home". The chief was eloquent, almost rehearsed in his precision. It was like a Magnum press photo. But he was refusing to cooperate with the media's obsessive emotionalism.

I walked down the highway, joining construction workers, volunteers, police and firemen in their hundreds at Chambers Street. No one paid me any attention; it was absurd. I joined several other watchers on the stairs by Stuyvesant High School, which was now the headquarters for the recovery crews. Just two or three blocks away, the huge jagged teeth of the towers' beautiful tracery lurched out on to the highway above huge mounds of debris. The TV images of the shattered scene made sense as I placed them into what was left of a familiar Sunday afternoon geography of bike rides and walks by the river, picnics in the park lying on the grass and gazing up at the infinite solidity of the towers. Demolished. It was breathtaking. If 'they' could do that, they could do anything. Across the street at tables military policeman were checking credentials of the milling volunteers and issuing the pink and orange tags that gave access to ground zero. Without warning, there was a sudden stampede running full pelt up from the disaster site, men and women in fatigues, burly construction workers, firemen in bunker gear. I ran a few yards then stopped. Other people milled around idly, ignoring the panic, smoking and talking in low voices. It was a mainly white, blue-collar scene. All these men wearing flags and carrying crowbars and flashlights. In their company, the intolerance and rage I associated with flags and construction sites was nowhere to be seen. They were dealing with a torn and twisted otherness that dwarfed *machismo* or bigotry. I talked to a moustachioed, pony-tailed construction worker who'd hitched a ride from the mid-west to "come and help out". He was staying at the Y, he said, it was kind of rough. "Have you been down there?" he asked, pointing towards the wreckage. "You're British, you weren't in World War Two were you?" I replied in the negative. "It's worse 'n that. I went down last night and you can't imagine it. You don't want to see it if you

don't have to". Did I know any welcoming ladies, he asked. The Y was kind of tough.

When I saw TV images of President Bush speaking to the recovery crews and steel-workers at 'ground zero' a couple of days later, shouting through a bullhorn to chants of "USA, USA", I knew nothing had changed. New York's suffering was subject to a second hijacking by the brokers of national unity. New York had never been America, and now its terrible human loss and its great humanity were redesignated in the name of the nation, of the coming war. The signs without a referent were being forcibly appropriated, locked into an impoverished patriotic framework, interpreted for 'us' by a compliant media and an opportunistic regime eager to reign in civil liberties, to unloose its war machine and tighten its grip on the Muslim world. That day, drawn to the river again, I had watched F18 fighter jets flying patterns over Manhattan as Bush's helicopters came in across the river. Otherwise empty of air traffic, 'our' skies were being torn up by the military jets: it was somehow the worst sight yet, worse than the wreckage or the bands of disaster tourists on Canal Street, a sign of further violence yet to come. There was a carrier out there beyond New York harbor to protect us: the bruising, blustering city once open to all comers. That felt worst of all.

In the intervening weeks, we have seen other, more unstable ways of interpreting the signs of September 11 and its aftermath. Many have circulated on the Internet, past the blockages and blockades placed on urban spaces and intellectual life. Karl-Heinz Stockhausen's work was banished (at least temporarily) from the canon of avant-garde electronic music when he described the attack on *las torres gemelas* as akin to a work of art. If Jacques Derrida had described it as an act of deconstruction (turning technological modernity literally in on itself), or Jean Baudrillard had announced that the event was so thick with mediation it had not truly taken place, something similar would have happened to them (and still may). This is because, as Don DeLillo so eloquently put it in implicit reaction to the plaintive cry, "Why do they hate us?", "It is the power of American culture to penetrate every wall, home, life and mind," whether via military action or cultural iconography.

All these positions are correct, however grisly and annoying they may be. What G.K. Chesterton called the "flints and tiles" of nineteenth-century European urban existence were rent asunder like so many victims of high-altitude US bombing raids. As a First-World disaster, it became knowable as the first ever US 'ground zero' precisely through the high premium immediately set on the lives of Manhattan residents and the rarefied discussion of how to commemorate the high-altitude towers. When, a few weeks later, an American Airlines plane crashed on take-off from Queens, that borough was left open to all comers. Manhattan was locked down, flown over by 'friendly' bombers. In stark contrast to the open if desperate faces on the street of September 11, people went about their business with heads bowed even lower than is customary. Contradictory deconstructions and valuations of Manhattan lives mean that September 11 will live in infamy and hyper-knowability. The vengeful United States government and population continue on their way. Local residents must ponder insurance claims, real-estate values, children's terrors, and their own roles in something beyond their ken. New York had been forced beyond being the center of the financial world. It had become a military target, a place that was receiving as well as dispatching the slings and arrows of global fortune.

Responses To 9/11

Individual and collective dimensions

RAJEEV BHARGAVA

n India, as elsewhere, every person understood that cry for help, the horror and fear writ large on terror stricken faces, the trauma in the choked voices of people who saw it happen, the hopeless struggle to control an imminent breakdown in public, the unspeakable grief. For one moment, the pain and suffering of others became our own. In a flash, everyone recognised what is plain but easily forgotten: that inscribed in our personal selves is not just our separateness from others but also sameness with them, that despite all socially constructed differences of language, culture, religion, nationality, perhaps even race, caste and gender, and over and above every culturally specific collective identity, we share something in common. Amidst terror, acute vulnerability and unbearable sorrow, it was not America alone that rediscovered its lost solidarity but across the globe, almost everyone who heard, saw or read about these cataclysmic events seemed to reclaim a common humanity.

As we empathised with those who escaped or witnessed death and relived the traumatic experience of those who lost their lives, we knew of a grave, irreparable wrong done to individuals, killed, wounded or traumatised by the sudden loss of family and friends. These individuals were not just subjected to physical hurt or mental trauma, they were recipients and carriers of a message embodied in that heinous act: from now on they must live with a dreadful sense of their own vulnerability. This message was transmitted first to other individuals in New York and Washington, then quickly to citizens throughout the democratic world. The catastrophe on the US east coast has deepened the sense of insecurity of every individual on this planet.

However, this was not the entire text of messages sent by the perpetrators. The rest is revealed when we focus on our collective identities, or rather on the collective dimensions of the tragedy that unfolded on that terrible, Terrible Tuesday. Unlike the first, which allows a plain and simple good to be distinguished from unambiguous evil, these messages were disturbingly ambivalent, morally fuzzy and less likely to sift good from evil, more likely to divide rather than unite people across the world. One such message which the poor, the powerless and the culturally marginalised would always like to have communicated to the rich, powerful and the culturally dominant, although not in this beastly manner, is this: we have grasped that any injustice done to us is erased before it is seen or spoken about, that in the current international social order, we count for very little; our ways of life are hope-

lessly marginalised, our lives utterly valueless. Even middle-class Indians with cosmopolitan aspirations became painfully aware of this when a countrywise list of missing or dead persons was flashed on an international news channel: hundreds of Britons, scores of Japanese, some Germans, three Australians, two Italians, one Swede. A few buttons away, a South Asian channel listed names of several hundred missing or dead Indians, while another flashed the names of thousands with messages of their safety to relatives back home.

Hard as it was to acknowledge in the immediate aftermath of September 11, it must be admitted that the attacks on New York and Washington were also meant to lower the collective self-esteem of Americans, to rupture their pride. Not all intentional wrongdoing is physically injurious to the victim but every intentionally generated physical suffering is invariably accompanied by intangible wounds. The attack on September 11 did not merel demolish concrete buildings and individual people. It tried to destroy the American measure of its own self-worth, to diminish the self-esteem of Americans. Quite separate from the immorality of physical suffering caused, isn't this attempt itself morally condemnable? Yes, if the act further lowered the self-worth of a people already devoid of it. But this is hardly relevant in the case of America, where sections of the ruling elite ensure that its collective self-worth borders on supreme arrogance, always over the top. Does not the Pentagon symbolise this false collective pride? Amidst this carnage, then, is the sobering thought that occurs more naturally to poor people of powerless countries, that occasionally even the mighty can be humbled. In such societies, the genuine anguish of people at disasters faced by the rich is mixed up with an unspeakable emotion, which on such apocalyptic occasions, people experience only in private or talk about only in whispers.

The whispering did not continue for long. Soon, left-oriented intellectuals the world over appealed vociferously to the Americans to explore the deeper reasons that underlie terrorism, pointing towards America's dubious foreign policy that has caused millions to suffer in Vietnam, Chile, Palestine, Iraq and Sudan, to name just a few countries. Madeline Albright's infamous remark that justified the suffering and death of Iraqi children ricocheted from newspaper reports to television channels. Americans were coaxed to re-examine what their leaders do in their name. American ignorance and innocence was ridiculed: if only ordinary Americans cared to look at what was really going on alongside the American way of life and the rhetoric of freedom, they would begin to understand what happened on September 11 and why many ordinary people in the non-Western world were overcome with the feeling that it was more or less what America deserved.

Naturally, American intellectuals reacted with horror and disdain toward such 'ideological excuses for terrorism'. They asked if a grave wrong committed today could be justified by a wrong committed in the past, in a different context and time? Could America never do anything right and were Americans never allowed to be victims? Surely, there has to be a deep-rooted anti-American prejudice in most such intellectual responses from the non-Western world. They could respectfully listen to reasoned political opposition to American foreign policy but not accept the pathetic ideological reflex that was characteristic of these anti-American responses.

It is hard to deny the presence of prejudice, rhetoric and the sledgehammer of ideology in current critiques of America. And even harder to accept the view of the skeptic that

denies the very distinction between rhetoric and argument, between ideology and reasoned political theory. It is true of course that both reasoned political argument and ideology seek to win over others, but they do so in dramatically opposite ways. One, steadfastly committed to transparency, provides every conceivable reason for its principles and value-based conclusions, the other short-circuits moral values, reduces principles to formulae, almost always privileges the use of rhetoric over reason and permits half-truths, even lies.

Yet, for all the validity and usefulness of the distinction between reasoned political argument and ideology, we must try not to seal them off altogether or wholly overlook what they have in common. For a start, the world of the political theorist is not entirely devoid of rhetoric and emotion, nor is the universe of the ideologist completely lacking in reflexiveness, internal coherence or rational thought. Likewise, no matter how well justified, a rationally defended belief system still contains an element of extra-rational preference and some prejudice. For all the justified complaints against ideology, in the end, we must also acknowledge the grain of truth it might contain about our world and us. No matter how exasperating its form and how crude its technique, we must attend to its content. At any rate, ideologies are shaped by their practical function, by the inherent logic of what they are meant to deliver, i.e., a broad conceptual map of the social and political world without which a political agent cannot think, decide or act. Ideologies are necessarily gestural, uncertain steps in the dark that may lead to invaluable and indispensable insights about the social and political world. Surely it must be admitted that reasoned political argument is not always necessary for this purpose and never sufficient. Reason may fine-tune some ideologies or help defeat others but it cannot replace them. Alas, even those of us who loath the form of ideology must closely attend to its content. The ideology of anti-Americanism must not be dismissed as prejudice standing against enlightened reason.

However, what appears to have invaded the public sphere well before and certainly after the air strikes is galaxies away from not only the careful, issue-based reasoned opposition to US foreign policy but also from the ideology of anti-Americanism. Way beneath the anti-Americanism of the ideologue lies a magma of impression, emotion and confused thought of ordinary people that just a while ago was self-directed and is now suddenly targeted at the other. It is this chaotic, sweltering, cesspool that non-Western intellectuals are trying to hold in their hands and then carry into the international public domain. It is quite wrong to call this ideology. Such mixtures of impressions and feelings, having settled slowly over the years, independent of our will, suddenly and unexpectedly reveal themselves under the impact of cataclysmic events. They are not content-less, however. Often, they are beliefs masquerading as feelings, the common man's interpretation of larger social and political situations based on directly felt experience and the itsy-bitsy information filtering through to him, the ordinary person's very own causal account of her suffering, produced in her view by a chain of oppression that resides in her home but originates and begins its devious journey from somewhere in America. The cognitive content of these feelings is this: the world is governed by two sets of international laws, one exclusive to America and its allies, and the other for the rest of the non-Western world. A single American life is worth more than a thousand others. Is it such a remarkable fact that struggling harried people, breathing a trifle freely for the first time, sometimes in an incipient egalitarian society, wish

not to take any personal responsibility for their own enduring woes? That they overreact with anger, blame and *schadenfreude*? Not any more than to discover that people with excessive wealth and power are generally insensitive to those without it, that they do not even notice their existence.

Non-Western intellectuals are trying to open a chink for people in America and give them a glimpse of these convoluted feelings. This is frequently done not in the language of reasoned political theory but in a somewhat defective, coarse, shockingly brazen or insensitive form that, alas, is yet another import from the West. The irony is that many of these non-Western intellectuals are personally committed to the best ethical ideals developed in the West and are close cultural cousins of a typical Western intellectual. In all probability, they are not even liked by the people whose message they so earnestly carry. Culturally estranged, they appear shallow and hypocritical to them. In aligning themselves with the oppressed, and in trying to communicate their feelings, these intellectuals sow in themselves the seeds of a permanent schizophrenia.

I have pleaded with American intellectuals that they should pay attention to the content of feelings, not obsessively demand that they be expressed in their preferred form. However, I have a few sobering thoughts to share with my own non-American intellectual brethren. Insensitivity and ignorance is not a unique American fault. Much of the Indian elite is shockingly insensitive to the appalling conditions under which their fellow citizens live, and alarmingly ignorant of the horrors in large parts of Africa. How can we then expect the even more wealthy, powerful and privileged to be any different? Humans everywhere in the world tend to build a wall around themselves, and the more comfortable they are within these walls the less likely they are to notice those outside such walls. Perhaps this is a time for all of us to look within and catch this ugly, decidedly uncomfortable truth about ourselves.

I had also spoken above of two dimensions to the message hidden in the mangled remains of the destruction of September 11. The moral horror of the individual dimension of the carnage was unambiguous and overwhelming. But as we examined its collective dimension, a less clear, more confusing moral picture emerged. How, on balance, after putting together these two dimensions, were we to evaluate this complicated moral terrain? The answer had to be swift and unwavering. The focus then had to remain on the individual and the humanitarian. To shift our ethical compass in the direction of the collective would have weakened the moral claims of the suffering and the dead. And this was plainly wrong. Nor was it enough to have merely made a passing reference to the tragedy of individuals, a grudging concession before considering the weightier political crimes of a neo-imperial state. Then, as always in such situations, the moral claims of individuals are supreme. To have aggressively emphasised the collective dimension of the tragedy at an inopportune time was horribly indecent. But equally, to have screened off the collective dimension, to have ignored what ordinary people in the non-Western world feel, would have obstructed our understanding of how tragedies of individuals can be prevented in future; surely, this would only perpetuate another already existing moral wrong.

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Violence And Translation

VEENA DAS

My writing on the events of September 11th is on two registers – the public event of spectacular destruction in New York and the private events made up of countless stories of grief, fear, and anticipation.[1] I hope I can speak responsibly to both, neither trivialising the suffering of the victims of the September 11th attack and those in mourning for them, as in the rhetoric of 'deserved suffering' (as if nations and individuals were painlessly substitutable), nor obscuring the unspeakable suffering of wars and geno-cides in other parts of the world that framed these events. A recasting of these events into conflicting genealogies by the politics of mourning in the public sphere raises the issue of translation between different formulations through which these events were interpreted and, indeed, experienced.

There are two opposed perspectives on cultural difference that we can discern today – one that emphasises the antagonism of human cultures as in some version of the thesis on 'Clash of Civilizations', and the second that underlines the production of identities through circulation and hence the blurring of boundaries. Both, however, are based on the assumption that human cultures *are* translatable. Indeed, without some power of self-trans-latability that makes it possible for one to imagine oneself using the categories of the other, human cultures would not be able to live on any register of the imaginary. The stark denial of this translatability on both sides of the present conflict concerns me most, though I note that this is not to espouse a vision of justice that is somehow even-handed in distributing blame. My concern is of a different kind – I fear that classical concepts in anthropological and sociological theory provide scaffolding to this picture of untranslatability despite our commitment to the understanding of diversity. There are obviously specific issues at stake in this particular event of destruction, its time and its space, and the response casting it as a matter of war rather than, say, one concerning crime. But it seems to me that there is a deeper grammar that is at work here that invites us to investigate the conditions of possi-bility for this kind of declaration of war – as a genre of speech – to take place.

One of the tenets of postmodern theorisation is that the concrete and finite expres-sions of multiplicity cannot be referred back to a transcendental center – the grounds for judgment cannot be located in either the faculty of reason or in common corporeal expe-rience. Although postmodern theory does not suggest that diversity must be valued *for itself* – indeed, it is part of its struggle to provide for conversation and recognition of otherness without any predetermined criteria for the evaluation of divergent claims – it does

raise important questions about the withdrawal of recognition to the other. I have suggested elsewhere that difference, when it is cast as non-criterial, becomes untranslatable precisely because it ceases to allow for a mutual future in language.[1] The shadowing of this into skepticism in which trust in categories is completely destroyed and our access to context is removed transforms forms of life into forms of death. Some such issue is at stake here in the Taliban's brutality against women on behalf of a pure Islam on the one hand, and a war waged on behalf of 'Western civilisation' on the other. After all it is the United States that spawned the very forces it is fighting as a defense against communism – the then enemy of the freedom and values of Western democracy.[2] There are no innocents in the present war at the level of collectivities despite the powerful deployment of the figure of the 'innocent' killed on both sides of the divide.

Elsewhere I have questioned the purity of the concepts that are put in play when claims are made on behalf of tradition, religious autonomy, modernity, or human rights. The translation of these concepts is not a matter of something external to culture but something internal to it. It is when a particular vision both refuses pluralism as internal to its culture and claims finality for itself in some *avatar* of an end of history that a struggle for cultural rights and the necessity to protect 'our way of life' turns into violence and oppression.

Allow me to take the pronouncements on events of September 11th that the attack on the World Trade Center in New York was an attack on civilisation or on values of freedom. I take these as statements in ordinary language propelled into a global public sphere from which there is no flight – for they function, it seems to me, as anthropological language. What these statements conjure is the idea of the United States (herewith America, not illegitimately I think) as embodying these values – not contingently, not as a horizon in relation to struggles within its borders against, say, slavery, racism, or the destruction of native American populations, but as if a teleology has particularly privileged it to embody these values. This is why the issues cannot be framed by the bearer of these utterances in terms of American *interests* but as of *values* that America embodies (not merely expresses) in its nation-state. So the point of view of totality exists in these utterances not in the divine whose reason is not accessible to us, but in the body of the American nation in which the gap between the particular and the universal, the contingent and the necessary is indeed sought to be cancelled.[3] Now it may surprise one that in the country that has given so much political and public space to multiculturalism, and when much effort has gone into signalling that this conflict is not a modern replay of the Crusades (despite slips of tongue), political language slides into the idea of America as the privileged site of universal values. It is from this perspective that one can speculate why the talk is not of the many terrorisms with which several countries have lived now for more than thirty years, but with one grand terrorism – Islamic terrorism. In the same vein the world is said to have changed after September 11th. What could this mean except that while terrorist forms of warfare in other spaces in Africa, Asia, or the Middle East were against forms of particularism, the attack on America is seen as an attack on humanity itself.

The point about many terrorisms versus a single grand terrorism that threatens American values that are seen to embody the force of history – teleology and eschatology – is indeed significant. As is well known, the last three decades have seen a transformation

in the idea of war. While there is a monopoly over high technology of destruction, the low technologies have proliferated freely, encouraged and abetted by geopolitical interests. The social actors engaged in this warfare in Africa, or in parts of the Middle East or Asia, are neither modern states, nor traditional polities but new kinds of actors (sometimes called warlords) created by the configuration of global and local forces.[4] Further, it is the very length of these wars, some lasting for more than thirty years, that allows for the constantly changing formations – slippage between the categories of warlords, terrorists, insurgents, and freedom fighters reflects the uncertainty around these social actors. It is thus the reconfiguration of terrorism as a grand single global force – Islamic terrorism – that simul-taneously cancels out other forms of terrorism and creates the enemy as a totality that has to be vanquished in the interests of a universalism that is embodied in the American nation. There is a mirroring of this discourse in the Taliban who also reconfigure themselves as historically destined to embody (not only represent) Islamic destiny. Ironically the clash of civilisation thesis is repeated in the pronouncements of the Taliban leadership.

The tremendous loss of life and the style of killing in the present wars – call them terro-rism (including state terrorism), call them insurgency, call them wars of liberation – all raise the issue of theodicy. Yet, while in many other countries the wounds inflicted through such violence are acknowledged as attesting to the vulnerability of human life – in the case of American society there is an inability to acknowledge this vulnerability. Or rather the vulner-ability to which we as embodied beings are subject, the powerlessness, is recast in terms of strength. And thereby the representations of the American nation manage to obscure from view the experiences of those within its body politic who were never safe even before September 11th. While many have heard arrogance in these statements, to my ears they are signs of the inability to address pain. Consider the following passage in Nietzsche on the moment of the production of *ressentiment*:

> "to deaden, by means of a more violent emotion of any kind, a torment-ing secret pain that is becoming unendurable, and to drive it out of con-sciousness at least for the moment: for that one requires an affect, as savage an affect as possible, and, in order to excite that any pretext at all".[5]

I am obviously not suggesting any conspiracy theory, or that a pretext was needed for the subsequent bombing of Afghanistan, but pointing to the deep need to show the tattered body of the 'enemy' as a *rational* response to the September 11th attacks. In the first instance, it seemed to me that this was the site of punishment as spectacle. Michel Foucault claimed that "justice no longer takes public responsibility for that violence that is bound up with its practice",[6] but here we find an emphasis on visible intensity through which justice is to be theatrically displayed pointing to the ways in which Foucault might have overstated the case for disciplinary power as the dominant mode for production of normality under the regime of modernity. On further reflection though, it appears to me that theatrical dis-play of sovereign power is only part of the story. It is the further need to replace the pain of the nagging questions posed to American citizens about what relation their pain bears to the pain of the others – what kind of responsibility is theirs when successive regimes elected by them have supported military regimes, brutal dictatorships and warlords mired

in corruption with no space for the exercise of critical monitoring of politics in the Middle East? If violence has replaced politics in the present globalised spaces in these regions, then surely it is only by acknowledging that pain as 'ours' that a global civil society could respond. Instead of replacing the pain with another more violent and savage affect, it would have to engage in a different way with the pain inflicted on it.

What are the obstacles in acknowledging this pain? Collective identities are not only a product of desires for recognition – they are equally forged by our relation to death. Yet it is in the classical theories of society that we learn that the 'other' is not part of human society because she has a totally different relation to death. Consider the contrast between altruistic suicide and egoistic suicide in Emile Durkheim's classic analysis – I suggest that this is the site at which a radical untranslatability of other cultures seeps into sociological analysis. It is no accident that it is in defining the subject's relation to death that Durkheim finds himself positing the kind of subjectivity to the other that domesticates the threat of their forms of dying to the self-understanding of the modern subject. Consider the following passage in which he spells out the distinction between altruistic suicide and egoistic suicide:

> "The weight of society is thus brought to bear upon him to lead him to destroy himself. To be sure society intervenes in egotistic suicide as well, but its intervention differs in the two cases. In one case it speaks the sentence of death; in the other it forbids the choice of death. *In the case of egotistic suicide it suggests or counsels at most; in the other case it compels and it is the author of conditions and circumstances making this obligation coercive*" (emphasis supplied).[7]

India was the classic soil for this kind of suicide for Durkheim. But he makes a broader contrast between the "crude morality" and the "refined ethics" of societies with altruistic and egoistic suicide – the former sets no value on human life while the latter sets human personality on so high a pedestal that it can no longer be subordinated to anything. As he says, "Where altruistic suicide is prevalent, man is always ready to give his life; however, at the same time, he sets no more value on that of another". In contrast, "A broader sympathy for human suffering succeeds the fanatical devotions of primitive times".[8]

Now I am not going to argue that the making of the subject whose mode of dying is to kill him or herself in the service of killing others for a greater cause is transparent. I will suggest though that the way language is deployed to render some forms of dying as fanatical (e.g. by terrorists) and others as representing the supreme value of sacrificing oneself (e.g. as in values of patriotism) blocks any road to understanding when and under what circumstances individual life ceases to hold value. It is not that in one case society compels whereas in the other case it counsels, but that by recasting desperate acts as those which close all conversations, there is an invitation to violence that raises the stakes – it leaves no other way of giving recognition except in the negativities through which more violence is created. It is not accidental that even a language of war is not sustained in the political pronouncements of American leaders, for war has become transformed into a hunt, thereby using the rhetoric strategy of animalising the other. Hence there is the preponderance of such verbs as 'smoking them out' or 'getting them out of their holes'.

Instead of Manichean battles between good and evil, there would be greater room for a tolerable peace if it was possible to attend to the violences of everyday life, to acknowledge the fallibility and the vulnerability to which we are all subject, and to acknowledge that the conflict is over interests, and further that these need to be renegotiated. It is not over uncompromising values. Most people in the world learn to live as vulnerable beings to the dangers that human cultures pose to each other. Between that vulnerability[9] and the desperation that seeks to annihilate the other, there is a terrible gap. In other words it is to the picture of transfiguration of violence rather than to its elimination or eradication in a warlike mode, that I draw attention. Different, even new ways of being Muslim are tied up to the creation of democratic spaces just as modern democracies would be deepened by the full participation of those who have been excluded from the public spheres in the West. Might we be able to mourn with the survivors of September 11th without the necessity of appropriating their grief for other grander projects? Whether conditions for this possibility exist when the languages of division are so virulent in the public sphere – I am pessimistic, but I pray that I am wrong.

NOTES

1. See especially Veena Das, "Wittgenstein and Anthropology", *Anu Rev Anthrop.* 1998, 27: 171-195.
2. The distinction between an 'inside' in which values of democracy and freedom were propagated and an 'outside' which was not ready for such values and hence had to be subjugated by violence in order to be reformed has marked the rhetoric and practice of colonialism and its deep connections with Western democracies.
3. There is an important tension in the pronouncements that assume that teleology has been completed in the body of the American nation and the idea of the 'promise' of America. I do not have the space to develop the argument here but I believe this tension slips into the idea of the promissory notes of America for its new immigrants and the completed teleology for the assimilated.
4. As an aside I note that these modes of engaging warfare were not only tolerated but also even admired as techniques to be used in the new global economies in which training was not the training to obey rules but to push the body to its limit and to learn to deploy guerrilla techniques in business.
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 127.
6. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 9.
7. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* (New York: The Free Press, 1951), 219-20.
8. Ibid. 240.
9. I simply note that to be vulnerable is not to be a victim – hence my appeal is not gesturing towards a fatalistic submission in the face of violence and death but towards a leashing in of reason gone demonic.

Branding The War
Terror and the commodity image

W I L L I A M   M A Z Z A R E L L A

The global telecommunications networks that ensured the immediate ubiquity of the images of the smouldering, collapsing towers (and how quickly the Pentagon was side-lined as spectacle) took only a short breath before the tidal wave of readings, rebuttals, interpretations and framings started pouring in. All of us were struggling with the reflexes that pushed us to make sense of this extraordinary fact in terms of the most ordinary fiction. More generally, many of us were torn between the comforts of the talking cure and a sense of the obscene gulf between the sheer affective shock of the event and the flimsiness of our therapeutic gestures.

The US government was not slow to recognise a marketing opportunity. After all, the most auspicious time for a radical branding intervention is when conventional semiotic closures are forced open, called into question. That is the time when the density of experience and connotation can be channelled into new containers, new packages, and sold at a premium.

Still, in desperate times, all but the most imaginative rulers fall back on nostalgia. Just before September 11, the omens were not encouraging. Introducing his new Under-secretary, advertising veteran Charlotte Beers, Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke thus: "I wanted one of the world's greatest advertising experts, because what are we doing? We're selling. We're selling a product. That product we're selling is democracy. It's the free enter-

prise system, the American value system. It's a product very much in demand". Within days, these words would come to stand as an inauguration of the United States' new wartime diplomacy, a finely tuned and comprehensive effort to 're-brand' the USA.

One measure of the yawning gap between the shock of the event and our prefabricated forms of intelligibility was the sudden ubiquity of the Stars and Stripes: on cars, on doors, on people, in consumer goods advertising. (The pathos of the occasion was such that the Star Spangled Banner even appeared in miniature as a sticker on the bananas in my local supermarket). Apparently an index of collective resolve in the face of adversity, the omnipresence of the flag in fact testified to a generalised disorientation, crying out for the relief of clarity. A symptom of this public longing was that especially those who might be suspected of harbouring doubts about the immediately inevitable war found themselves obliged ostentatiously to express their patriotic engagement. In my own neighbourhood, Chicago's Hyde Park, Ossama's Hair Design swiftly plastered its shop window full of American flags.

In the news media too, the flag functioned as the basis for a branding project, an emotive reduction of ambivalence and multiplicity. To frame their transmissions from the smouldering heap of ruins, each of the networks elaborated its own sub-variant of the larger brand. CBS brought us "America Strikes Back". CNN displayed the dubious alacrity of inserting the ad business' favourite word into its baseline: "America's New War". ABC's version, "A Nation United", expressed the affinity between a certain rhetoric of political solidarity and the drive towards semantic singularity that is characteristic of branding.

But the very logic of this 'New War' – its scornful dismissal of any notion of limitation – made such a drive all the more implausible. The refusal of limits was built into its very name. Military operations have since 1942 been designated according to a formula by which the first part of the name refers to its location, the second to its purpose or aim. Hence, a decade ago, "Desert Storm". It is by now well known that the Dubya administration's first idea for its upcoming campaign, "Infinite Justice", immediately fell foul of US Muslims who objected that only Allah possessed this particular resource. What is perhaps more telling is that both "Infinite Justice" and its successor "Enduring Freedom" conjure a battlefield marked above all by figures of endlessness.

It is into this infinite vista that a new kind of ideological intervention is being projected. The United States Information Agency has, since 1953, operated as a kind of global propaganda machine. Its mandate has been complementary to that of a more conventional diplomacy: to nestle the American Way into the folds and textures of everyday life, by means of 'soft power', in the register of culture. Paving the way for a new kind of intervention, in 1999 the USIA was merged with the State Department. The offspring of this union was a hybrid called 'public diplomacy', an unholy blend of marketing, public relations, and good old-fashioned political rhetoric. Advertising remains an important inspiration in this endeavour. Cultural critics have long been pointing to the blurring of the boundary between politics and marketing, between citizenship and consumerism. Today, the American government is blithely subverting the critique by proudly claiming this blend as its official policy.

"Why do they hate us?" was the question most often aired in the American news media

in the immediate aftermath. Certainly any number of liberal pundits stepped up to the mike to deliver, by way of a response, analyses of American foreign policy during the last fifty years. But they missed the point, because on the home front the very point of departure was that the question had to remain rhetorical. For an American, politics in the sign of public diplomacy, it is crucial that the attacks of September 11 were and must remain incomprehensible, inherently excessive to any attempts at explanation. The implicit approved model for the American citizen-subject here is Forrest Gump: startled, certainly wounded, but ultimately reliant on a proudly naïve bedrock of native innocence.

The 1990s had been all about the ideological equation between neo-liberalism and globalisation. On September 11, that equation definitively came unstuck. Retrospectively, a new era emerged, one that stretched from the end of the Cold War in 1989 to the beginning of the Total War in 2001. Paradoxically, however, the new public diplomacy insists on operating in a nostalgic mode. Its formulas are, precisely, those of the Cold War. It is clear that Powell, Beers and their accomplices subscribe to the marketing truism that you cannot be what you are not. You have to play to your strengths, which generally means that you cannot dispense with your established brand properties. So it is that we find the heralds of the new public diplomacy mouthing all the familiar phrases: freedom, tolerance, and democracy, even as they are complicit in abrogating precisely these values in the emergency legislation that the war allows. Discursively, these absolutes are, once again, ranged against a familiar other, this time given an Islamic face: collectivism, fanaticism, and Oriental despotism. Perhaps the clearest difference on this level of public articulation is the overt concern with pursuing the war as a battle for market share, which on the ideological level translates into 'mindshare'.

The logical conclusion is that if the US has made mistakes in the Arab world during the last few decades then it has not been a matter of concrete political interventions. Rather, the crisis is one of communication, of not 'getting the message across' adequately, of failing to 'tell our story'. The recommended response: fine-tune the message and pump up the volume. It is in this spirit that Beers has reportedly considered buying advertising time on Al Jazeera, to compete directly alongside Osama himself. (The so-called 'CNN of the Arab World' is of course hungry for advertising dollars, not least because of the boycott imposed by most of the governments that comprise America's fragile coalition in the Middle East).

Transplanted into the realm of political rhetoric, the affective logic of the brand survives intact. Says Beers: "An emotional punch is absolutely necessary. If a falling building is seen as just a falling building, the message is lost. If one focuses on the orphans left behind, the people still grieving, the message gets through". This is of course precisely the basis for the obscene contrast in recent US news reportage between the sentimentalised hyper-personalisation of the heroes and victims of the attack in New York and the clinically abstract, remote-controlled visual idiom by which the bombing of Afghanistan is conveyed into American homes.

It is important to note that the migration of marketing logic into the new public diplomacy has been met with considerable skepticism from the advertising business itself. The American trade publication *Advertising Age* reminds us that a prominent practitioner already expressed doubts back in 1961, just as the nuclear stand-off was about to enter one of its

tensest phases: "What about the counter-appeal of the West? It is weak. It is inadequate. Even where our counter-propaganda effort seems ample, it is often irrelevant to the immediate self-interest of its target audience". The business has, in other words, long suspected that while Corn Flakes and democracy may be coupled on a semiotic level, they remain rather different kinds of use-values.

In the days immediately following September 11, America was pitched into a strange and frightening state: an uncanny absence of advertising. It couldn't last. Soon enough, the corporations returned, draped with awkward solemnity in the Stars and Stripes. Some, like Tommy Hilfiger, decided temporarily to replace literally eroticised imagery with a more sublimated variant: the fetish of home, community, and tradition. Others saw less circuitous routes between what remained of their consumers' libidinal urges and the cash register. One fashion designer reflected in the press that a look of sexy vulnerability was 'very now'. In the final analysis, however, the new patriotism sat awkwardly with most of corporate America. The problem was that the glib multiculturalism of the United Colors of Benetton, always suspect to be sure, no longer had any credibility whatsoever.

Some might think that this is merely a structural impasse of advertising, of the subordination of the image to the logic of capital. But this would be fundamentally to misunderstand advertising and marketing as a mode of public cultural intervention. It is true that the logic that animates the production of commodity images is always subordinated to the tyranny of 'the bottom line'. But it is equally true that the material out of which these images are assembled far exceeds the instrumental aims of particular campaigns or individual sales pitches. This material, these images and texts, is deeply imbricated in the public fields of connotation and embodiment that all of us inhabit in our various ways. And so the

Political and marketing rhetoric share one basic ideological premise: namely that the alternative to the semiotic order imposed by their particular constructs is chaos, monstrous mutation, fragmentation, the absence of value.
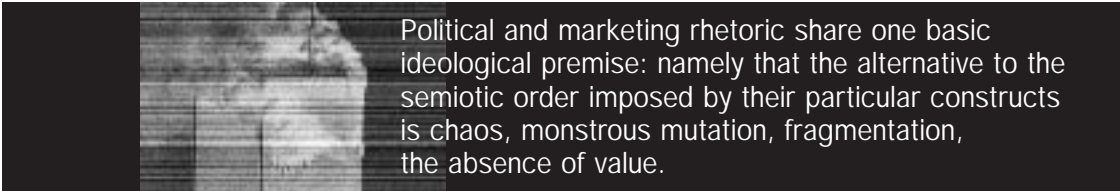
impasses of advertising are, to be sure, indicative of the limitations of a commercially constituted public sphere. But they are *also* suggestive of the kinds of creative political engagements that we can imagine on the basis of our own locations within contemporary media ecologies.

These are engagements that are founded neither upon a commitment to some transparent ideal of discursive communication, nor upon a lucid insistence on free-floating signifiers. Images *do* have a political economy, but to the same extent political economies must be understood as imaginary. The point is to grasp the dialectical articulation of affect and discourse, image and text at each of its sites – whether corporate, intimate, disciplinary or subversive. Only when we understand its local determinations, its historical imbrications, will we be in a position to intervene creatively.

Political and marketing rhetoric share one basic ideological premise: namely that the alternative to the semiotic order imposed by their particular constructs is chaos, monstrous mutation, fragmentation, the absence of value. On this level, the role of the Internet in the post-September 11 period has been instructive. The obverse of the interminable series of judiciously authoritative statements by 'major intellectuals' has of course been the wild profusion of rumour, the trade in counterfeit images, the rampant hypertextualisation of the meaning of the event and its aftermath. This much one would have expected of the Internet. But what is perhaps more interesting is that the spectre of 'terror' has made the rest of the public sphere behave in an analogous way.

Of course the initial attacks were virtuosic in their spectacular execution. Tailor-made for prime-time television, their symbolic logic was crudely overdetermined. But in the weeks that followed, the logic of terror came into its own. Particularly in the wake of the anthrax scare (not least the palpable anxiety associated with its unfathomable origin) it was as if the entire terrain of everyday life became fertile ground for a promiscuous and ungovernable semiotics. Suddenly the Achilles' Heel, the crucial fault-line, was everywhere and anywhere. The most improbable rumour about possible future attacks seemed all at once eminently logical, diabolically ingenious.

The landed symbolic authority of the 'legitimate' state and the ostentatiously fleet-footed 'illegitimacy' of the terrorist network confront each other at once as parodic mirror images and as competitors for market share. Mediated by the unstable structure of the commodity image, each of them illuminates one side of its dialectical process: semantic closure and affective disorder. By the same token, we come to understand that the commodity image is indexical of a wider public cultural field, one in which exchange-value is not the final arbiter. Indeed, if there is one small consolation in all this sickening violence, all this lethal posturing, then it is perhaps that the real stakes and means of our possible public interventions have become so nakedly visible precisely because formal politics has been driven to such an intensity of caricature.

"The One Who Really Scares Me"

– P A U L   V I R I L I O

interviewed by D O R O T H E A   H A H N

The French philosopher Paul Virilio on the New War and
how it works, and why the installation of missiles around
a French nuclear power plant is an act of war. Also why
PV is more afraid of Bush than he is of Bin Laden. And
why he shouts "*Merde!*" in the face of politicians and
media makers. Original to *Die Tages Zeitung* (*TAZ*)

~ *Monsieur Virilio, you are a philosopher and you are concerning yourself with all kinds of
catastrophes.*

> **Paul Virilio (PV):** I am a warchild.

~ *(But) now, we are having all kinds of catastrophes all in one go: terrorist attacks, bombings,
bacteriological threats. Are there any known precedents to this situation?*

> **PV:** We see here a breaking point within the (classic) economy of war, a breaking point of
historical significance – comparable to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For more
than fifty years, we have been living in an intermission within the economy and politics of
war: we have been brushing with the infathomable then: (total) annihilation. For me,
Auschwitz and Hiroshima are crimes against humanity. The attack on the World Trade
Centre too, is to me a crime against humanity – I wouldn't say that of the attack against the
Pentagon. It is a crime that alters the character, the economy, and the politics of war.

~ *Did that come totally out of the blue?*

> **PV:** What we have witnessed in the 20th century is the dilution of war. It first happened in a
subversive form during the decolonisation struggles. Then came guerrilla wars, including

their urban varieties in Latin America. Subsequently we had terrorism, as with the Palestinian, which can possibly be justified, and also in Germany and Italy. What Clausewitz already feared in *On War* is taking place now. The destruction of the World Trade Centre is the direct consequence of the evolution of war into chaos.

~ *Officially we are not at war. There is no known enemy.*

> **PV:** That's exactly what the change is about. I insist on the word 'war'. Clausewitz calls war "the continuation of politics by other means". This is a type of war we have been accustomed to in the walk of history: the so-called *guerre substantielle*, a conflict with declaration of war, known enemies, battlefields, etc. But Clausewitz also feared that, beside the political war, there would also develop a *guerre accidentelle*, a formless war, a war without declaration of war, without acknowledged enemies and stated war-aims, apart from the catastrophe.

~ *But there has been no clear policy before this war either.*

> **PV:** And that while we are already in the domain of the accidental war. A trans-political war. This is an extraordinary occurrence. It means the end of deterrence as it was invented after Hiroshima. There was an armament race, but a situation of no-war obtained. With the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre, we have left the stage of the equilibrium of terror that was the basis of deterrence, to enter the disequilibrium of terrorism.

~ *What you call the disequilibrium of terrorism is something that yourself already announced eight years ago, at the occasion of the first attack on the World Trade Centre. How did that idea occur to you at the time?*

> **PV:** I am originally an urbanist and an architect. I have reckoned that the truck that entered the WTC with 600 kilograms of explosives was intended to bring the whole tower down. 20,000 people were working in the tower at the time. Its collapse could have caused the other building to come down, and in all 40,000 people could have been killed. That is in the order of magnitude of the Hiroshima bomb whose explosion erased the life of 70,000 human beings in one go.

~ *What kind of reactions did you get during the mid-'90s to the forewarnings you formulated in your book* Un paysage d'evenements?

> **PV:** People told me: you are a pessimist. You are apocalyptic. (And in any case:) you exaggerate.

~ *But what do you think should have happened?*

> **PV:** One should have taken that (first) attack seriously, and convened the members of the

United Nations in order to tell them that this occurrence heralded the advent of global terrorism. A chaos, to which we will be unable to put an end, if we let this form of warfare develop any further. A war without winners. Only losers.

~ *Was there an error of judgement from the side of the United States?*

> **PV:** The West as a whole failed then. And the United Nations. And the NATO too. The attack was a clear sign, a clinical symptom, just like with a disease that indicated the large-scale terrorism to come.

~ *You talk global terrorism. But you do not mention names or ideas.*

> **PV:** At this moment [mid-October] Bin Laden appears to me to be not sufficiently important a personage to explain all that happened. I am still not convinced that Bin Laden stands entirely alone in this affair.

~ *Who else do you think?*

> **PV:** That's precisely the question. I do not know. We find ourselves in the mist of war. A situation where the enemy does not make himself known, remains anonymous, and is suicidal to boot.

~ *Monsieur Virilio, what is the relation between the demise of the Soviet Union and the current situation?*

> **PV:** The equilibrium of terror precluded conflicts on the global scale. It allowed, however, micro-conflicts to arise and develop, the more so since these were provided with ever more modern weaponry and techniques. One example: the Americans did not act very responsibly when they equipped the Afghans with state-of-the-art ground-air missiles in their struggle against the Russians.

~ *Do you find the response to the latest attacks more appropriate than eight years ago?*

> **PV:** What I have been hearing over the past month or so is hot air, babble and gobbledy-gook. *Merde*!

~ *You're getting loud, Monsieur Virilio?*

> **PV:** We should take the facts seriously. We should analyse the occurrence as it presents itself. But instead one gets propaganda and noise. In the media, we are almost back where we were eight years ago. They're talking ideas and ideologies, Islamists and the such. Of course there is an Afghan dimension, and an Islamic one, and a North-South component, and the economy plays a role... but the situation is much more complex. One will not stop

global terrorism with ideology.

~ *When you speak of old wars and new (types of) war(s), do you mean that there are good wars, which can be won, and bad wars, where no one can win?*

> **PV:** I wouldn't say that. War used to be a means of aggrandising territories, of obtaining riches, or women. Nowadays there are only losses. Before, wars were waged with battles, these days the organised accident has taken that role. A terrorist attack is an organised accident, especially when its perpetrators remain anonymous. The difference between an attack and an accident reduces to zero.

~ *Economic interests behind this conflict do not interest you?*

> **PV:** Of course there is petroleum in Central Asia, and you have the problem of drugs, and without these terrorism and the arms trade would not come to the fore. But one should not limit oneself to economic analyses one should also take the strategic interests into account. Take the attack of eight years ago: no strategic analysis of it was ever undertaken. It was said that its authors were Islamic, they were arrested and duly put in jail, and that was it.

~
What is the difference between a terrorist and a soldier?

>
PV: A soldier is a (professional) murderer, and he can be killed (in turn). A terrorist is an anonymous entity, who preferably kills innocent bystanders, in order to provoke a scandal and engineer irreversible hatred.

~
Would that mean to you that the victims of Hiroshima were less innocent than those of the World Trade Centre?

>
PV: I have always said and written that Hiroshima was a crime against humanity. Just as Auschwitz. What started in Guernica went on in London, and then in Hamburg, intensified in Dresden and culminated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And so the political war was transformed into terrorism on a massive scale.

~
Before you had been differentiating between the (attacks on the) Pentagon and (those on) the World Trade Centre.

>
PV: Had a terrorist chartered plane destroyed the Pentagon, then we would have stayed within the military format (of war). Like in Pearl Harbour. It would have been a war-initiating attack upon a military target belonging to the enemy force, which one might want to define as the Headquarters of world domination. I do not by any means excuse such a deed. But it would not have attained the dimension of a crime against humanity. What happened with the World Trade Centre (however) did alter the nature of these attacks.

~ *This brings in a graduation of sorts between the victims.*

> **PV:** Whatever one may say about these things cannot be politically correct. You have to dirty your hands. There is no such thing as politically correct military thinking. Even if politicians, both on the Left as on the Right have been for years pretending otherwise. War must be thought out from the reality of war itself. Not from some kind of ideals. There may be justified wars. There are no innocent armies.

~ *Superior civilisations?*

> **PV:** You're making fun of me? I am no believer in Nietszche's *Uebermensch*!

~ *I'm only talking about current affairs. About Messrs Bin Laden, Bush and Berlusconi. [Signor Berlusconi (aka 'il Cavaliere'), the Italian PM, had just a few days earlier made quite intemperate remarks about the "inherent superiority of Western civilisation"].*

> **PV:** The one who scares me the most, at the moment, isn't Osama Bin Laden, but George Walker Bush. His intellectual capacities don't match up to the current circumstances. He is a small-time guy, whereas our time needs a Churchill or a Clemenceau.

~ *What do you have to say about the reaction of the Americans?*

> **PV:** Catastrophic. I believe bombing Afghanistan is counter-productive. Bombs won't solve the situation in which the world is now.

~ *A so-called anti-terrorism policy is being currently implemented in Europe.*

> **PV:** Indeed. Missiles have been deployed in France around nuclear power plants. Deploying ground-air missiles around the La Hague atomic enrichment facility and other, secret, installations is an act of war. This makes very clear that we are not any longer in a situation of terrorism pure and simple. We are involved in a new war. This is not being taken seriously enough.

~ *The government says it wants to protect the population.*

> **PV:** We are (in fact) being treated like children. We *citoyens* are being infantilised. We are being treated as if one wanted to avert panic. There is a denial of the truth. This amounts to a form of censorship. Truth is always the first casualty of war.

~ *(But) who is the enemy in this war?*

> **PV:** I am addressing all peace loving people and all democratically minded citizens: if we do not quickly identify the adversary, we will plunge in chaos. We are on the verge of

(triggering) an international civil war. An unheard of occurrence. And one has even more to fear that this international civil war will also degenerate into a religious war.

~ *You are being very pessimistic.*

> **PV:** Not so. I am not pessimistic at all. I am a victim of war, and I have been a soldier in the war in Algeria [France's decolonisation conflict 1957-1962]. I am not spreading mist around, of the sort one reads in the paper nowadays. No, today there are no longer pessimists and optimists. There are only realists and liars.

Original interview published in Die Tages Zeitung (TAZ), *Berlin, 22 October 2001*
http://www.taz.de/pt/2001/10/22/a0147.nf/text
Translated by Patrice Riemens.
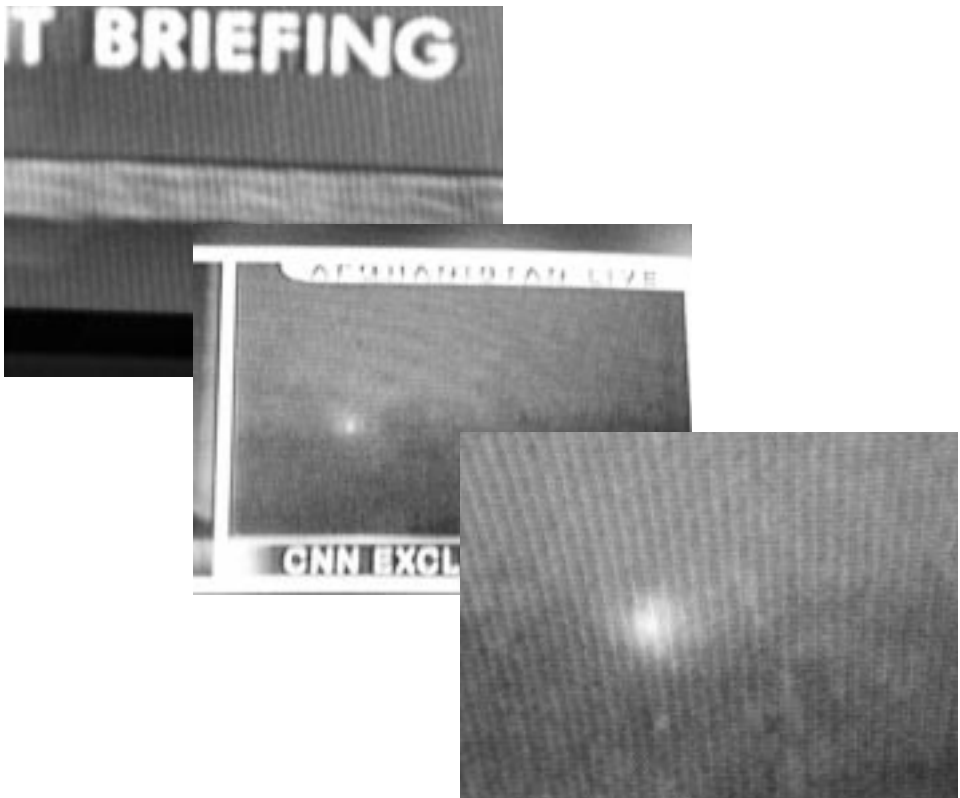
The obliqueWTC

LARS SPUYBROEK

We decided to respond positively to the request of Max Protetch and Architectural Record to design a "new World Trade Center" not because we are 'optimists', but because we thought the work and the exhibition can help stimulate a public discussion about what to do with the Ground Zero site.

Obviously we should first of all consider if anything should be built, and when answering this positively, whether it should be large or small, especially whether it should be larger or smaller than the first WTC. There will be many emotional, social, socio-political or even economical reasons to narrow the number of options down to a certain type of solution: an absent building, or a not-so-high building (at least lower than the former WTC towers), or even a higher building. All these are possible, but somehow they go beyond the range of what architects can contribute to the discussion. Architects put social matters by definition into productive concepts. In this case the question becomes: what can architecture do (here), and how does architecture do it? What can architecture contribute in a rethinking of how the global loops back into the city. In that sense Absence or Lowness can never be architectural answers, and seem more like evasive solutions. I think we should realise there is a difference between the USA and America, where the USA is still a nation-state and America its global effect, at least an effect that rejoins in a global atmosphere where all forces, especially cultural and economic forces, return to earth manifold and hardly controllable.

We should try to find urban strategies to deal with the Huge, with global forces working on local situations. We should find ways to work against the homogeneous and find other ways, more open to life, the changes and unpredictability of life. Now, undeniably the skyscraper is the most successful building type coming from the twentieth century. However, we feel its generic reductionism, its passive stacking of human behavior, its manic monoprogramming will and should become obsolete, and as a type it will have to be rethought, making a new evolutionary step of the megabuilding possible.

In rethinking the mega, the Huge (which is slightly related to the High), we should be more concerned with the structure of the Huge than its size. Developing techniques to heterogenise the Huge without simply chopping it up or collaging it together means we have to reconsider our design techniques themselves. Moving away from top-down techniques towards bottom-up techniques – especially when dealing with superlarge structures – becomes totally necessary. We re-used the old wool thread modelling technique invented by Frei Otto and his Institute for Lightweight Structures in the 1970s. In our case we used one wool thread for each core of the destroyed or damaged buildings on the former WTC
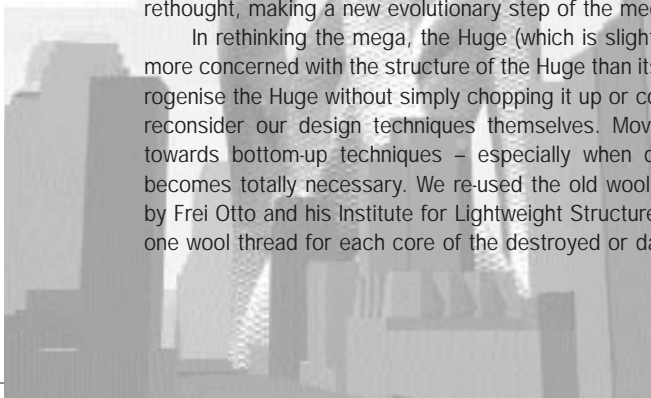
site. As an inverted model the wool threads hang straight down under the sole influence of gravity. When dipped in water and taken out again all threads reorganise themselves into a complex network (with the cohesive lateral forces of the water now added to the gravitational system) comparable to bone structure. The structure is not formed any more by a simple extrusion of a plan, but self-organises into a networked megastructure where the whole is larger than the sum of its parts. We thicken each of the wool threads into a lean tower that merges and splits up as it moves upwards. This enables the structure to comply with the New York zoning law that only allows high buildings to occupy 25% of the total site surface area. In this case, however, the 25% is always positioned somewhere else, making it both into one single Megabuilding with many (structural) holes in it or many thin towers that cooperate into one large structure. The towers sometimes act as a bridge, sometimes as a counter-structure for another one, and sometimes free themselves to become a smaller subtower. Most of the loads are transported through a honeycomb steel structure of the surface which is helped by an interior column grid, which follows the diagonals of the towers. Also the elevators form a highly complex structure of diagonals, where at some platforms more than five or six different cores come together to form larger public areas. It is this network of elevators which makes the building not just a new type of tower but more like a new type of urbanism. The elevators become an urban extension to the subway system: a punctuation of the street by a technological system to intensify its public functioning. Generally all interactions of a Manhattan block (with its programmatic diversity that should at least be rivalled by this new building) only happen on the street, while all buildings blindly tower away from that level into a non-interactive side-by-sideness. Here we re-network the street into the tower. We read the wool thread diagram both structurally and programmatically, where the structural 'diagonals' become a re-emerging of Virilio's oblique: lateral, horizontal street forces are multiplied with the vertical stacking model of the sky-scraper resulting in an oblique tower.

We included a Memorial Hall inside the building. High up in the structure several floors are taken out to form a large open space that gives an open view over the city, but the space will also be visible from most areas around New York. The Hall should not be a monumental petrification of mourning but should be a projection space where visitors can interactively request for home videos, photographs and web sites of the all people lost, and meet them.

Rotterdam, 14 December 2001.
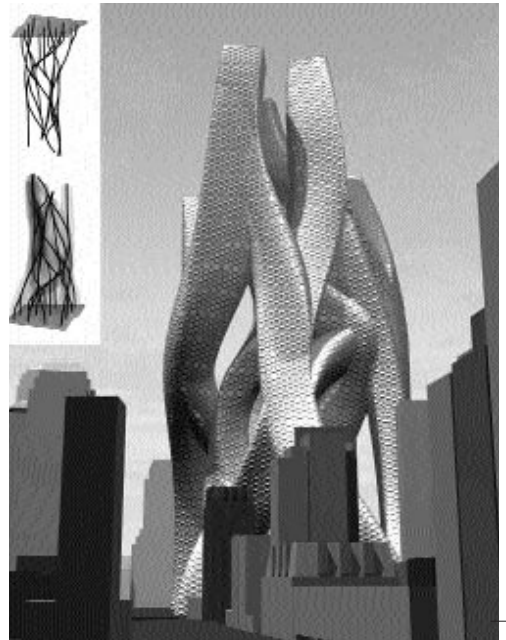
VIRTUAL

DIGITAL URBANISM

+ ARCHITECTURE

+ V

DIGITAL URBANISM

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"Information wants to be space" – Erik Davis

Within new media, space seems to be an almost irresistible metaphor. Not only does a spatial structuring of information help us to navigate in the yet-to-be-discovered virtual environments, the data themselves seem to have an ineluctable tendency to structure themselves along architectural principles.

Virtuality, if we follow Elisabeth Grosz's argument in *Architecture from the Outside* (MIT Press, 2001), is characterised by temporality, embodiment and the inclusion of the other. Cyberspace is not some metaphysical pearly gate to heaven, but rather an interval, an in-between space between the built and the un-built. As post-binary structures, virtualities (in plural) are always unfinished, non-dialectical and non-linear in nature, emphasising movement, practice and action. The fluid, unstable architecture of databases, interactive 3D worlds, discursive galaxies of lists, online archives and search engines may seem in sharp contrast to the solid materiality of the known architectural profession.

What is particularly striking about all the emerging 'virtual architecture' practices that we encounter is their open and multidisciplinary character. These are "embodied utopias", in the sense that Elizabeth Grosz has spoken of. What brings the efforts of a variety of artists, theorists and actual builders of real and virtual spaces together is their belief in radical futures. Empowered by critical concepts and a computer, they prove that the world as we know it can be folded inside out, both in our heads, on-screen and in the material world.

Virtual architecture is not an escapist response to the dirty reality of today's megacities, although it is tempting to read these unfamiliar digital spaces as mere representations of baroque opulence. In order to access the techno-imagination at its best, it is of 'tactical' importance to forget about the virtual as an enemy of the so-called real. As others have suggested earlier, instead of pushing reality into virtuality, we could let the virtual worlds bleed out into the three-dimensional physical existence. Marcos Novak calls this occurrence "eversion". Today's generation of architects, theorists, urban planners, using computers, are just doing that. They alter and mutate the space we inhabit.

This section on virtual architecture will hopefully be the beginning of a larger effort to introduce these ideas, engagements and projects into the context of Sarai in order to catalyse an exchange aimed at overcoming the worn-out binary opposition between real and virtual realities.

GEERT LOVINK

Hyper-Architecture

OLE BOUMAN
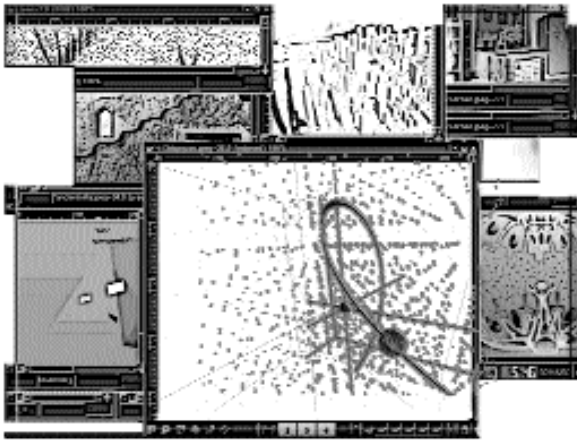
Most people who theorise about the fate of architecture, and its ongoing tendency towards lightness, focus on the constructional aspect. They talk about the use of mirrors in the 18th century, new construction techniques in the 19th, modernist transparency and screen facades in the 20th century. For these people the 21st century will show architecture that is even lighter, using all kinds of synthetical materials and fast click systems.

There are also theorists who concentrate on the conceptual level. These thinkers explore the progressive immaterialisation of the architectural object, its gravity, its integrity and its solidity. They come up with either a sort of minimalism, a neutral, abstract space-oriented approach, or all kinds of abberations of the Platonic volumes: deconstructivism, blobs, and so on.

But there is also a social and programmatic level. And this is perhaps the most important impetus of the literal enlightening of architecture. Architecture always was a representation of power, and as such a conquest of a certain territory by definition. It also circumvented the agents of social cohesion: a church, a tempel, a palace. Later, in modern times, even when secularisation challenged these agents, the new ones still needed architecture

to enclose them: the family house, the factory, the office. In the best functional tradition, people moved from one situation to the other. Today we see the next step of dissolution of social bodies. Families, firms, communities are either vanishing or changing their structure. After the melting into air of the ideologies and big moral institutions, it is now the patterns of dependency and interaction between people whose turn to be liquefied has come. They have become malleable. What we see is a loss of strong mutual engagement, defined through spatial protocols. For instance, in a remarkable reversal of the millennia-long tradition, it is the high and mighty of the day who resent and shun the durable and cherish the transient. Social disintegration is as much a condition as it is the outcome of the new technique of power, using disengagement and the art of escape as its major tools.

Having said that, it seems to be appropriate for this occasion to look to the way we can take this situation as a condition for creative design, rather than the hindrance of it. We need to conceptualise architecture which is no longer the art of occupying space by its enclosure, but the creation of situations that become movable and thus reflect major social tendencies. What will be the new mandate of architecture in the age of liquid modernity? Here my speech will become more disciplinary.

As technical facility, spatial accommodation and property investment, architecture will never become superfluous. As long as there are people, they will need shelter and this is in itself enough to guarantee the continued existence of an entire profession. But as a cultural carrier, architecture may indeed become superfluous. Culture may designate other carriers; people may satisfy their need for meaning elsewhere. On this score, architecture must prove itself over and over again, and precisely this makes it an art and an interesting cultural medium. How does the cultural relevance of architecture manifest itself?

Just about everything that makes architecture more than a technical construction, an accommodation and an investment, is under pressure in the digital era. What does it mean to draw boundaries in a society where entire environments are intermixed by means of sensor and display technology and interface design? What does it mean to occupy a place when at one and the same moment you can be everywhere and nowhere, via GSM and WAP, via *avatar* and alias. What is there left to represent by means of buildings when there is little collective meaning anymore and messages are becoming more and more individualistic? In an age when investments must yield a profit for a large group of anonymous financiers, return and functionality are the dominant motives. The territorial is reduced to security. It is difficult to represent values when there are no longer any shared values. Ambitious clients turn into risk-shy investment companies. Spatial unicity becomes impossible under a regime of extreme cost-consciousness. What remains is a building profession that falls back on its core activity and is at risk of losing its cultural relevance.

U n l e s s ...

Unless architecture is able to redefine itself and to broaden the substance of its design activities. And that will only be possible when it no longer leaves the design of the digital environment to trained specialists but incorporates it into the design of the physical built environment. If the virtual world is threatening to usurp the cultural relevance of architec-

ture, then it is logical that architecture should seek to connect with that world.

I will describe four stages in which this can happen, ending this trajectory by showing that it is possible to do all four.

1. The moving surface.

What does the future hold for architecture when any of its buildings can be animated and transformed by projections and electronic displays? What is left of architecture if our architectural 'sign' language is no longer etched in stone? Facades and walls could be brought to life by designers and provided with a new, dynamic iconography. When stationary objects are visually animated they lose their 'objectness', their fixity. However sturdy their construction may be, they appear to be moving. That really is 'lite' architecture. In addition to striving after ever-lighter structures, transparent and translucent walls, and gravity defying curvilinear forms, architecture can now, via film, become truly immaterial. Contours fade, forms become fluid. The relationship between human beings and architecture is no longer polar or dialectical, but 'immersive'. You can quite literally be swallowed up in it... Who will be the first architect to win the Oscar for best director?

2. The interactive surface.

How to overcome the passivity of the viewer? If the building is going to become a kind of terminal anyway, you might as well go ahead and make it an interactive medium. The introduction of sensor technology heralds a new age in which architecture can be programmed to respond to highly specific actions. Connected by an efficient interface to the display possibilities I just described, recording cameras, scanners, electronic eyes, sound and heat detectors, infrared systems and the like, architecture can generate a dynamism that finally eclipses the significance of the static object altogether. The architectural design encompasses not just the object, but also the reaction of that object to the subject. Architecture becomes intimately involved with experience. The building or urban environment does not move because it has been turned into an animation but because you, the actor, animate it.

3. Architecture online.

Once the building is interactive, the next step is to connect the architecture to digital networks and make it 'online'. What possibilities would be opened up if not only people but whole environments could be linked together in networks? Architecture online! Now that digitisation processes are making headway in both the creation and experiencing of environments, it is possible to link physically separate environments to one another. Once architecture has been redefined as 'information' this can be rendered compatible by means of a protocol-juggling interface. This in turn can be linked to other environments, analogue as well as digital. The first variant of this approach is to link up with other physical environments. A building is crossed with another location. Interestingly, the aesthetic experience can be collective as well as individual. By adopting a multimedia approach – which involves linking digital recording equipment such as video cameras, webcams, microphones, scanners and sensors, to reproduction media such as displays, loudspeakers, or 'invisible' integrated architecture electronics – and designing an interesting interface that makes the option of exchange worthwhile and selective, it is possible to devise a new type of spatial

extensibility. Places and people in those places communicate with one another. Architecture becomes a matter of moving situations.

This way, architecture travels, multiplies, becomes a migrant. Rather than creating a place, designers stage-manage moving situations. The relation between individual and object becomes the relation between dynamic places and (sometimes manipulated) states of mind. This architecture belongs to neither the physical nor the virtual domain; it is a hybrid. Space becomes genuinely fluid; it forms the link by which the digital space can flow into the real space of daily life. And vice versa...

4. And, finally, full-blown Internetted architecture

This brings us to the second option for online architecture. In addition to virtually connecting two or more physically remote environments, it is also possible, to link these physical environments to virtual environments of online networks. This application will only really become interesting when the design itself utilises the information from the Net as a fundamental component of form: animation as creation. Should an architect or an artist devise a special interface between physical environment and the Net, this application could become an essential element of the architecture. Linked to networks, the meaning of architecture actually becomes reprogrammable. Reprogrammability means that a building can fulfill an important cultural role for a much greater part of its life. Updatability is no longer a question of adaptation to new functions but has become an essential component of the architectonic character of a static, constructed object.

Transports

The question is how to design an architecture that reflects the Net society. Can we design an architecture that starts moving if you want it to do so? Can we design a building that adapts itself to different uses? Can we design environments that are linked to all kinds of remote environments? Can we conceive of an architecture that is a possible modality of Net activity?

The answer is, quite simply, yes. And the prototype for such an architecture is called Trans-sports, a project developed jointly by the architect Kas Oosterhuis and myself.

Trans-sports is a fully interactive visitors' pavilion that can on several counts be termed 'moving'. To begin with, the building will be constructed through a space frame of pneumatic structural components, so that the volume of the building is fully manipulable. Secondly, the interior of Trans-sports is wholly dictated by display screens. Form and image are permanently in the process of being reprogrammed via input from people and physical circumstances on the spot as well as from remote sources: distant online environments and Internet traffic on the web site to which the building is 'hooked up'. This total intermixing of construction, form, image and use, made possible by a satisfactory broadband connection, current CPU technology and adequate interface design, spawns a building that has completely shaken off its static character.

Accordingly, the pavilion is able to assume various identities. Because structure, text and image are programmable, the interior can effortlessly adapt to intrinsically different uses. The building has several different modes, such as:

> archaic mode: the building does not 'transmit', it is turned off.
> performance mode: the show taking place inside the pavilion determines the configuration and transmits this during the show.
> TV mode: the space is used as TV studio.
> commercial mode: active 'total commercials' of 'clients'.
> lobby mode: the space is used as reception area.
> research mode: the space is used for research into human-space relationships.
> art mode: Trans-sports is 'fashioned' into an autonomous artwork.
> meeting mode: the building can be operated as an interactive conference room for teleconferences.

If a building can be taken over spatially by multiple users on the basis of appointments, so too can its meaning. The building has a continuous program, not on the walls but including the walls. The material medium becomes the program and it reacts to use. This use can therefore be multiple and as such alternate according to user and client. This is the new form of time-sharing. As well as usable space, the building offers 'transmission time'. This leads to seven points for a new architecture. As a pilot project Trans-ports will be:

> a major step in fusing spatially and digitally disparate ranges of experience.
> an attempt to reduce the redundant character of static architecture as a 'repetitive' visual element in our existence, in favor of a more flexible, 'informative' response to the public.
> a serious attempt to achieve a truly moving structure, governed both by direct physical and remote digital input. This implies a new human-space relationship.
> a contribution to the development of architecture as a filmic discipline through the progressive integration of the constructional with the visual aspect.
> a prototype for adaptive architecture capable of dragging the discipline away from its eternal obeisance to 'peak usage'. It will be possible to see what happens when the volume contracts in response to lower usage. As such, Trans-sports is an ecological project.

However, these are all values that reside in architecture as we know it. Trans-ports is more.

> it is a wholly uploadable and updatable architecture. It puts architecture 'on air', in the form of transmission time. This time can be reprogrammed with content from art, the market, the public sphere and so on. As a client you don't just rent space, you rent time.
> finally, time in terms of media can only be Internet time. This is the first architecture that not only has a web site attached to it, but that is itself an attachment to a web site: the Internet site of Tans-ports has architecture as its 3D interface.

The result is the rise of Digital Gothic. This is not just lite architecture, but a full-blown architecture of light. It is multiple architecture without a contingent form, territory, client, representation, space, or iconography. Such a building doesn't need a developer. It needs a publisher.

Diagramming

LARS SPUYBROEK interviewed by CHO IM SIK

~ *Cho Im Sik: In the last 10 or 15 years, there has been an important shift away from all kinds of preliminary techniques like sketching and modelling towards diagramming-developing non-visual drawing techniques that are based not on optical abstractions of later-to-be-realised forms but on informational visualisation techniques that place themselves at the interior of a process instead of the exterior of a sensed form. Can you explain a bit more about the technique itself?*

> **Spuybroek:** Diagramming is indeed the most important innovation in architecture of the last 10 to 15 years. And it is not clear yet what it means, not at all. I think, on a techno-cultural level, diagramming means a move towards metadesign. Metadesign already happens a lot in graphic design and industrial design, and it basically means designing with 'templates': others can use the template to design an actual product. Designing the way of designing itself. There is a metadesign for a Nike shoe, for a Swatch watch, for a Renault Megane etc. It is a network of relations that make the thing the thing without actually designing it. It is an informational system. It is a networked system of decisions. Basically it means a whole opening up of designing One Thing to a whole family or Range of Things. Later, in the close future, we can design our own shoes, our clothes, our cars, our own chairs (like we now can design our own web sites) and the question of "How?" is answered by diagramming and metadesign. You would buy the template of a certain design family, a style, of let's say BMW, and then design your 'own' thing – don't forget this design family can be as complex as is suggested by branding and lifestyling, you could have a BMW template for a chair or a watch or a car etc.

Probably most of these interactions will happen on the Internet. You would make your own variations, and of course these variations would happen within this digitised continuum, meaning that the information of your own design would immediately be transmittable to a production machine that assembles all the parts, and sends it over to your house…

In my diagramming techniques I use flexible interactive systems, I have different names for them, none of which has really satisfied me: flexigrams, haptograms, kine-tograms, even awarograms, but I also like Brian Massumi's "biogram". 'Flexible' because they are not rigid, they don't know just one solution, 'interactive' because all are connected into one system: one parameter changes everything. I'm trying to move architecture in the direction of systems theory. The old sketch method would go like this: first you look at the parts (rooms, stairs, entrance etc. etc.) then you try to take a look at the whole; this is most often done by very old tools like the grid, the box, or the axis. Then the designwork is the difficult 'shaking up' of these two viewpoints (concentrating on a part/trying to see the overview): bringing them as close as possible, trying to close the gap between the whole and its parts – a very old philosophical problem... That is how we learned it at school.

What I do is building a machine, almost always in the computer, what one should call a 'virtual whole', a matrix, a geometric system where all relations are set but not fixed, and then all the information is processed over time. Sometimes in an animation, sometimes in a machine-like procedure of interlocking steps, like a series of algorithms. The whole is like a matrix: it's a system of relations and if one changes one thing, the rest changes too. In the sketching technique one would be working at one part, and the rest doesn't change with it. If I start sketching a certain room, or the staircase, the rest doesn't change with it, right? In my machines it does, all drawing pencils are interactively bound together. First in an abstract system of lines, then later during the process it becomes more and more clear what these lines can be.

~ *How then do your diagrams (so-called "strings and springs" model) respond to these 'unde-termined' movements of a body in architecture, the movements that weren't in the program?*

> **Spuybroek:** Basically what I do with the diagrams is relate flexibility to movement. Flexibility is translated into movement and movement into flexibility. Philosophically that is very tricky: qualitative changes of kind become related to quantitative changes of degree. So, the presupposed movement of people, their potential movement is abstracted into the language of architecture, and that abstract movement loops back and relates again to people's movement. Of course I use the lines (the "strings") to read the program, the crystals of behaviour, but I also use them to read through the program, to make new connections where possible. So, what I do is read the tendency of human bodies to change their mind, to be aware of more then just their momentary intentions; I read their tendency to be flexible directly into architecture. Let's give an example.

I used a "strings and springs" model for the V2_Lab here in Rotterdam. It is a simple model of five parallel lines. These lines are a reading of the existing building and also of the main orientation of the program. Now, all the movements in the building are 'put in' that machine: around the table, around the doors, coming in, leaving etc. All these movements act upon the lines as forces, and because the lines have material properties in the com-puter (like rubber), they start twisting, vibrating, and all movements interact with each other. In a longitudinally oriented system (five lines) we get lateral bending, sideways orientations (waveform curvature of the five lines). Then the lines are 'read through' the program as

given by the client: table, corridor, wall, room etc. So, all the lines give a bit of profile to each of these elements. And because they were connected in the 'rubber' model they also end up connected in the end product made of wood: the table merges with the corridor, one edge gives a clear 'table' definition, the other edge a clear 'corridor' definition, but in between we get a form that is neither or both… It is a movement that is now abstract, an architectural movement, a qualitative change, a morphing of table into corridor, and vice versa. You see? The implied movement of people, the working, the walking, is mapped on to the architectural elements themselves, through a flexible set of lines where it creates a language of movement first, a flexibility of use and form between given architectural element (table, corridor) that is then actualised by different possible movements of people. In the real it means people walk up the table, or they drink their tea there; it's informal behaviour, connected to formal behaviour, more loose, more free. It's an architecture that not only articulates planned and foreseen behaviour (working at table, walking through corridor), it also stimulates unforeseen behaviour. Unforeseen in the sense that it is still related to 'work', it isn't "accidental behaviour", like murder, as Tschumi's famous example goes…

~ *How does using diagrams at the start of the process differ in the result, compared with the conventional means of process?*

> **Spuybroek:** Normally we architects put the lines where the walls are, no? When we sketch, we sketch the positioning of material elements, not where the movement is, because we presuppose the movement between the walls, not in them. Trying to be a bit more clear, I'd say that I'm not using the movement of people to design my walls, that would be the old 'streamlining' technique of the 1930s… I'm not 'rounding off', no; I'm looking for the structural capacities of movement, the ordering capacities. Now, in my technique that means the movement doesn't go into the continuous black lines of the walls, but into the dotted lines of the ordering system, the black lines are – later in the process – derived from these. Movement is related to order first, and then to structure.

I think the diagram is the best way of instrumentalising 'inspiration', while it is completely opposed to inspiration. Inspiration is vague, subjective; it often happens through visual methods, like clippings from magazines, recollection of a memory, seeing a vision etc. I think it is completely 'legitimate' to use that visual information. I'm not trying to have everybody use only rational and transparent tools. What I'm against is being un-precise with that information. One should have a conceptualised approach for the whole of the process, not do something subjective here, and something objective there. A systems approach is much more coherent, it recognises the design process as a series of actions upon visual means.

When does something become architecture? When does architecture enter the design process? That is the most important question in any design process. Can you start with an image, the image of a face, of a crowd, or a dog, or a group of trees in the mist, and end up with a building? Of course you can (although I wouldn't recommend such an impressionist method), but only by contraction, by contracting information out of it that has the potential of becoming something else, not the picture of something, but the internal, organisational

structure of something else. Finding this vector, constructing this vector-towards-some-thing-else, can only be done by diagramming, by seeing structure and architecture beyond image and before one 'sees' actual buildings. It is a professional way of dealing with this moment of 'blindness': being in-between one's contraction of the world, and one's expres-sion of something new. Basically you go from image (memory) to image (new building) through abstraction, and this abstraction should never be completely lost. Now, there are very simple forms of diagramming, like using visual imagery, towards more complex ones like gathering data and graphing techniques, towards very complex algorithmic techniques. In the end, what counts is "what can the diagram do for you?".

~ *What can the diagram do for you?*

> **Spuybroek:** Mostly diagrams are 'read'. That means mostly, often, their abstract capa-cities are left in the building as traces in language. This seems logical, as the abstract capacities of architecture are typical food for the mind. Walking through a Palladio villa doesn't make any sense if you don't know music and early harmonic systems. The two most important diagrammatic architects today, Rem Koolhaas and Peter Eisenman, still see the diagrammatic capacity of architecture too much as something of language. The architec-ture of architecture – as I tried to explain in the notion of metadesign – is in their case still a property of language. A concept to them is a sentence, an explanation. Cultural criticism in the case of Koolhaas, criticality in the case of Eisenman. My diagrams are more 'sensed', they are more 'felt' than 'read', they are felt in the day-to-day decisions and hesitations we experience. Basically my architecture deals with consciousness and awareness, of how the experience of being there, in this uninterrupted stream of presence is constructed. I'm extremely interested in this continuous 'thickening' of the now, of the present. With Rem Koolhaas and Peter Eisenman the real has already happened, the architecture understands it, deals with it, through language, and serves this view to the inhabitant, user, whatever its name is; it is always consumed afterwards. He or she just re-experiences the real as it was already foreseen in the diagram. However, I think the diagram is something that should exactly be placed between the world-as-imagined and the world-as-experienced and there-fore stop before it becomes language. I know this makes my work also very vulnerable, because it can only be sensed, but hardly discussed.

~ *It is understood that the computer is used in your conceptual process, leading a complete shift from Euclidean geometry to topology, from tectonics to textile, from object to process, from crystalline space to the undulating field or medium. You have mentioned, even, the necessity of computer-aided conceptualisation and computer-aided manufactur-ing. What do you think is the future potential of this too?*

> **Spuybroek:** It is the future per se; there is no other future. But architects have to learn to deal with it conceptually. They always thought it was 'just a tool', a means to something else: architecture. This is a complete misunderstanding of a) what computing is, and b) what technology is. There are no innocent tools; there is no tool that is separated from its

purpose. Tools make us think differently, and, even more important, feel and wish for differently. Machines are social fields; technologies are countries we live in. You cannot 'do' computer and not 'think' computer. Every master/slave relationship is always reversible. Let's not forget that a lot of the design tools we use in architecture without the computer, like copying, rotating, aligning etc. are basically early, primitive computer tools. Bernard Cache said: "the compass and the ruler are very simple computers", which means we have always used computers. Computers, we should always realise that, are steering devices, they are vehicles in a sense. They can only enter the world as a world of processes, of interactions, where dynamics and structuring are not understood as opposites. In a time and world where we can truly think complexity, we shouldn't deny ourselves an architecture of the complex. We don't have to constantly run back into the arms of Mamma Reduction anymore, because we cannot cope with the troubles of life. Minimalism is fatal. Since the fifties we have had new views in mathematics, physics and biology, in cybernetics and information theory, all based on calculation. Turing machines, genetic algorithms, chaos, fractalisation, fuzzy logic etc. etc. – Where is architecture in all this? To me – to sum it all up – it is absolutely irresponsible to keep on throwing cubes into the world (a geometrical language of 3,000 years ago!) in a time where we have mathematics and physics dealing with processes, time and complexity.

~ *Realising or materialising the image of freedom can't be an image on the wall or a hole in the floor. Then how can we be connected to the unseen? How can the unforeseen happen?*

> **Spuybroek:** You maybe know there is this beautiful concept of potentiality, which is the old word for virtuality, which states that nothing can happen if there isn't first the potential for it to happen. It's a concept from Aristotle, differentiating between mathematical possibilities ("mere possibilities") and real or physical possibilities. Somehow we have to connect – as architects – the abstraction of space, this memorising of events that have already happened, to the reality of time, to the continuous flow of events. Strangely enough this continuity is given (there are no 'bad times' for events), but not the actual content of the events. We know things will happen, even at a certain pace, but not always what. So space has to become a tool in this whole production of the 'what'. I'm very interested in how architecture can help in increasing this dimension of tension and potentiality. You know, that is my whole problem of seeing consciousness as intentionality; it thinks that consciousness is something like seeing, that locking on to an object in space with your eyes is the same as thinking, as being mentally engaged with the now and the near future, of being alive, of being open to what happens or could happen. Being conscious, being aware, being fully engaged in the now, doesn't mean you lock on to the future as an object. Architecture can only help this openness of mind with an architecture of connectivity, of topology, of the continuous. For too long architecture was a tool to control life by seeing events as the repetition of older events, and every new event was an 'accident', something acting against the 'substance' of architecture. The new doesn't come from the future, it comes from the past, that is what potentiality is, it is a mating of old existing events patterning into tendencies, an unfolding of events.

~ *Because an important aspect of architecture is its materiality, and most matter usually resists rapid transformation, how does liquid architecture go beyond the "moment of freeze"?*

> **Spuybroek:** What is of course very important in my work is the difference between architecture and building, between the organisation of something and its material structure. I've tried to allude to that with my reference to the "continuous black lines" and the "dotted lines". That I'm interested in movement doesn't mean I'd like buildings to move around... That means there are architectures that go far beyond buildings; the architecture of a text, of a political plan, but also the architecture of a book. And of course diagrams do exactly that, they make all these architectures communicate, and with computers that can even be done much better. Because I'm interested in movement and change I'm interested in systems that are created and structured by change, for instance, liquid fluid systems. Now, 'liquid architecture' is a paradox, because the architecture can be liquid but the building is solid, or as I said before: The building should be static, but the architecture should never be at rest. But it doesn't mean that one can use every movement (of water, or whatever), freeze it in an instant like a photograph, and then build it – that would be the craziest distinction between concept and structure, no? That's why I'm moving more and more in the direction of 'material diagramming'. Movement has to become structural; movement has to be structurally absorbed into a system. In all these diagramming techniques that I use, you see that the more flexibility is leaving the system the more structure is gained. That is why I'm resisting both the concept of 'datascape' and pure 'animate form', though both Winy Maas and Greg Lynn are good friends. With the first, information enters a preset form (often a cube); with the second all information is directly materialised as a form. I work much more with interaction between information and form. Basically I'm only interested in the structuring, the patterning effect in-between the two. That's why I tend towards iterative processes, stepwise methodologies, because every time the form is changed it absorbs the information differently. It's a slow process of hardening, from architecture to building... In the end all the movement that was in the first diagram is separated in abstract movement in the architecture and real movement of bodies and minds.

Seeing Cyberspace
The electrical infrastructure as architecture

B R I A N   C A R O L L

INFRASTRUCTURE: Tools, Buildings & Systems

Cyberspace is the electronic internetwork materialised within the artefacts and assemblages of the Electrical Infrastructure, a symbolic new architecture representing electrical space-time, aesthetics and culture. Its precedence is in the sublime, where metaphor itself becomes reality.

Envisioning this 'structure beneath' Electrical Civilisation requires recognising the vital interconnections between our tools, buildings and their inherent but often invisible infrastructural systems.

Traditionally infrastructures have performed a critical role for understanding how a particular building exists in the world. For example, an architectural analysis of a classical Roman bath would be incomplete if it ignored the pipes, water and remote aqueducts that enabled it to function.

Today the predominant infrastructure is not water but electricity in all of its phenomenal dimensions. It has become the new architectural order in the built environment. Consider Le Corbusier's cryptic statement in *Vers Une Architecture* in this regard:

"Architecture can be found in the telephone and in the Parthenon".[1]

Le Corbusier relates architecture with its infrastructural extension when juxtaposing the new order of electricity with the standard of architectural order in the Western tradition. This

paradoxical statement makes conceptually visible the interconnection between the telephone and its assemblage of telephone lines, poles, switches, and buildings which enable it to function.

Examining the relationships between these different types of Electrical Tools, Buildings and Systems allows the ongoing emergence and manifestation of the Electrical Infrastructure to be rationalised in architectural terms. For example, Cyberspace remains an incomprehensible, immaterial, and abstract entity as long as we continue to disregard its physical foundation in the artefacts of the Electrical Infrastructure.

It is only an illusion that a 'virtual' building on a computer screen can be totally detached from the 'actual' world of architectural objects and their physics. The computer tool is housed by an electrical building connected to the electrical power system. Together this infrastructure materially represents and sustains the *trompe l'œil* of other-worldly immateriality while simultaneously depending upon a physical assemblage of wires, plugs and sockets to distribution lines and poles, transformers, transmission towers and electrical power plants. Without these extensions, Cyberspace would cease to exist.

Seeing Cyberspace in turn enables us to better understand the new electrical space-time, aesthetics and culture of the Electrical Civilisation that we now live within. As the discipline of architecture has taught legions of questing students, one must know well the foundation upon which one designs and builds. Thus we need to study the natural and artificial electrical worlds if we want to understand the virtual electrical world of Cyberspace.

Today's projection of an aestheticised 'virtual' image upon the world-screen of Cyberspace is not sufficient. The assemblage of electrical artefacts of the computer network themselves needs to be investigated: from the screen to the guts of circuitry, through power plugs and outlets and into the wires suspended from electrical poles and towers, traversing transformers and substations so as to arrive at the 'bricks and mortar' power plants which transform the coal, oil, atoms, water, wind and sunlight of nature into power.

Underlying this artifice is an untold cosmology of the natural electrical world of molecules, atoms and electrons which constitute matter, life, and thus humanity. Electromagnetic Earth, its charged atmosphere, and electrical life forms evolved from the theoretical Big Bang of electromagnetic energy billions of years ago. Human beings ascended with an electrified brain, nervous system, senses and consciousness, which were essential for designing and building the Electrical Civilisation we inhabit today.

While Cyberspace has always existed in the atmosphere of our minds, it is only now that we are able to literally see it externalised within our speed-of-light electrical technologies. With so much complexity, enormously rapid change and exponential evolution, it may seem improbable that any larger holistic perspective of Cyberspace can be accurately integrated with the centuries which precede it. Yet, upon deep and sustained reflection this has been proven not to be the case, and reason will eventually prevail:

"An Architecture exists within the Electrical Infrastructure".[2]
Subsequently, seeing Cyberspace requires seeing the Electrical Infrastructure as a representation of our economic, social and political culture in built form. This not only allows one to decipher the interconnections between the natural, artificial and virtual worlds but also provides overwhelming evidence that an Electrical Order permeates everything that exists.

Ironically, we have always built with electricity. It is the electrical force which resists the pull of gravity against the molecules that hold up the buildings made of brick, concrete, metals and stone. Over the last 2,500 years humanity has successfully harnessed this underlying mystery by bringing it to the surface of our reality, and we are now able to mediate and build with it directly. This is evidenced in all that is electronic: from the Human Genome Project mapping the human genetic code to the deep space probes, Voyager I and II, which have exited our Solar System, extended as ambassadors of our emerging Electrical Civilisation.

CYBERSPACE
Electrical Energy | Warfare | Economy
The grand project that is Cyberspace is grounded in the mundane realities of what is required to sustain it. Today's multitudinous technological breakthroughs such as the Internet are still reliant upon ancient and recurring themes tying the diagnostic health of Electrical Civilisation to its sources of energy, war and economic stability.

ELECTRICAL POWERLINES
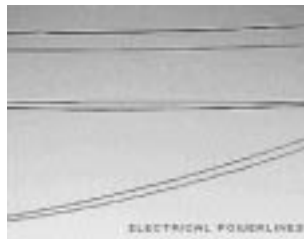
Electrical Energy: In its current manifestation, generating electrical power is mainly a destructive endeavour of extracting resources from the Earth as fuel for the electrical grid of power plants and the technologies it runs. Two-thirds of the electrical power generated is lost to waste heat before it can ever be used, due to large-scale, highly centralised production facilities and the hundreds of miles of transmission and distribution power lines the energy must transit before being consumed. When the power finally reaches an electrical device, even more energy is wasted in its inefficient use.

Furthermore, non-renewable fossil fuels are being burned at an ever-increasing rate. Oil is still the lifeblood of Electrical Civilisation, without it almost every machine would cease to function. With its use also come oil spills, toxic refinery emissions, and geopolitical wars to control the limited resource. Likewise, coal is a temporary but plentiful energy source, yet coal-fired power plants are at the same time the leading cause of greenhouse gases which are suspected of causing Global Warming. So too, nuclear power plants are still widely used, even though there currently exists no safe way to dispose of, no less store, the subsequent radioactive nuclear waste for hundreds of thousands of years into the future.

Electrical Energy | Warfare | Economy

There is an intimately close relationship between the military-industrial complex, the energy sector, and energy policy. This is because energy is strategically important to national security and geopolitics. In the United States, for example, the Department of Energy (DoE) is a major part of the Department of Defense (DoD). Likewise, the US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) oversees both research and development for nuclear power plants and weaponry. Energy is a keystone between national and international security agendas.

Thus any attempt to dramatically alter the development of the Electrical Infrastructure often fails outright because any challenge to the current policy, driven by an industrial worldview, falls back on to the shoulders of authorities in the national security and energy administrations and their military and industry contacts, all of whom have a vested and short-term special interest in keeping the bureaucracy of power functioning as it is, fundamentally unchanged.

Instead of implementing a proactive energy policy with conservation measures, public investment, and strategic redesign, there are energy wars.

Nuclear weaponry is devastatingly destructive. The theory of 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD) that kept Cold War superpowers in a precarious balancing act remains today, because with more actors on the world stage the likelihood of a regional nuclear war turning global increases. In addition, terrorists could detonate a device such as the infamous nuclear suitcase and destroy an entire city. Currently less than a dozen countries maintain an arsenal of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons.

The impact of nuclear weapons ranges from conventional explosive power to specific effects on the Electrical Infrastructure. Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) can carry payloads of several nuclear warheads, each of which can annihilate an enormously large percentage of all buildings and inhabitants within several miles of impact, including making the environment radioactive and uninhabitable for generations thereafter.

One type of nuclear weapon specifically targets the Electrical Infrastructure and would likely be used in limited nuclear warfare. The electromagnetic pulse bomb is a small nuclear warhead detonated in the atmosphere above a targeted area. The electromagnetic pulse (EMP) it radiates is a bursting of gamma rays that disables or destroys all unshielded electronic equipment in the targeted area. Thus an EMP bomb could not only render much of the military inactive, but also all of the computers and regional networks that sustain Cyberspace. So too the electrical energy relied upon by millions of civilians for heat, light and power would disappear instantaneously and indefinitely.

Oil embargos can also be used by oil-exporting countries to leverage their power over oil-importing countries for geopolitical ends. When the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) raised oil prices in the 1970s vast energy conservation measures were enacted in the US to counter the total dependence upon this energy source. Ultimately, an oil embargo could devastate the entire communications, energy and transportation infrastructure as it would be ground to a halt for lack of oil to lubricate, power and run the machinery keeping everything in motion.

Thus wars have been and will continue to be waged to protect and exploit the world's energy resources in the name of national and international security. This is because today's geopolitics is energy politics whose policies are driven by an institutionalised energy ideology that protects often despotic industrial modes of operation.

A common tactic in electrical warfare specifically disables or destroys the Electrical Infrastructure, as the US and its Allies have recently displayed. In Serbia a "graphite bomb" cruise missile was tested in which canisters of graphite tape exploded into great nets of ribbon above power lines, which then short-circuited the electrical grid by causing power spikes and arcing. In the Gulf and Serbian wars, electronically guided "smart bombs" sought out electrical power plants and telecommunication facilities via artificial intelligence (AI) software and global positioning systems (GPS) so as to disable the electrical command and control of the enemy forces.

Thus whole countries, their soldiers and civilian populations can be cast into an isolated darkness within hours of war. It is one thing to have an act of nature cause a power outage, but another to have an enemy of war turning the lights off at will. This is the new nature of warfare, and the Electrical Infrastructure is the main target.

The electronic computer is critical to all of the above-mentioned military technologies, yet nowhere are its potential capabilities for offensive and defensive action more likely to be fully expressed than in the realm of information warfare and electronic espionage.

Security Experts utilising networked computers can manipulate electronic information,

including turning off portions of the electrical grid. Computer viruses can be unleashed to damage networked computers on a global scale and disrupt electronic banking and global stock markets. And electronic surveillance technologies – the UKUSA Echelon network being the most notable of these – can be utilised by security agencies and others to covertly monitor Cyberspace under the aegis of looking for terrorists, spies and subversives who threaten the established order.

The architect John Young is spearheading the effort to disseminate information on these societal, and thus architectural issues, which include cryptography, privacy rights and designing buildings for protection from electromagnetic surveillance.[3]

Such advocacy work raises the ire of many in the reigning power system, as any effort to substantially alter the Electrical Infrastructure threatens the national and international security establishment if it opposes the outdated industrialised world view of total control and unquestionable authority that runs Electrical Civilisation today.

Yet, if an energy policy guided by a shared human interest were to be enacted, it could invert the pyramid of electrical power by democratising its present and future development.

Electrical Energy | Warfare | Economy
Cyberspace ceases to exist without electricity. And without the wars that sustain and protect it so too would the New Economy, as it depends upon Electrical Power, Media, and Technology in order to function.

In the last one hundred years, electrification has transformed the entire economic, social and political culture from a pre-electric to an electrical state of affairs. Yet the industrial power plants of the Old Economy remain the foundation for the New Economy of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The electrical current generated at these plants is the vital prerequisite for electronic commerce in Cyberspace.
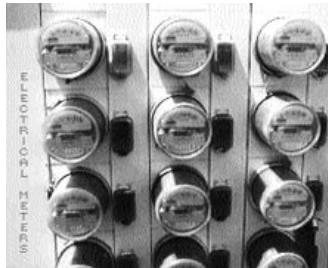
In particular, the automated and standardised manufacturing processes of the electrical factory of the Old Economy today still represents most goods and services produced, sold and consumed in today's global marketplace, including nearly every piece of computer hardware that makes the New Economy possible. All areas of the economy, both New and Old, are thus influenced by and reliant upon electricity in order to function.

The New Economy of Cyberspace represents a paradigm shift from the material tangibility of molecules of atoms into the abstraction of sub-atomic bits of electronic information, as Nicholas Negroponte first stated. For example, an Old Economy bank with

human tellers is transformed by the New Economy into automatic teller machines (ATMs) and an online banking web site, enabling transactions 24 hours/day and 7 days/week via an electromagnetic bank card.

This dualism of the Electrical Economy has created a fissure both locally and globally, and it is not yet known how or whether this gap will be bridged. The problems of the Old Economy are amplified in the New Economy where inequality, classism, and poverty persist unabated. Organising labour in the high-tech workforce and addressing the Digital Divide are two recurrent themes in a new guise.

The symbiotic relationship between the mature and elderly Old Economy and the exuberant and youthful New Economy can be seen in the electronic pulse of the stock markets. The most important fact being that both require the Electrical Infrastructure in order to keep their pulse, and profits, alive. If the electricity stops flowing, so does the money and economic devastation can be the result.

In summary, the electrical 'structure beneath' Cyberspace is dangerously energy inefficient. Wars are needed to obtain and protect strategic energy resources. And the local and global economy of Electrical Civilisation depends upon this subsidisation of power in order to function and to grow.

Challenging the underlying energy policy of the Electrical Infrastructure requires questioning the modus operandi of national and international security agencies, the energy industry and government officials, and their entrenched special interests. It must become our responsibility, as public citizens, to change this dystopic system for the better by transforming the rules by which it operates. An architectural 'way of seeing' the Electrical Infrastructure holds the key to this action.

CRISES:
Electrical Outages | Inefficiency | Pollution
Substantial reason exists for reconfiguring the Electrical Infrastructure as multiple crises threaten the daily sustenance of our Electrical Civilisation. The impact of these critical lapses ultimately jeopardises Cyberspace and the New Electrical Economy.

Electrical power outages are increasingly common. Blackouts range from minutes to hours and days without electricity. Nature is often the cause with its earthquakes, hurricanes, blizzards, heat waves, tornadoes, floods and thunderstorms. Going without power for any length of time reminds people of how critically dependent upon electricity we have become,

and how we cannot fathom functioning normally without it. Basic skills such as cooking, cleaning and communicating, and advanced skills such as telecommuting via a networked computer are all dependent upon a functioning electrical grid.

This dependency upon electricity is now causing a major crisis in California, such that the supply from all of the active power plants on the electrical grid can no longer meet the demand for power. The following scenario may foretell what might happen elsewhere when the New Economy takes hold.

California is well known for its natural disasters such as droughts, earthquakes, and fires. But today the disaster is the Electrical Infrastructure, such that during the holiday season residents were asked not to use electrical lights for holiday decorations for fear of bringing down the electrical grid. Electrical power production has been at over 95% capacity dozens of times, and several times over 98.5% capacity, triggering "rolling blackouts" where electrical power is turned off to roving sectors of the state in order to keep the rest of the grid up and running. Even with temporary power plants online and interstate power, the current demand for electricity cannot be met.

In the epicentre of the New Economy, the Silicon Valley of San José, the demand for electricity has increased because of the vast amounts of power needed for buildings such as semiconductor fabrication plants (FABs) and web hosting Server Farms. Some companies like database software maker Oracle are building their own private power plants so as to not risk losing millions of dollars in manufacturing costs when the power goes out. Several large corporate customers receive rebates for voluntarily generating their own power in times of emergency. Ironically, at the same time there is great opposition to building a new power plant in the area, while billion-dollar companies such as Intel have stated they will not build new facilities in California if the electrical crisis is not resolved soon.

Add to this scenario the fact that electronic-commerce and dotcom companies in California cannot effectively function without a steady and reliable supply of electricity, and the state of disaster looms larger and larger. Furthermore, the deregulation of the electrical power supply in the state has resulted in electricity bills doubling and tripling in cost within a few months' time, due to high demand in the marketplace for a limited supply of electrical power. In the State of the State Address the Governor, Gray Davis, spoke extensively of the power crisis and rhetorically threatened to use eminent domain to take public control of California's private power plants if necessary.

The electrical crisis continues day by day, and year by year, into the future. What is happening in California and the US may well happen in other places where the New Economy takes hold, and the Old Electrical Economy directs the action. While acts of terrorism, sabotage, war and natural disasters all cause power outages, these events may soon become secondary to the disasters resulting from short-sighted energy policies which misguide our Electrical Civilisation today.

Electrical Outages | Inefficiency | Pollution
The energy crisis of the 1970s led the United States and other countries towards energy conservation. Daylighting, passive and active solar, energy efficient windows, doors and insulation optimised the energy efficiency of buildings, which temporarily reduced demand

for electrical power, and thus oil, and the sense of threat to national security.

Still these gains did not affect the larger inefficiencies of the Electrical Infrastructure. Because of economies of scale most electrical power plants remain highly centralised with enormous generating capacities. More than two-thirds of the power generated is lost to waste heat through its transmission through hundreds of miles of power lines in order to reach consumers. This centralised design is also strategically vulnerable to any concerted attack in that a few missiles could take down the entire electrical grid, whereas a decentralised power system would make this scenario improbable.
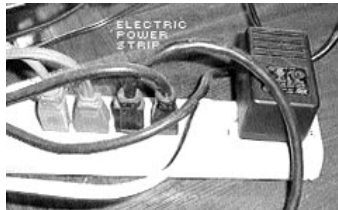
The electrical appliances industry has sought to make energy savings an issue. Electric washers and dryers and refrigerators all use less power, as do most computers. Even computer microprocessors like the Crusoe chip by Transmeta seeks to be as energy efficient as possible in an effort to maximise its effectiveness for use in mobile communications. Unfortunately these gains are minimalised by some long-standing problems. For example, the current battery life of a laptop computer is six hours, a cell phone is a few days, and a personal digital assistant (PDA) is a few weeks. Rechargeable batteries do not store enough power for any substantial length of time, and disposable batteries waste enormous resources for their temporary supply, all of which makes the current battery technologies for portable electrical power untenable.

Another grand inefficiency exists in the planned obsolescence of electrical technologies, especially computers. Expensive computer hardware has a practical lifespan of only 2 or 3 years, while costly software devolves even more rapidly, requiring constant upgrades. Older computers and software are rendered obsolete as they are unable to function with the latest innovations. It is believed to be more economical to purchase an entirely new computer system every few years than attempt to upgrade an old computer at an equally great cost. This waste of manufactured resources and the energy it takes to create them is obscene and beyond reason.

In all, almost every Electrical Tool, Building and System of the Electrical Infrastructure – including the Internet and its Cyberspace – depends upon electrical power that is less than 33% energy efficient.

To say this is a crisis is an understatement – it is an unethical policy that benefits no one.

Electrical Outages | Inefficiency | Pollution
While the theory of Global Warming is currently being debated by scientists, everyone agrees that the weather has become increasingly unusual, and this has caused both more

power outages from weather-related disasters and increased demand for electricity during statistically cooler and warmer than usual temperatures. Not only do the seasons of the year seem to be shifting, but the weather is becoming more violent, unpredictable, and extreme.

Not surprisingly, fossil fuel electrical power plants are the number one cause of the pollutants released into the atmosphere, which have led to this effect on the global environment. Yet no significant change in energy policy is in sight which would reverse this global trend.

Attempts at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the UN Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming in 1997 have so far been unsuccessful. For example, at the November 2000 meeting in The Hague, Netherlands, the United States government opted for short-term economic profits rather than risk changing the way the Electrical Infrastructure works. In 2001, the new US administration, heavily supported by the oil and energy sectors, continues to disregard the strategic importance of addressing these problems proactively.

Ignoring energy policy will be the Achilles' heel of the New Electrical Economy.

Millions of tons of highly toxic, non-biodegradable electronic equipment is discarded at city garbage dumps and landfills, causing pollution when their rare minerals and radioactive components are left to stew, leaching toxins into the soil. Likewise, billions of disposable batteries are discarded, releasing toxins and contaminating the environment while their mined and manufactured resources are thrown out as pure waste.

PAD MOUNTED
ELECTRICAL
TRANSFORMER

Controversy also surrounds emissions from electromagnetic fields (EMFs), and whether or not they are carcinogenic. International investigations have been launched to study communities transversed by high-voltage power lines whose residents have unusually high rates of cancer and birth defects. Similarly, research is being conducted which questions the relationship between mobile telephone use and brain tumours.

While the negative effects from EMFs are hotly contested, it is important to remember that we do not know the full effects of our increased exposure and proximity to EMFs on the human body and brain. At the same time we exist enveloped, en masse, in dense fields of electromagnetic radiation.

At some point a relationship between human health, disease, and living in an Electrical Civilisation will be recognised. Two medical researchers are of note in this regard. Dr. Merrill

Garnett whose work in electrogenetics offers a new approach to cancer treatment,[4] and Dr. Andrew Marino whose extensive work focuses on the relationship between human physiology and electromagnetism.[5]

The threat of contamination of humans and the environment by lethal doses of nuclear radiation is also ever-present. Nuclear war is one precedent. Another is revealed in the meltdown of reactors at nuclear power plants such as that in 1979 at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, USA, and in Chernobyl, Ukraine in 1986. Added to this is the very real possibility for a nuclear meltdown of the reactors on board any of the hundred or so nuclear submarines, ships, and aircraft carriers patrolling the oceans of the world, or decommissioned and abandoned in naval graveyards.

Furthermore the spent fuel from all nuclear reactors has to be safely disposed of – yet this is currently not possible.

Attempts have been made to bury nuclear waste underground and in concrete casks in the oceans. Still, given the time needed for the radioactive elements to decay, these will inevitably leak deadly radiation. Humans will have to live with radioactive waste for generations upon generations to come. While the cost of generating nuclear power may seem cheap in terms of price per kilowatt/hour, or a good solution for Global Warming, the unknown costs are never included in the economic price tag. And the people will end up paying for the cleanup from nuclear contamination and for storing nuclear waste for hundreds of millennia to come.

Because of this, the true cost of our energy policies must include rendering the planet Earth increasingly uninhabitable for human beings. While nature will survive, we may not.

The crises of Electrical Civilisation that we are now experiencing are caused by an outdated and destructive energy policy of the industrial era and mindset. Instead of changing its course, governments and industries have bunkered down to protect the inherited Electrical Infrastructure in the name of short-term profit. This approach totally ignores the fact that the crown jewels of the New Economy and Cyberspace will no longer exist if the Electrical Infrastructure fails to function, which it will unless we radically change our local and global energy strategies.

Concerned politicians, scientists and activists have all been unable to accomplish this task by reason alone. There are too many special interests with too much power controlling the future direction and development of the Electrical Infrastructure, well outside of the public's democratic control.

A new common sense tactic is required which will unite public citizens who want to change this outcome. With the passionate will of planners, designers and architects supplementing that of the politicians, scientists and activists, the case for change will be made crystal clear:

A new public energy 'policy' will be constituted, ratified, and enacted in the democratic and grassroots redesign of the Electrical Tools, Buildings and Systems that constitute our shared Electrical Civilisation.

As Le Corbusier implied: architecture cannot be avoided. The revolutionary opportunity now exists to understand the Electrical Infrastructure as the literal representation of the reigning economic, social and political order. If we can begin seeing Cyberspace as a physi-

cal extension of this 'structure beneath' Electrical Civilisation, we can also commit ourselves to strategically rebuilding it in a more progressive direction, optimising its long-term viability and thus our own.

Revisionist policies based on the virtues of the industrial power system, such as national security and cheap gasoline, are delusional in that they only serve the powers of the past, which threaten the very democracy that supports them.

Instead, strategic energy policies are needed that will free the public from the crises that continually plague us, inherited through the industrial power system and its world view. Our goal should be to inhabit a democratic, just, and two-thirds sustainable Electrical Civilisation by 2100 Common Era.

STRATEGY
Electrical Planning | Design | Architecture
What is needed to change the misguided industrial world view that continues to develop the Electrical Infrastructure?

Public awareness through education of the cultural aspects of the Electrical Infrastructure. That is, to understand from both scientific and artistic vantages how our economic, social, and political systems are ordered by electrification.

With unified actions in Electrical Planning, Design and Architecture working in collaboration with other disciplines, the human public can once again lay claim to its destiny to self-determine its future.

As a goal unique to our century, the strategic redesign of the Electrical Infrastructure will be the greatest building project of the 21st century, preparing the formwork and framework for a democratic and sustainable Electrical Civilisation into the future. The effects of doing nothing are predictable. More nuclear wars, increased pollution and an irreparably broken society due to a lack of vision, courage, and a will to change the status quo.

A new holistic understanding of the Electrical Infrastructure can be revealed by investigating and interrogating everyday Electrical Tools, Buildings and Systems. It consists of shared and open standards, is both cooperative and competitive, and is organised around public and private partnerships between governments, citizens, businesses, organisations and professionals who value social and economic profit alike. As a decentralised strategy it utilises grassroots efforts to enact large-scale changes that are otherwise impossible.

In this way, the problems of the past and the possibilities of the future of the Electrical Civilisation can be seen in their full spectrum, through a shared and multidisciplinary scientific and artistic awareness with which we can develop a working model for changing the industrial system of power.

Now it becomes absolutely essential for planners, designers and architects, amongst other artists, to coordinate their efforts so as to implement the necessary changes in the built environment as part of their civic duty as citizens of the world. By recognising the vital importance of the Electrical Infrastructure for our daily livelihoods, artists can create and sustain this new awareness for the public at large, which will someday become 'common' sense.

Electrical Planning investigates and interrogates Electrical Systems which need to be

strategically organised by multidisciplinary planners so as to securely establish a democratic Electrical Infrastructure and the Cyberspace reliant upon it.

To do so requires planning a decentralised network of community-based power plants. When feasible, electricity should be generated from alternative and clean energy sources including wind, solar, geothermal and hydro power. In addition, small and localised power plants burning natural gas, oil and coal should be used to reduce the inefficiency and pollution caused by larger centralised plants. All residential, commercial and industrial sectors will need to be required to generate a portion of their own power and to sell any excess back to the community electrical grid.

Microturbines and cogeneration technologies can help accomplish this task, as can fuel cells, a technology which has existed for more than 150 years. Fuel cells create electrical power through an electrochemical reaction of oxygen and fuel, without combustion, with applications ranging from power plants to batteries. One future envisions fuel cell automobiles whose excess electrical power is fed into to the electrical grid when not in use. Also possible is that someday every building may be powered by its own fuel cell. Even so, we can no longer wait for a theoretical silver bullet to solve today's planning problems sometime in the indefinite future.

The adoption and enforcement of energy conservation measures via local planning codes will be critical to any electrical planning initiative. All buildings, new and old, must be required to conserve energy when and wherever possible, and it should be a violation of the law if they do not.

Energy conservation is not only an environmental strategy but also an economic and military one, certainly not to be dismissed as "a personal virtue" as US Vice President Cheney did, who heads the planning task force for the nation's public energy policy.

Planning for self-reliance and energy efficiency will limit power outages caused by disaster, decrease pollution and reduce greenhouse gases. Localised power will also enable a new electrical grid to be built that communities will be in control of. In the long term, a reduction in energy costs and less dependency upon foreign resources such as oil and gas will help deter and avert unnecessary energy wars. National and international security would also be strengthened by having hundreds of thousands of sources of electrical power, rather than a small number of highly centralised targets in times of war. Governments could spur these necessary changes by offering tax breaks, rebates and subsidies.

The need for Electrical Planning is further strengthened if telecommunications techno-

logies such as fibre optics, cable, satellite, and broadband wireless are taken into account. For how are the electronic internetworks that constitute Cyberspace going to function if the Electrical Infrastructure can no longer maintain itself due to a total dependence upon a centralised electrical power, as is proving to be the case in California?

Planning this new Electrical Infrastructure will demand both public and private collaboration and investment, and a shared and public vision of what kind of world we want to live in during the next century. Profit will be realised from investing in large-scale cultural transformation. And a bond between citizens, businesses and government will form, solidifying and stabilising communities by raising the standard of living through long-term planning for a sustainable Electrical Civilisation.

Electrical Planning | Design | Architecture

Electrical Design investigates and interrogates Electrical Tools. The creation and innovative use of Electrical Tools by designers and artists is essential for strategically realigning Electrical Civilisation with a public purpose.

Of the trillions of Electrical Tools in the present world almost all rely upon electrical power plants and batteries, including web sites, movies, microwaves, cell phones, and light bulbs. Their use cannot be separated from the negative effects of the Electrical Infrastructure, including war, pollution and inefficiency. But this relationship can first be identified and then changed. And designers and artists have the freedom and opportunity to help in transforming the cultural reality.

Industrial designers can have an enormous impact on the future development of Electrical Civilisation by promoting standardisation, reuse, upgradability, sustainability, energy efficiency and recycling of millions of products that are placed on the market every year. The throwaway culture of Electrical Design we have inherited needs to be disposed of, and its salvageable parts and processes recycled and put to better use.

Electrical appliances offer one example of how energy conservation has been adopted by industry, but this is nowhere near enough. Every product should be designed to meet strict but reasonable guidelines for maximising energy efficiency, product lifespan, and product recycling.

If private industry cannot pursue this vision, then government regulation at the local or national or international levels will be required. It is not about private choice but about public duty. Nobody profits when products waste energy, resources, and pollute the environment. Our time to act is rapidly diminishing.

Product design could play a unique role by creating public awareness of the total energy cost of a product, making sustainable Electrical Tools into a marketable design goal.

Further, as Anthony Dunne states, electronic product design needs to go "beyond optimisation to explore critical and aesthetic roles for electronic products... raising awareness of the electromagnetic qualities of our environment".[6] One such opportunity exists in the desperate need to redesign the chaos of electrical plugs, cords and outlets, which in the US remain fundamentally unchanged since the 1930s.

Visual designers, painters, filmmakers, and sculptors can make Cyberspace and the

Electrical Infrastructure more readily visible to the public by using electrical iconography in their work.

For example, the oil paintings *Telephone Pole and Sun on Allen Alley* (1994) and *Telephone Pole* (1994) by Joe Blanchette materialise the abstract electronic internetwork of Cyberspace in the everyday built environment by presenting the electrical distribution pole as an aesthetic artefact.[7]

So too, various artists including electronic, computer, Internet and video artists, film-makers, composers and musicians can explore the relationship between the medium of their work and the system of electrical power upon which it depends.

As a case in point, *Powerlines*, the film by Helen Hall, poetically documents the effects of electromagnetic radiation upon biological organisms through the mediums of dance, film, music and narration.[8]

Using unique skills and vantages, designers and artists can thus raise public aware-ness of the system of electrical power by radically re-interpreting it, becoming the vanguard for redesigning Electrical Civilisation.

Electrical Planning | Design | Architecture
Electrical Architecture investigates and interrogates Electrical Buildings as an extension of the Electrical Infrastructure.

A generic term with a generic definition, Electrical Architecture is the architectural exploration of electrical phenomena which makes possible the logical analysis of the build-ings of Electrical Power, Media, and Technology. Understanding any Electrical Building requires comprehending the infrastructure of Electrical Tools and Systems which enable it to function.

For example, to understand an electrical dwelling today it becomes necessary to

acknowledge its programmatic and structural relationship to power plants, radio and television stations, and telecommunication facilities. Without these other buildings, their tools and infrastructural systems such as power lines, distribution poles and transmission towers, the dwelling would have no light, no heat, no power and by default no connection to Cyberspace. The inhabitants would no longer exist in the 21st century, but in the pre-industrial era of the 18th century Enlightenment. Which is exactly where architecture exists today for those who continue to deny or disregard this most basic fact of life.

The traditional architectural concepts of form, light, structure, space and materiality have been transformed through electrical knowledge. Light consists of electrically charged photons, spatio-temporal phenomena are electromagnetic, and building materials are composed of atoms held together by electrons in orbit. But these are not just opinions. They are universal truths which the reigning system of traditional architectural knowledge stands in defiance of.

Yet now that architectural explorers are beginning to see electrical lights shining everywhere in the form of the screens of Cyberspace, the opportunity exists to rationalise the origins and meaning of electricity in relation to architecture. This requires dissolving the overruling paradigm of total authority over expert but limited knowledge, and freeing the idea of architecture by allowing it to be reborn anew in the 21st century context of Electrical Civilisation.

Once a basic knowledge of electricity is established, the dependency of architecture upon the Electrical Infrastructure can be revealed for what it is. Doing so will reawaken the discipline to its vital mission as public servants of the natural and built environment, and will give rise to an architectural movement addressing the ongoing issues of pollution, inefficiency and war that are eternally waiting to be addressed by the profession. With this new vantage Electrical Buildings can be strategically redesigned, with the possibilities limited only by the architectural imagination.

Immediate results will come from 'seeing Cyberspace' from an architectural point of view. That is to say that the ethereal and immaterial aspects of the Internet and WWW are actually grounded in the everyday electrical artefacts which exist as a new order in the built environment. Seeing Cyberspace thus means seeing electrical space-time, aesthetics and culture in the electrical distribution poles populating the world by the billion, similar to the columns of the Greek and Roman classical orders. Building in both thought and action, architecture can make clear what no other discipline can.

For example, Electrical Buildings can integrate distribution poles and power lines into their designs, juxtaposing Cyberspace and actual space. Analysis of this symbolism could unveil what has previously been considered invisible and nonexistent. That is, that Cyberspace is a physical and tangible place all around us in the built form of the Electrical Infrastructure.

Furthermore, electrical iconography can be explored in a way like no other, as every electrical artefact from meters and antennae to power lines and computers can be reinterpreted for their symbolic architectural meaning. This exploration could delve into the expression, improvement, and conceptual coordination of these disparate parts.

Seeing Cyberspace is only the first step. If people can 'see' Cyberspace they can

also begin to comprehend the much larger Electrical Infrastructure of Power, Media and Technology. Doing so will be the impetus for an Electrical Architecture which integrates the sustainable Electrical Systems of planners with the innovative work and Electrical Tools of designers.

With enough awareness of the phenomena of electricity and architectural study of the Electrical Infrastructure, a paradigmatic state of reasoning will be unveiled showing that electricity is beyond doubt the new architectural order in the built environment. And, remembering Le Corbusier's sage statement that the engineer's aesthetic is architectural, the Electrical Infrastructure will then be transformed into an Architecture of Electricity for those whose mind's eye can see it and build it.

The current configuration of the Electrical Infrastructure is unacceptable and must be challenged and fundamentally changed through the strategic redesign of Electrical Tools, Buildings and Systems. Planners, designers and architects are thus needed to aid the work of politicians, scientists and activists, along with other citizens, businesses, and organisations to redirect the course of Electrical Civilisation on a scale thus far inaccessible to the public will.

Once the fundamental importance of the electrical 'structure beneath' our everyday lives and livelihoods can be realised, we can begin to rebuild a locally controlled, democratic and sustainable Electrical Civilisation. But to do so we first need to find a way to work together, despite our differences.

OBJECTIVE
Electrical Order | Action | Electronetworking
Electrical Order is cosmological, beginning with the Big Bang billions of years ago. As the natural world of electromagnetic matter and energy evolved, so did humanity. Using our electrical minds we researched and helped develop this new order over a period of 2,500 years, creating millions of electrical artefacts as a result. In the last 200 years we constituted the artificial electrical world with electrical generators. In the last 100 years we harnessed this artifice to lay claim to the virtual world of Cyberspace through the telecommunication technologies of the telephone, radio, television and networked computer.

As our understanding of electricity has evolved so too has our awareness of the Electrical Order everywhere around us. From atomic bombs to deep space probes, we have became ever more reliant upon this force, to the point where the order of tradition has been surpassed by the predominant model of electrical space and time, aesthetics and culture. This new Electrical Order, common to humanity, manifests itself within the assemblage of
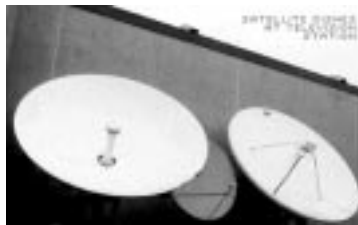
Electrical Power, Media and Technology, whereupon the subliminal force of nature literally surfaces in the artificial and virtual worlds of Electrical Civilisation. This paradigmatic event culminates in the symbolic transformation of metaphor into reality: the Electrical Infrastructure becomes Architecture, representing economic, social and political culture in built form.

Our critical task of the 21st century requires a basic understanding of this new Architecture of Electricity and an awareness of the design flaws in the current infrastructure upon which Electrical Civilisation depends; including the negative aspects of the current Electrical Order that need to be publicly recognised before they can be radically readjusted.

Yet at the turn of this millennium conceptualising a 'world order' based upon electricity carries with it the extremely negative connotation attributed to the ideologies of globalism and the 'new world order', which to many promotes inhumane, unjust and corrupt policies. As a case in point, Craig Baldwin's hybrid sci-fi/documentary film *Spectres of the Spectrum* (*S.O.S.*) explores the total control of the "new electromagnetic order" by transnational corporations, and the resistance movement against this all-encompassing power.[9] *S.O.S.* offers a realistic critique on where discourse begins today, at the point of war and the gathering of forces to reclaim our future back from the past.

The main contributor to this decline of Electrical Civilisation is the industrial world view which constrains all economic, social and political decision-making to only those options sanctioned by the reigning order of tradition, locally and globally. As a result, the Electrical Infrastructure has become the severely broken foundation of 21st century society, which under the rubric of change will only become more and more centralised and secure in its total control of power and authority over the cultural order of things.

This dangerously undemocratic power system and its policy can, must and will be fundamentally changed. We, as fellow human beings, require it for our collective survival.

Call to Order | Action | Electronetworking

The Electrical Order is neither inherently good nor bad – but it can be designed to promote the status quo or change it. This explains the paradox of seeing Cyberspace in the Electrical Infrastructure common around the world. Doing so enables one to compare and critique both paradigms, new and old, through their ordering of space and time, aesthetics, and culture in built form.

Seeing Cyberspace within Electrical Tools, Buildings and Systems provides an immediate opportunity to unveil the epic story of electricity and its role in defining the larger world-picture. Through an architectural awareness the new Electrical Order can be seen in every nation on Earth in the electrical power plants, transmission pylons, substations, distribution poles and power lines of the Electrical Infrastructure.

By recognising this common Architecture of Electricity in our everyday lives, the potential exists for the democratic and sustainable redesign of Electrical Civilisation. This

is a call to arms for all planners, designers, architects, patrons, citizens, businesses, organisations and governments to pledge their support to facilitating this enormous and important public endeavour.
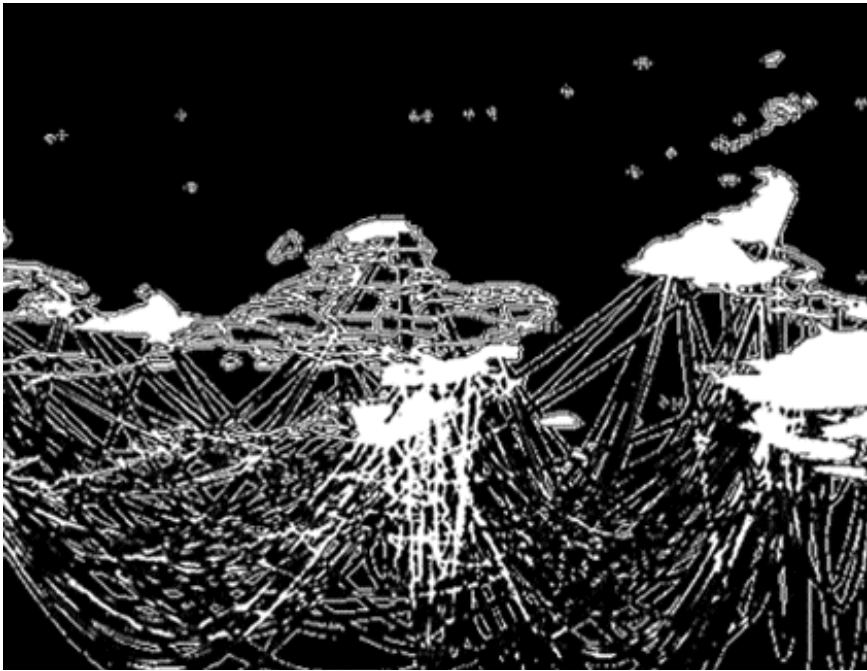
Order | Action | Electronetworking

Only by working together can we redirect the course of Electrical Civilisation for the better by renewing its greater sense of cultural and ethical purpose, and our own. Please join this effort and contribute your unique skills to this public pursuit through working on these, our shared goals.

LOCALIZE & DEMOCRATIZE ELECTRICAL POWER TODAY!

NOTES

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Archifesto
Towards a digital urbanism of radical difference
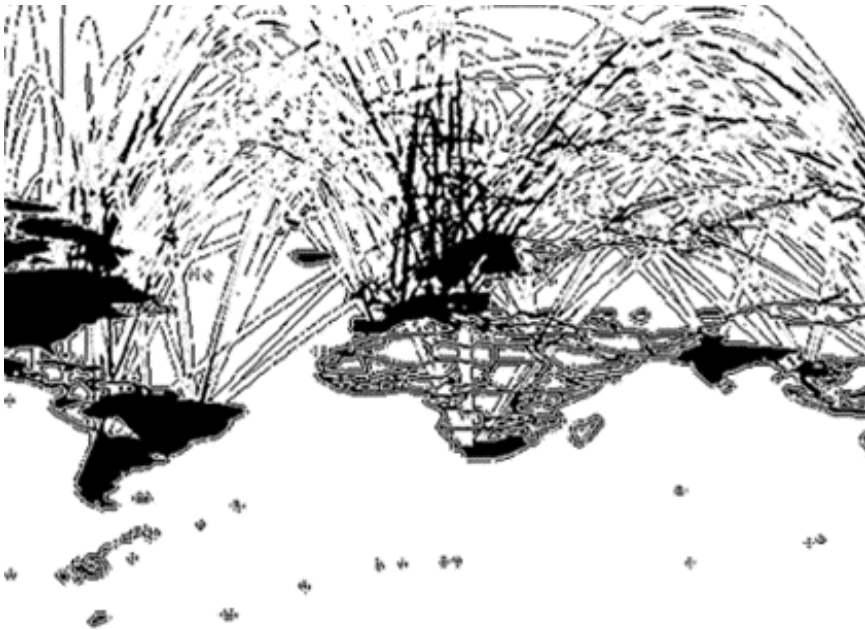
In the Cities of the Future... the peoples of the world will be empowered.

The sea of information which surrounds us is more than a mere superficial addition: the physicality of buildings, streets, public squares, malls and habitats. The city of contemporary experience is a dense web of interconnecting fibres, cables and lines which overlay the physical infrastructure of offices, corridors, doors and alarms which make up our urban architecture. Telecommunications are the networks of invisible wireless signals, satellite feeds and other unseen yet omnipresent systems of messaging in all its forms.

Despite technological changes in the digital revolution, private capital and its urban industries have remained largely undifferentiated in form since the nineteenth-century era of the weaving loom, steam engine and the child labour factory. Those in economic and political power have sought to coerce others to see the world as it appears, through them, as an uneven and skewed office, workplace and shopfront, where freedom from drudgery and boredom is just out of reach, forever a mirage of what could be possible or latent in desire itself. This is Guy Debord's perception of the society of the spectacle, further reinforced by the diffusion of media into every nook and cranny of global consciousness.

Computer and Internet access will be available to all people everywhere. The Net will be publicly owned as open to everyone, as the sky, public parks and the right to breathe.

Amidst the development and access to digital urbanism, work and its social relations have been transformed. The new global digital technologies offer a dislocated relation to hierarchical forms of work – a decentralised sense of what one is doing at one's terminal in relation to what others are doing. The sense of place has expanded to include readily available communication with workers, artists, creative people, activists and owners in all parts of the world. The idea of the 'global village' can be expanded upon from its initial place in corporate rhetoric to include the very real totality of persons engaged in some kind of telecommunications from country to country, city to city, town to town, room to room, regardless of the content of these messages, and within this, as independent culture and service providers have flourished, alternatives to the system of exploitation, as it has stood before, have emerged.

In the Cities of the Future, there will be equal, affordable Net access for all.

The needs of societies must be identified by the people, for the people, above and beyond those of the corporate balance sheet. As the sea of what science fiction writer Bruce Sterling calls "Dead Media" fills with the obsolete machines of countless offices – often only slightly 'out of date' pentiums, 486 computers, laptops and peripherals – the technologically innovative and progressive connect under-served people to the Internet, its ideas, sites, CD-ROMs and other formats. So rich is the potential of this technoculture and its valuing of techno-detritus that not only working machines can be assembled from corporate flotsam, but these machines can be put online for people who genuinely need them, and inexpensive, even worker or community-owned servers can be linked to create non-profit networks for literacy, communications, learning and social development, art and education.

Technology and its methods will flourish for the Public good.
Corporate Domination will cease.

Archimedia suggests that new free-form networks with some of the qualities of 'cities' are being made out in the digital landscape. Computers require only the physical space, electricity and communication links which enable them to be turned on, and used. A cast-off

machine can hide under a counter in a space no bigger than a drawer, and yet serve web pages, software and material with the entire world. A refurbished laptop can run alone, in a back room or a hidden place – all that is needed is a phone line and an Internet account. Each web site or user located at an address acts as a citizen in a network of communi-cation which is the urban architecture of the cybercity; spaces devoid of corporate control and the functionalism of traditional work.

> **The Net will be a rallying point for communities –
> not a marketplace for exploitation.**

Increasingly mediated by the complex conditions of a globally digitised system/economy of commerce and governance, cities are increasingly becoming rife with spaces in which corporate profit is being designed through specific architectural devices such as franchise, food courts, mini-malls, main streets, atrium malls, mixed-used apartment mall complexes, theme parks and secured commercial development, or what Saskia Sassen generously refers to as "economic chains".[1]

These new types of corporate-industrial-entertainment conglomerations which have appeared in the global cities of the late 20th and early 21st century are backed by the increased use and exploitation of the privatised multinational web-based economy. Those unconnected or uninterested must pay the price of an often externally imposed set of social relations, which, for the most part, are bent on destroying public spaces both real and virtual and which are promoting cities and spaces in countries all over the world through the spectacle of the privatised global marketplace.

> **Networks, expanded to include the majority of the people and
> to belong to the people, form the basis of any true resistance culture
> in a globalised, digitised economy.**

Thinkers, artists, and activists refusing to cede to the expected initiatives of capitalism are carving out new and progressive forms of media usage. These are the public media initia-tives created by the programmers, graphics people, musicians, culture jammers and liber-tarians who have adapted the refuse of the media Spectacle and who have turned it back upon itself. These are also the community-based activists and educators who are supplying underserved communities with ways to learn and build their networks. This is the philoso-phy of 'DIY' – of community cooperation and ownership, at the heart of public life in many parts of the world.

But as privatised networks and computers are 'obsoleting' urban spaces as we once knew them, there are also networks and computers manned to create meaningful online spaces and viable social spaces in their place. Where computers and networks proliferate, very often so do economic and social and cultural systems. If we view connection itself as the basis for participation in hybrid urban life, perhaps digital communication begins to ful-

fill its utopian promise as a kind of social adhesive, one which assures differentiation even within some global hegemony of technological expansion.

There is already an emerging kind of global culture of connectivity such as non-government organisations, alternative mediamakers, human rights groups, and other non-profit, people-based thinkers and institutions which are openly filling the void which profit's vacuum – corporate capital and its architecture – has robbed from social and civic life. Consider for a moment the significant international media events brought about recently by public rejection (and violence towards) the global chains Starbucks and MacDonalds, or the widely viewed movements to reject mall-culture and genetically modified foods in numerous cities: Seattle, Washington, Philadelphia, Melbourne, Prague, London, Genoa.[2]

Apart from the rejection of the WTO or the IMF is the full-on damage to the positioning of the global franchise within, especially, non-American cities. The recent terrorist attacks on the global conglomerate of the World Trade Center further bespeak a rejection of the dominating global economy. Meanwhile, rural activists, agriculturists, and scientists from non-western countries and individuals such as Vandana Shiva have used the new technologies to participate in a global discourse rejecting globalised capitalism. The growth of a mixed, multinational, non-Westernised media as global culture is apparent in the documents of these provocative and highly successful events.[3]

Cultural and political movements have long demonstrated creative uses for both city space and the technologies of communication which cities have given rise to. For example, the mobile tool of the video Portapak sparked new media relations during the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in the United States and Europe, allowing the dissemination of information regarding social protest to reach a broader public. The international women's movement has benefited widely, also, from the accessibility of cameras. Today, the wireless phone, Internet, and laptops are powerful tools for anti-globalisation movements, as they facilitate the coordination of and the participation in protest action outside the gaze of the police and the interests of state and commercial power. The miniature tape recorder, the fax machine and the cell phone are put to use by the proletariat, the culture jammer, the writer and the activist across borders. Nothing more exotic than a phone line and an Internet account can link activists together from all over the world.

Corporate Domination will cease… The Net will not be censored!

The proliferation of security cameras and 'point-of-sale' systems mirrors the decentralisation and divided consciousness as yearned for by those in power. People must be both on display and watched at all times, according to this litany. The system of financial exchange which has installed shopping mall cultures into cities of the western world, and which has been busily installing shopping mall and theme park cultures into spaces of the non-western world, creates a climate of security and surveillance leading, in part, to an all out return to the ludicrous fear of the Other. This particular racist line of thinking earmarks the current paranoid trend towards the Patriot Laws being legislated by the George Bush Administration to curtail open usage of the Net, and to the endless parading of men and

women of colour as the Number One global criminals in the post-September 11 globalised media spectacle.

Peppered with techno-detritus, and now rife with the ideology of an increasingly 'secured' western economy, urban spaces the world over are being occupied with stronger tools in an even more contentious landscape of intentions and values. The inequality of nations, peoples, genders and cultures has come into even sharper focus since the globalised distribution of the images of the Twin Towers falling and the ensuing presentation of an insular and debilitated Afghanistan. When one looks behind the blank facades of everwhitening 'Main Street' commercialised, corporatised thinking, one finds the back alleys of a critical, politicised culture calling for a diversified future of increased peace and global understanding; folks booting up and getting on with their hand-me-down 386s and 486s and pentiums, or running open-source operating systems and independent web servers. As the paranoid patrons of Western capitalism work towards devising stricter codes of law enforcement, surveillance and social control, rat-bag technophiles happily struggle to dismantle the apparatus of Western oppression.

Global media culture tends to be viewed as a one-way mainstream juggernaut, whose tentacles emanate from multinational corporate industry and spread to all corners of the globe. Note the recent aggressive merger initiatives by AOL to overtake international markets as the major Internet service provider.[4]

Cable television, satellite news, and giant telecommunications firms have largely succeeded in making the world itself a configured 'desktop" where filtered information and ideas relevant to the most powerful countries, companies, trends and ideas are the only ones allowed through. But with every branch office and with every commercial spin-off which accompanies the spread of media hegemony comes the potential for individual and community empowerment through media – the microcosmic building blocks of social and political change. The walls of oppression are only as high and thick as the belief in the oppression itself.

Exploitation by one nation over another, by one class over another, by one sex over another, by one race over another, will be no more.

The collision of physicality and virtuality in the global village of the Net gives rise to new types of architecture – hybrid forms – or a blend of physical space with the imagined spaces of the mind and minds of those connected via networks and software. Similarly the spaces of cities are affected by the new distribution of cyber-identity and cyber-imagination within the real distribution of access, power, gender, education, language, population, use and function. As William J. Mitchell has observed in *City of Bits*, the arrival of automatic telling machines eventually gave rise to the gradual erosion/distortion of the very idea of the bank – a large building in a city which holds money and keeps it safe for customers. Money itself has assisted in the collapsing necessity of the local bank by becoming increasingly detached from its real world referents – cash, cheques etc. It has been the networks rather than the automatic machines at the end of them that people use for their finances, leading to the free flow of capital at all levels, and hence banks can be 'anywhere' as long as they are connected to the banking network. Decentralised, de-physicalised and cut adrift from the domain of fixity, banks now operate largely as token 'start points' and 'end points'

in the global system of circulating capital which, as McKenzie Wark dryly noted, "like rust, never sleeps".[5] The metaphor of dispersed and mobilised capital is an apt one for the fluid exchange of ideas in a changing, free society. And like money, or ideas, bodies are liberated through digital media as well.

We are mobile entities, rhizomatic entities, nomadic, intercultural peoples, capable of attaching and detaching, exchanging and absorbing, communicating and effecting global space. No longer agents cathected uncomfortably to a structuralist system, we are freed by the lucid flexibility of the networks, to live in a self-documenting, self-willing post-structuralist public...

Archimedia, December 2001.

NOTES

1. Saskia Sassen, "The Topoi of E-Space: Private and Public Cyberspace" in *Readme!,* nettime ed. (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1999).
2. Whispered Media, "Showdown in Seattle" and "Breaking the Bank" (Video; San Francisco: 1999 and 2000); CNN footage of May Day riots (London, UK: 2000); zines, ephemera, varia documenting WTO uprisings.
3. Ibid.
4. "AOL Takes Over the Australian Content Space", article available online at http://www. abc.net.au/news/ justin/nat/ newsnat-10dec2001-75.htm and posted to the ::fibreculture:: mailing list (www.fibreculture.org, 11/12/01).
5. McKenzie Wark, *Virtual Geography: Living with Global Media Events* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

THE POLITICS *of* **I N F O R M A T I O N**

My mailbox at Sarai has recently been receiving a number of unsolicited mails with subject headers like 'Access Control', 'Biometrics', 'Workplace Watchdog' etc., from companies vending innovative software solutions in Pune and Bangalore. Looking for distributors for various Physical Access Control, IT Security and Fingerprint based Access Control System technologies, they hope that I might be interested.

On the other hand, my father, who has chosen to remain a tenant all through his long years in the city, was recently given a 'tenant verification form' by the housing society in which he stays, to be submitted to the local police station. He is disturbed about having himself verified after thirty-five years of abiding by the law. Both these events – the e-mails selling surveillance systems and the arrival of my father's verification form – are pointers towards an increasing drive to collect information that will enable greater control over access and mobility within urban spaces.

What we are witnessing now is a sophisticated compact between state institutions, public policy, businesses, voluntary groups and technologists to control 'populations' and to erect fortresses (and *gulags*?) of data.

Information is also part of a complex flow of a global traffic of investment, goods, labour and instructions. Information, in its commodified form, travels towards new frontiers, pushes boundaries, making certain barriers obsolete, some porous, some re-configured, and also creating novel and more refined access regulators.

Being within this 'network' of access controls and accelerating flows also implies innovating, resisting, building horizontal solidarities and imaginatively constructing possible practices and futures with and of information. The knowledge that runs the network is available to many millions. And the network is always inhabited by a million mutinies.

The exhilaration of our times lies in our creative ability to translate and extend the language of freedom, collaboration and commons that animates so much of the practices within the digital domain to other social domains and practices.

The collection of articles in this section is an attempt to engage with and think through these issues.

J E E B E S H   B A G C H I

Banking (on) Biologicals
Commodifying the global circulations of human genetic material

K A U S H I K   S U N D E R   R A J A N

I will use two controversies as starting points for this analysis. The first is a court case, *Moore vs. the Regents of the University of California* (1990; henceforth the *Moore* case), and the second is the controversy surrounding the patenting of DNA sequences. In the former case, John Moore, a patient afflicted with hairy-celled leukaemia, had his spleen cells excised. The researchers belonging to the University of California were able to convert these cells into a unique cell line (which they named Mo, after Moore) and were able to patent the cell line. When Moore found out that derivatives of his spleen cells had been made without his knowledge and consent and had been patented, he demanded a share in the property rights. The case was finally decided in the California Supreme Court, which while upholding Moore's claim that the UC researchers had shown a breach of fiduciary duty and had not obtained proper informed consent, denied him any property rights in the cell line, which it was claimed was the researchers' 'invention'. In other words, in the words of critical legal theorist James Boyle, Moore was "the author of his destiny, but not of his spleen" (Boyle, 1997: 107).

In the DNA patenting controversy, however, the exalted status of intellectual property law has looked slightly more crumbly, and many groups with specific interests are trying to devise strategies to get around IP in these areas.

Both of these controversies surround the ownership of human biologicals,[1] in an era in which 'biological' increasingly functions as a noun. The general moral tone that inflects these controversies – and that is particularly stark in institutionalised bioethics discourse – is that the human biological should be 'respected' by being kept outside the realm of commodification.

There is, however, a key difference between the moment of *Moore* (1990) and the current controversies around DNA patenting a decade later, because in the intervening years it has become increasingly easy to *informationalise* human biologicals. Therefore, the controversy surrounding the patenting of DNA sequence information is essentially about the ownership of genetic *information*. Now why is this significant?

Actually, this difference is often not seen as significant, and sliding over this difference is not without consequence. A recent *60 Minutes* show on American TV, for instance, explored DNA patenting and critiqued it as something that horrible biotech companies were doing in order to stake property claims on something that is supremely human and for that reason outside the realm of commodity circulation. Now, if genes *are* information – which is what molecular biologists and bioinformaticians tell us – then patenting information about our genes is equivalent to patenting our genes. But is it really? It is important, I will argue, to tease out the difference between the patenting of human biological *materials* and human
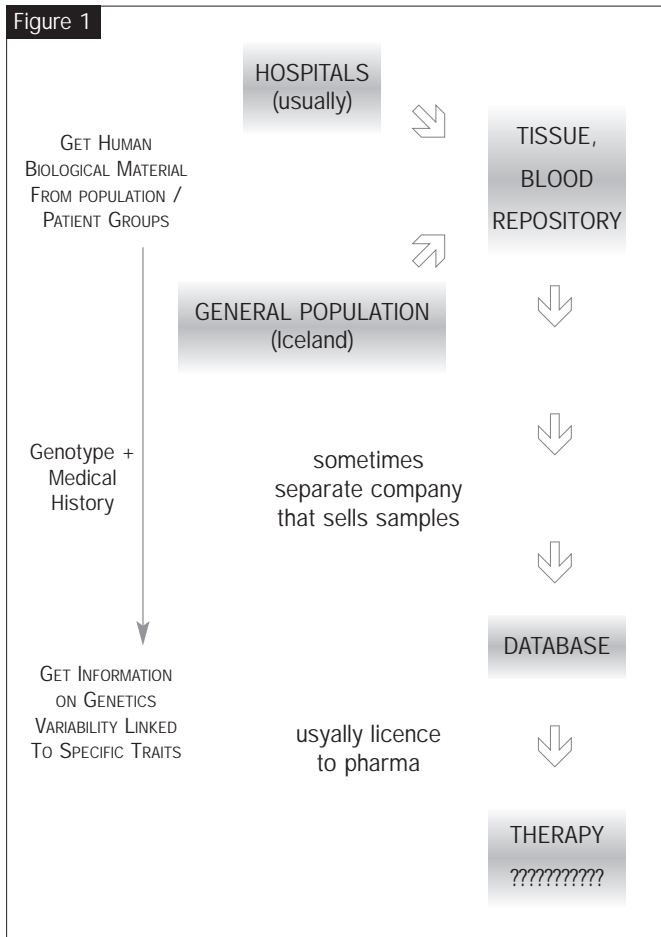
biological *information*. In other words:

> *Human genetic information is a new type of human biological material that the genomic revolution has made increasingly accessible to annotation and analysis.*

Let me tease out further the different social lives of material and informational biological. Even though these are different 'things', a continued relationship exists between them. This relationship is primarily one of *temporality*. Biological information helps to rationalise wet lab experiments. Therefore, one can use bioinformatics in sequence homology searches in order to determine the probable function of a protein encoded by that particular sequence. The tissue from which information has been extracted then has two functions: it could serve as a continued 'repository' of future information whose extraction isn't even anticipated at the time of the initial experiments. Further, there is often a need to go back and do wet lab experiments on these tissues to actually validate what the information from the tissue suggests about molecular activities within the tissue. In other words, information is detached from its biological material originator to the extent that it does have a separate social life, but the 'knowledge' provided by the information is constantly relating back to the material biological sample. The database plays a key intermediary role in the transition of 'information' to 'knowledge': in this case specifically knowledge that is of relevance to therapy. It is knowledge that is always relating back to the material biological that is the source of the information; but it is also knowledge that can only be obtained, in the first place, through the extraction of information from the material biological. The abstraction of information away from the material biological has a very specific function in making therapeutically relevant knowledge. This is also why it is so easy to intuitively conceptualise the generation of information as 'inventive', and therefore ownable.

Therefore, it is important not to collapse analyses of human biologicals into one category without teasing out the different (if related) social lives of material and informational biological.

What is really new here is less the fact of human genetic information as something that can be obtained, accessed and made 'thingly', as much as it is the sheer volume of information that is now available. At the same time, this is also not something that is synonymous with other types of human biological material, such as the cell lines that were patented in *Moore*. The question to be asked is how different forms of biological – material and informational – *interact*, and how overlapping or different the politics around their respective ownership is.

The nature of interaction depends on the type of work that is performed in different cases. The working draft sequence of the human genome that was published in June 2000, for instance, does not document genetic *variability* between individuals and populations, which is of increasing importance in generating information relevant for diagnostic and therapeutic development. For that, one needs DNA from different individual, patient or population groups. The development of, for instance, pharmacogenomics or personalised medicine, which many people claim is the ultimate aim of genomics, is vitally dependent on getting large collections of DNA samples (usually obtained as blood samples, occasionally as tissue samples depending on the disease being focused on). The market terrain that manifests this logic is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

HOSPITALS
(usually)

GET HUMAN
BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL
FROM POPULATION /
PATIENT GROUPS

TISSUE,
BLOOD
REPOSITORY

GENERAL POPULATION
(Iceland)

Genotype +
Medical
History

sometimes
separate company
that sells samples

GET INFORMATION
ON GENETICS
VARIABILITY LINKED
TO SPECIFIC TRAITS

DATABASE

usyally licence
to pharma

THERAPY
??????????

Now in this model of genetic research, you obtain human biological material from diffe-
rent, often clearly identified, patient or population groups that are strategically selected,
and then genotype them (i.e. find out their genetic sequence). Through such large-scale
analysis, especially when situated across multiple populations or patient groups, it is pos-
sible to obtain information on that genetic *variability* that centrally underlies specific traits
or diseases of interest. The human biological material – *not* information – is usually obtained
from hospitals with which researchers draw up specific agreements, though other sources
are also occasionally tapped. The Iceland-based genomics company DeCode Genetics, for
instance, obtains material from the general population. That material is stored in a tissue
repository of some sort. These repositories could be within the company that is planning to

perform subsequent research (as it is in the case of DeCode), or in a public domain tissue collection, or, with increasing frequency, in specific companies who base their entire business models on serving as such repositories. The information that is generated from this material is often converted into databases. These databases are (or so it is hoped by the companies developing them) the precursors of therapy. In an ideal world, the company that generates the database would like to hold the information and use it in its own drug discovery programme. In reality, taking drugs to market is so heavily capital intensive that most database companies license their information to big pharmaceutical companies (again, in the case of the Icelandic example, you see that DeCode has licensed its database to the multinational pharmaceutical giant Hoffmann-la Roche). In this way they try to ensure that information pays off. Now the key footnote in Figure 1, which I will get back to later, is that genotyping alone is not enough to generate meaningful information about the genetic basis of disease: *there is an absolute importance of medical history that can be correlated with the genotype. It's only in the correlation of the two types of information that true meaning can be extracted.*[2] Having in addition information about family medical history is even more valuable, but is very rare except in cases like Iceland. Now the dream for any company that is indulging in this business is that they can do all three of the above steps: collect the DNA, generate valuable information and then develop a drug. In reality, as I've already mentioned, different companies end up concentrating their business models on specific points of this value chain. Some examples of this are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

REPOSITORY

First Genetic Trust

Genomics Collaborative, Ardais

DeCode

DATABASE   Incyte

CuraGen   Celera

Human Genome Sciences   Millennium

THERAPY   Big pharma
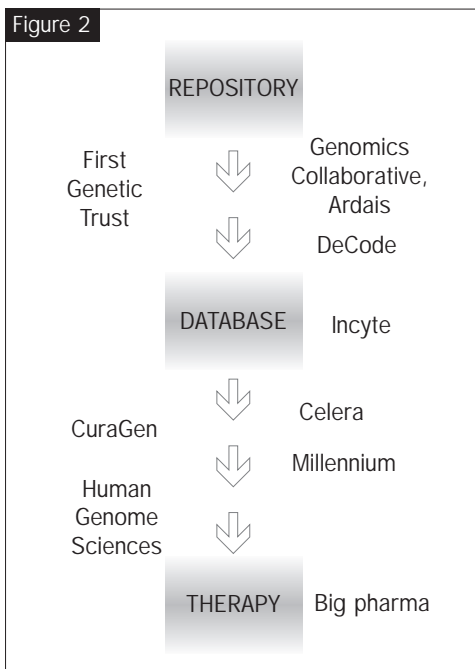
Therefore, you have companies like Genomics Collaborative and First Genetic Trust, which are (at this point at least) primarily DNA repositories. You have DeCode, which is a DNA repository but is using that repository very much as a means to develop its own database reflecting the genetic information of the Icelandic people. Then you have the archetypal database companies, what I call 'first-generation' genome companies that sprung up in the heart of the race to sequence the human genome. Therapy is still very much the domain of big pharmaceutical companies, though there are some older biotech companies such as Genentech that have developed drugs that might be called 'genomic', though these companies were not making databases as part of their business model as Incyte or Celera were.

Controversy around DNA patenting has really only involved the part of the value chain that leads from database downstream to therapy. However as I hope is clear, issues surrounding ownership that most closely resemble the *Moore* controversy have more to do with the part of the chain between repository and database. The field upon which intellectual property debates in biotechnology take place is framed by these two sets of debates. Before I move on to the latter set of issues, I'd like to briefly outline the actors in the DNA patenting controversy and mention what each actor's stakes are.

Very briefly, one could say that there are three groups that oppose DNA patenting. The first are public researchers, who believe that information should be in the public domain. This is both for reasons of logic (generating sequence, they say, is not particularly inventive), and of ideals (an adherence to a certain Mertonian ideal of communism, as reflected in conventions that involve depositing sequence information into a public repository before it can be published by a journal). It must also be remembered that the American state through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has been a major enabler of private research. Further, the NIH itself has a historical relationship to gene patenting that it would rather forget, having burnt its fingers trying to patent DNA sequences from brain tissue in 1991 (see Cook-Deegan, 1995: 311-325).[3]

Then there is the general public, at least that section that is agitated about DNA sequences getting patented, and who get represented through media interventions like the *60 Minutes* show I mentioned earlier. This type of opposition seems to stem mostly from a gut ethical or moral opposition to the idea of human genetic information being in the realm of commodification. Such a position, as I've tried to argue until this point, does not make much distinction between material and informational biological – human DNA information, in this point of view, becomes 'living matter' in the same way that cell lines do.

The third group that is opposed to patenting DNA sequence information however is in my opinion the most intriguing, and those are pharmaceutical companies. As is evident from the value chain that I outlined earlier, database companies are the ones who try and patent DNA sequence information so that they can sell/license it. Pharmaceutical companies usually have to pay upstream licensing fees and subsequent royalties on any therapy they may discover to these database companies. They would, therefore, much prefer information to be accessible in the public domain. Therefore, even public/private debates are over-coded by corporate fights. In other words, and this is crucial:

What distinguishes the genomics/drug development marketplace from, say, the soft-ware industry is its peculiar upstream-downstream terrain. Drug development is such a capital intensive process that there are very few companies with the muscle to actually take drug to market.[4]

Remember, also, that none of the DNA sequence patent debate touches upon the desirability or otherwise of 20-year drug patents, which are still unthreatened. Therefore the SNP consortium, which is an alliance of public researchers and 10 of the world's biggest multinational pharmaceutical companies to keep information of nucleotide-level genetic variation in the public domain, is very much in the interests of the big pharma partners as well. (Of course, it is often projected that big pharmaceutical companies are entering into willing alliances with public researchers and relinquishing patent rights on DNA sequences in order to facilitate cheap, fast and easy flow of information towards therapy. This is not untrue; what gets hidden from such rhetoric is that it isn't these guys who're in the business of leveraging sequence patents for profit in the first place. See Sunder Rajan, 2001 for an elaboration of this argument). What I want to emphasise at this point is that the different approaches to DNA patenting between, say, Hoffman-la Roche and Celera is not because Celera is inherently evil or a nasty little spoiler while Roche realises the benefits of free downstream flow of information. It is because pharma companies and database companies occupy fundamentally different market niches that dictate how they approach DNA patent-ing. All companies are aggressive protectors of intellectual property *when it benefits them*. It is this particular upstream-downstream terrain that distinguishes the drug development industry from, say, the Internet or finance industries.[5]

For the rest of this paper, I want to focus on ownership issues that arise when one deals with the first half of the value chain I showed earlier: the bit concerning itself with creating databases from corporate DNA repositories. What sorts of ownership barriers underlie the business models of the companies that concentrate on this part of the value chain? I will specifically talk about one company, a commercial DNA repository based in the north-eastern United States that I shall refer to as Repository X (Rep-X).[6]

In its corporate description, Rep-X calls itself "a functional genomics company with a comprehensive, clinical approach to discovery, focused on developing high value, pro-prietary intellectual property for its own account and in collaboration with major biophar-maceutical companies. Rep-X maintains the [Rep-X proprietary repository][7], an unparalleled, large-scale resource of clinical research material, including human DNA, serum and snap-frozen tissue samples, linked to detailed medical information collected from patients world-wide. To date, Rep-X has recruited more than 100,000 patients in its effort to build the [Rep-X proprietary repository], and collections continue".[8] In other words, what Rep-X wants to become is the world's largest commercial DNA repository, collecting DNA samples from all over the world, genotyping them and then leveraging them for profit.

Now obviously a business model such as this can be deemed by many as ethically somewhat fraught, as indeed the controversies over DeCode and the Icelandic genomic database have shown (though the key differences have to be borne in mind here: two of the major reasons why DeCode is so controversial is because they presume consent rather

than obtain informed consent to use medical information; and secondly, because they have been given exclusive rights for their database by the Icelandic parliament. Rep-X does adopt an informed consent procedure and, in theory at least, any company could base itself on Rep-X's business model and compete with them for sample collection). So clearly bioethics is a key area in which Rep-X takes an interest, which is not unusual for a biotech company these days. Indeed, Rep-X has its own in-house bioethicist, a bioethicist being a peculiar breed of individual who professes 'expertise' in the ethical issues that surround new biotechnologies. In fact the CEO of Rep-X says of hiring bioethicists: "I'm surprised more companies don't do it. It doesn't cost us anything, and in the end it may save us [money, time or reputation]. I mean, the whole idea of it is so reasonable. We've always said that if we are going to be on the front page of the *New York Times* we'd better make sure we get it right".[9]

Rep-X haven't yet made it to the front page of the *Times*, but they have made it to the business page of the *Boston Globe*, testifying to the enormous amount of generally favourable publicity they have been getting in business and investor circles in the US. The *Globe* article is typically celebratory, and paints a picture of dynamism, speed and incessant progress, none of which is an unusual character sketch of a young biotech company. A quote from this article: "When the FedEx driver rings the bell on the loading dock at [Rep-X], it's a call to action. The driver unloads bundles of special envelopes marked with the biohazard symbol: fresh samples of tissue and blood from patients nationwide. Within minutes, technicians scurry to open individual plastic kits. Glass vials of blood, each identified only by a bar code, are quickly scanned into the computer – like a giant grocery checkout in reverse. Processing the samples is a carefully choreographed blend of tedious hard work and blazingly fast robotic automation" *(Boston Globe*, August 22 2001). And so it goes on: the combination of speed and genius combining to create value from a novel business model, the seamless rhetoric reflecting the seamless operations of an aggressive young company.[10]

Now the big 'ethical' issue that Rep-X confronts, à la *Moore*, is not the fact that it can own samples, but the fact that it should collect them properly – as their CEO suggested in the quote earlier, 'doing it' isn't the question as much as 'doing it right' is. In other words, like the judges who constituted the majority opinion in *Moore*, Rep-X is most worried about getting proper informed consent. It knows that in the US at least getting exclusive property rights on the samples doesn't really constitute the bottleneck. This is reflected in Rep-X's fascinating statement of what it calls "Rigorous Ethical Standards", which states: "[Rep-X] is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards possible, and to that end, meets quarterly with a distinguished Bioethics Advisory Board that has been invaluable in developing innovative solutions to the range of ethical problems posed by genetic research. In addition, [Rep-X] has created a proprietary system for anonymising collections while ensuring data quality and protecting patient confidentiality. Informed consent and patient rights are key to [Rep-X]'s operations, and ensure sample quality while maintaining pristine ethical standards. Working with international leaders in the area of informed consent for genetic research, [Rep-X] has developed consent procedures appropriate to the repository context".[11] Not only does Rep-X, in statements like this, espouse itself as the embodiment of ethical practice, it also sets up the idea that an institutionalised bioethics provides exper-

tise that can transcend national boundaries and contexts, in the same way that the genetic samples Rep-X collects do. Indeed, Rep-X's statement is quite typical of the disclaimers that are central to many of the companies that occupy the part of the value chain between repository and database, and concerns itself with proper informed consent procedures for sample collection, privacy and confidentiality. Of course, what is notably missing in this statement is anything to do with ownership rights, which, as in the case of *Moore*, are deemed non-negotiable. This is because it is the company that's doing the genotyping that's deemed to be the 'inventive' work; where samples come from merely constitutes source, which is always written out of intellectual property agreements.

Unfortunately for Rep-X and the retinue of 'expert' bioethicists who profess transnational and universal problem-solving capabilities, the expertise of institutionalised bioethics, professing as it does primarily American (and sometimes European) codes for ethical governance – such as we worry about informed consent and privacy, but sharing ownership is not even an ethical question – doesn't translate very well into other socio-political and geographical contexts.[12] My last set of points therefore is going to have to do with the friction that Rep-X's seamless rhetoric encounters in the practical context of collecting genetic samples from India: a friction of course that is completely left out of the narrative that institutionalised bioethics, the business press and Rep-X's own public relations apparatus construct for it.

India occupies a particularly interesting and ambiguous space in global technoscience writ large, a space that is particularly accentuated in areas relating to biotechnology and drug development. At one level very much a Third World country with some of the lowest human resource indices in the world, India has always privileged science and technology as levers into globally competitive playing fields. Presently, India's technoscientific establishment is undergoing a profound period of change, as the institutional socialist model of primarily state sponsored R&D is giving way to a more market oriented approach. However, some of the most aggressive market players in Indian biotech are not companies, which are still by and large reticent and risk-averse, but Indian public sector labs.

Genomics is an area that the Indian government has been particularly interested in. India did not get into the Human Genome Project in the early '90s, a fact that its scientific policy establishment was ruing by the mid-'90s when it became evident that genomics was where the action – and the fame and money – were at.

Public labs in India have now become enthusiastic participants in genomics and population genetics, and are helped by the fact that Indian populations are, for a number of reasons, deemed to be very good candidate populations for genetic studies.[13] Therefore, they see Rep-X's sample acquisition in a very different light from Rep-X.[14] They maintain that Rep-X's samples are worthless, even if extensively genotyped, without detailed medical records. These medical records are collected along with the samples from Indian hospitals. Therefore, this argument goes, the Indian hospitals should have a share in the IP. Indeed, some American companies do draw up extensive legal arrangements with the hospitals they obtain samples from, such as Ardais, which has an extensive agreement with the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. This argument therefore says that if Rep-X

shares IP with Indian hospitals, it can have all the samples it wants. But if it doesn't, then it is theft. What complicates this analogy is that many of the best known research hospitals in India are public institutions, whereas in the US most such hospitals are private and function as corporations. Therefore, this argument of the Indian state paradoxically frames the state as itself a corporate entity. This is very much in keeping with a post-1990s ideology of economic liberalisation that has been prominent in Indian elite and policy circles and whose idea of India is as India Inc. With Rep-X so far unwilling to draw up IP sharing agreements with Indian hospitals, all the samples that they have collected from India since October 1999, under the authority of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), have been prevented from leaving India.

Who could have guessed from the *Globe* that a significant outcome of Rep-X's "careful choreography" involves rotting blood samples in a Third World customs shed?

To summarise then:
> Ownership debates relating to human biologicals tend to confuse the ownership of human biological *material* and human biological *information*. The difference between these two forms of ownership is not something that is in the intangible realm of bioethics, but is directly related to different upstream business models that are trying to realise value off of different biological things (that often, indeed, translate into different types of biological information).
> All of these issues must be situated in the understanding of the drug development marketplace, which because of the capital intensive nature of the enterprise, has a very few, very large companies that are positioned to actually take drugs to market. Most of the upstream innovation therefore leads ultimately to licensing agreements with big pharma companies. Therefore, it is much harder to envision a situation in drug development where upstart companies take on Microsoft-like giants. What they can primarily do is encumber the marketplace for big pharma, by developing proprietary knowledge that big pharma has to license.
> When the proprietary 'stuff' that is at issue is genetic information that might otherwise have been in the public domain, it is obviously as much in the interests of pharmaceutical companies as of public researchers to remove the playing field of those patents. Also, the notion of the 'dubious' patent here is very much framed and limited by an ideological notion of research (drug patents, and their advisability or otherwise, aren't even deemed an issue). Therefore you see arrangements such as the SNP consortium, which sees the alliance of public researchers with big pharmaceutical companies to facilitate unfettered release of genetic information into the public domain.
> Business models dealing with biologicals further up the value chain, between DNA repository and database, however, have a different set of ethical issues and ownership politics tied around them.

Bioethics, which is supposed to be providing the space for ethical and political discourse, does not believe that central to these issues is ownership – as an institution, it is more concerned with informed consent and privacy issues, just like the judges in *Moore* were.[15]

There is, however, a lot of varied resistance to IP laws as they exist surrounding the owner-ship of human genetic material, and this resistance takes various forms depending on the stakeholders involved.[16] The resistance from the Indian state is of a particular order. It doesn't want IP because it thinks source should be valued. It wants IP because it realises that generating medical records is part of the inventive procedure. In fact at first sight the argument that it is public *hospitals* and not *patients* (which is what a model such as PXE International's might suggest) that should share in IP might seem rather peculiar. Nor is it the Indian state as represented by the ICMR that wants to share IP, as an institution that can distribute those rights through *all* hospitals, regardless of where samples are obtained, as public good. All that the ICMR wants is that the same market principles for licensing and ownership sharing that get applied in arrangements between hospitals and research insti-tutions in the West be reapplied in the Indian context – a position, as I mentioned above, that can be deemed problematic both from the point of view of a distributive justice argu-ment and in the way a public institution frames itself as a corporate entity.[17] In the global (South à North) travel of genetic material, the South/Third World gets framed as 'source' – and this is of course a framing with a colonial legacy, that even anti-imperialists in countries like India buy into, often legitimately. The Indian argument here is that Rep-X taking samples from India and patenting it is not colonial expropriation, but industrial theft.

A version of this paper was presented at the conference Wizards of OS: Open Cultures and Free Knowledge, held in Berlin, October 2001. Many thanks to the conference organisers, as well as Christopher Kelty, for their invitation to present this work. I have also benefited greatly from discussing this paper at the Science, Technology and Society writing workshop at MIT. Thanks especially to Alexander Brown, Joseph Dumit, Shane Hamilton and David Kaiser for extremely provocative and useful comments.

NOTES
1. Patents can be taken out on DNA from any species, but I stick to the case of human genetic material for this paper.
2. One could conceptualise this by the relationship: R_x Genomic Info = genetic material + genotype information + medical information.
3. The person who filed that patent application was actually J. Craig Venter, CEO of Celera, which contro-versially raced the public Human Genome Project to sequence the human genome.
4. One might think, however, that the state, were it so willing, might have the muscle to bring drugs to mar-ket. Historically however the state, and not just in the United States, has been very good at initial capital outlay that enables the development of private industry, but has been very bad at successful long-term execution on capital intensive projects. Therefore, while the idea of a 'public-sector' pharmaceutical com-pany might be tempting to those who believe that the state should invest heavily in the development of accessible therapeutics, this is likely to remain out of even the spectrum of options that states generally explore. Further, in the United States, there exists an extremely strong pharmaceutical company lobby in Congress. Therefore, the US state has very close relationships with big pharma.
5. The analogy of the upstream-downstream terrain of drug development with the software market is inte-resting for me to think through further. I have suggested that the capital intensity of drug development makes it very unlikely that small biotech companies will ever really compete with and displace big phar-

maceutical companies. Such a capital intensive environment as a competitive advantage for large companies doesn't really exist in industries like the software industry. In other words, I have suggested that the very *nature* of drug development makes it that much harder to alter the fundamental power relations between small and big companies. Having said this, the fact remains that in the software industry, few organisations have seriously tried to go up against Microsoft's core business. There have been many that have tried to compete with one or two products or services that Microsoft has offered, but the only significant challenges have come from those companies that have fundamentally tried to change the rules of the game (such as Netscape or AOL). The costs of bringing any big product to market, regardless of industry, are likely to keep the number of competitors low. Nonetheless, the time the biotech industry was just beginning (in the late '70s) was the time a little start-up called Microsoft was challenging such established computing giants as IBM and Wang. Even if Microsoft has an impenetrable hold on the software market today, there has historically (as seen in Microsoft's own case) been the room for the sort of emergence of a small company into a giant corporation that has just never happened in biotech. I am grateful to Alexander Brown for conversations that have helped me think through these parallels.

6. I have wrestled with the issue of whether to name this company or not, and am still not sure that my decision to keep it anonymous is the correct one. These are dilemmas that are of some consequence in thinking through methodological questions surrounding the ethical choices that one makes while doing corporate ethnographies.

Donna Haraway has said that one reason why she didn't do any interviews for her book *Primate Visions* (1989) is because she wanted to be angry and didn't want the entanglements of the interview relationship to get in the way of writing what she wanted to. Joseph Dumit ponders this very seriously in his recent work on venture science (still unpublished), where he names two biotechnology companies and has therefore consciously decided to avoid interviewing people at these companies. In this case, however, I had already interviewed two people at Rep-X (one employee and one manager, one on-tape and one off-tape) before I learnt of the company's controversial situation in India that I discuss in this paper. At no point in this paper do I draw upon these conversations. As Dumit has shown, it is both legitimate and a challenge to do corporate ethnography by working from the public record in order to reserve the right to 'tackle' certain actors. While that is precisely what I have done in this paper (using not just the public record, but public documents that Rep-X has had a significant hand in 'spinning' to its own advantage), the problem of how to 'forget' my conversations at Rep-X is a lingering one. I have decided to keep Rep-X anonymous until I have resolved it for myself.

This is, as much as anything, an acknowledgement that anthropology is different from journalism, and one of the lines of difference is the relationship with informants. Journalism is adversarial by nature: the work is to 'get' a story out of a subject, even if there is a long-term relationship involved. The challenge for an anthropology such as this is to be ethical and non-adversarial, which is not to say non-critical. At the end of the day, anthropologists write, in part, to their subjects, not just to their colleagues and beyond.

Corporate ethnography involves writing about what is fundamentally a culture of secrecy. I take inspiration here from Hugh Gusterson's work on nuclear weapons scientists (Gusterson, 1996), which shows quite clearly his fascination by how and why things get made secret, without necessarily feeling the obligation to make public what the subjects want kept secret. This is precisely the opposite of the investigative journalist. On a basic level, the journalist wants the 'truth' that is 'out there', while the anthropologist wants something like the subject's truth, or truth in Foucault's sense of "the system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements… linked in a circular rela-

tion with systems of power that produce and sustain it" (Foucault, 1980: 133).

Many thanks to Joseph Dumit for a series of conversations and correspondences on this dilemma, many of which I have directly borrowed from in making my argument for anonymising Rep-X here.

7. Name of repository anonymised.

8. This quote is obtained from the Rep-X web page. However, in order to preserve anonymity, the exact citation cannot be provided.

9. This is also a quote linked to Rep-X's web page, and therefore will not be cited in order to preserve anonymity.

10. I am particularly intrigued by the way in which this article makes DNA sample delivery sound like groceries being delivered. This could, from the tone of the article, be a description of such online grocery stores as homeruns.com or namaste.com. This is not merely an interesting discourse: it is, I believe, a strategic one. After all, making controversial activities seem mundane is key to naturalising them.

11. Yet again, I will not provide the exact citation, which is taken from Rep-X's web page.

12. The question of why bioethics concerns itself so little with questions of ownership is an interesting and important one to address. A major reason is disciplinary and pedagogical: institutionalised bioethics, especially in the US, draws largely from analytic philosophy, which engages normative questions much more readily than questions that are more explicitly 'political'. My suspicion, however, is that *Moore* has served as more than just a legal precedent: it has further served as a normative precedent, that suggests somehow that ownership issues are 'settled'. This is why challenges to intellectual property regimes come much more often from that messy and unpredictable space of the public domain, and through the messy and unpredictable routes of politics, than through institutionalised spaces that, at some level, do exist to channel and regulate this messiness through the 'sanity' of expert mediation. In other words, it isn't just the *content* of bioethics that I find problematic. It is the bioethicists' mediation in such debates *as experts*, to the exclusion of other participating voices, that makes institutionalised bioethics such an undemocratic institution, even when it manages to be an 'ethical' one. The question that is left hanging for me then is what a genuinely transnational bioethics would look like, since I do believe that biotechnology as a global regime needs transnational, democratically accountable systems of governance and regulation. One direction to look for this is towards patient advocacy groups such as PXE International, that I mention in a later footnote.

13. Of course, neither of these is obvious or intuitive outside the constantly expanding rationality of population genetics as a discipline and enterprise that discursively constructs populations as units that 'naturally' exist to be genetically studied.

14. This section is based on conversations with Indian scientists and policy makers. Instead of directly quoting specific conversations, I have summarised their general content, and will keep specific informants anonymous.

15. This institutionalised bioethical position is not hugely different from the positions adopted by biotech 'activists' such as Jeremy Rifkin (see, for instance, Rifkin 1998), who fail just as spectacularly to situate their critiques in any way. I am writing as much against this particular, unsituated mode of 'activist' antagonism towards biotech as I am against institutionalised bioethics, or certain biotech corporate practices.

16. You have, for example, the Human Genome Diversity Project, a public project of the NIH, which has met with fierce opposition from Native American groups, who simply do not want to participate in the genetics revolution because they don't expect to be the beneficiaries of it. A very different stakeholder is PXE International, a patient advocacy group founded by Pat and Sharon Terry, who believe they *will* be direct

beneficiaries of the genomics revolution if they can have some control over research agendas. So they have negotiated IP agreements with companies in which they share in the IP – a model that completely overturns an IP rationale that has always valued 'invention' while simultaneously devaluing 'source'. PXE International, however, believes that PXE patients who donate their samples through the organisation are not merely 'source', since the organisation has significant control, through the use of the IP rights, in charting the inventive agenda. See www.pxe.org for more information on PXE International, and the Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism web site, www.ipcb.org, for a Native American organisation's perspective.

17. The question of what constitutes 'source' and what 'invention' is, of course, a central one in IP debates writ large, and isn't just confined to biotech. Telephone books, for example: what was initially deemed to be public record was claimed to be copyrightable when put in the 'inventive' form of an alphabetical compilation, and the phone book companies won. The question of what, if anything, is distinct in the blurring of source and invention in biotech – other than the obviously different and dramatic political contexts that some of these biotech controversies operate within – is of central importance, and something I'm very much grappling with.

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The Face Of The Future
Biometric surveillance and progress

R A N A   D A S G U P T A

Perhaps a good test of the effectiveness of a democracy might be whether or not it permitted the populace to say "No" to any more progress: to declare that a particular technology had been taken far enough, and should not be taken further; that new kinds of change were likely to make society worse rather than better, and should cease.

If we think that most democracies might fail such a test it is probably because we feel that progress' ongoing process of destruction and recreation is more fundamental to modern hi-tech democracies than plebiscites. For the united middle classes of the world it is difficult to conceive of time itself outside of the notion of a movement from naivety (past) to technology (present, future). The word 'progress' has become pretty much detached from any kind of ethical vision, and as it becomes an inexorable drive of pure power, profit and technology this seems only to consolidate its position as something fundamental to the mechanics of the universe.

But 'progress' is not predefined. The unfolding of the future is a confused process, full of conflict, and public opinion is not so mute in this as it might appear. New social forms, new technologies, new processes of control must all legitimise themselves under the rubric of 'progress' and there are limits to the flexibility of the category. The genetically modified food industry, while presenting its new products as merely the next stage in an age-old history of selection and breeding ('progress'), has still not managed to achieve this legitimacy in much of the world. Food seems to be one domain where people wish their connection to the natural not to be broken, and though the concept of 'the natural' may have been stretched very far, genetically modified foods still seem to lie outside it for many people. The industry has spawned lobby groups all over the world, and 'offshore' PR bodies aimed at presenting an independent, unruffled picture of more food and happy farmers, but publics outside the US, already panicked by (sometimes unrelated) natural disasters such as BSE or foot-and-mouth disease have remained largely unreceptive. The equation more technology=better world does not always work.

Biometrics and progress

Another area where this fight for legitimacy is going on is in the area of biometric systems of identification and authentication. The technologies exist, their usefulness in what Deleuze would call a 'control' society is clear, but the public has just taken a long time to understand what's good for it. In fact the scanning of fingerprints, irises or DNA as a prerequisite for access to buildings or information has long been a staple part of the nightmare of Hollywood sci-fi fantasies. In such scenarios the private realm has usually been completely eradicated, and in films like *Gattaca* our experience of this universe is via the tortured interiority of an interloper – whose pariah status allows him to retain the humanity that everyone else has lost – whose only remaining privacy is the secret terror that he will be discovered. (As we'll see, in the marketing of biometric systems, such interlopers are always someone else). It may actually be that such science fiction dystopias do a lot to 'prepare' us for the unpleasant futures they present by making natural the progression that results in increasing levels of technological control in society; but still the fear of being continually scanned and tracked is one that companies who are betting their future on more scanning and tracking have somehow to 'deal with'. They too have hired PR firms to help insert their products into the benign sweep of progress and set up an industry association in Washington, DC, the International Biometric Industry Association (IBIA) that lobbies for its interests.

But this industry has had a happier time recently than the biotech giants. Current affairs have intervened to give a massive boost to the PR campaign, and since 11 September 2001 biometrics executives have become the good guys, avuncular in their sympathy for the afflicted, grim in their determination to find a solution, and fêted in all the media from CNN to the *Washington Post*. To quote a *Business Week* report from 2 October 2001 on the post-September 11 market catastrophes that were crushing most other technology firms, "Biometric companies, which sell devices that authenticate individuals by scanning unique identifiers such as fingerprints or retinas, are… expected to do well. The uphill public relations battle that before Sept. 11 afflicted such outfits as Visionics (VSNX),

which makes controversial facial-recognition software, is easing. Visionics stock has sky-rocketed nearly 150% since Sept. 11".

The boost to the performance of these companies has since been much more dramatic even than this. Visionics' stock increased from a high of US$ 4.50 on September 10 to US$ 16.89 six weeks later. Competitor Imagis Technologies Inc. saw its value increase nearly five times over the same period. Such dramatic rises were fed by veiled references to imminent mega deals, uttered with a mixture of barely contained glee and the dignified confidentiality of the newly elect, as in this press release from Imagis (issued on September 14 to explain to anyone who was wondering why they were suddenly doing so well), "Imagis Technologies Inc., ('Imagis') reports that the substantial increase in the company's stock price is due mostly to Imagis biometric facial recognition technology. The tragedy that took place last week has turned attention to those companies that have the technology to assist in airport security, customs and immigration, law enforcement and criminal justice. In the past, Imagis has made a number of technology presentations and demonstrations of its software capabilities to major system integrators and government agencies in the United States and in other countries worldwide. Over the past week, many of these organisations have contacted the company to assist in the development of identification, airport and security system installations using its biometric facial recognition technology, ID-2000".

Analysts who had hitherto been wary of overvaluing a small and unpopular industry have been frenetically revising their calculations. While most agreed before September 11 that the industry would not be worth half a billion dollars before around 2006, an analyst from Morgan Keegan & Co. recently predicted a ten-fold growth in total revenue over the next two years to around US$ 2 billion by 2004. As the *Washington Post* reported on 1 November 2001 in a fascinatingly eloquent statement on public, progress and technology, "Industry analysts said the attacks probably accelerated by years the public's adoption of face recognition and other biometric systems that rely on immutable human features".

In this new climate of warm handshakes and non-stop ringing telephones these companies have scrambled to cut deals that will consolidate their positions. On December 7, Visionics issued a press release declaring a partnership with "ARINC Incorporated, the leader in mission-critical communications and information-processing systems for the aviation industry", a partnership in which ARINC will sell Visionics' FaceIt® system as an integrated part of all its other airport systems. Michael V. Picco, staff vice-president of ARINC Airport Systems, stated, "Aviation security is a major area of focus for our systems integration efforts. We are committed to providing the best solutions to the myriad of security challenges that the airlines and airports face today. A key component of these solutions is facial recognition, and our alliance with Visionics gives us access not only to the best-of-breed biometric technology in this area, but also to a scalable platform on which to deliver it. The alliance will focus on meeting the broad security needs of the airline industry, a market sector in which ARINC is well established. ARINC is owned by a consortium of leading airlines, aircraft makers and operators based in the United States and around the world, including United Airlines, American Airlines, Boeing, FedEx, British Airways, Lufthansa and Raytheon".

As these deals congeal, the various companies are fighting a cut-throat battle over

standards and technologies, and everyone is flaunting their own blue-chip credentials. The senior executives in these companies have backgrounds in the top universities, the top corporations and the top intelligence agencies. Dr. Joseph Atick, the CEO and co-founder of Visionics Corporation, who humbly advertises himself as "a renowned visionary and business strategist" has directed the Computational Neuroscience Laboratory at Rockefeller University and the Neural Cybernetics Group at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. The CEO of another facial recognition company, Viisage, spent 20 years with Digital Equipment Corporation during which he was responsible for selling their products to the US Federal Government and the aerospace, electronics and manufacturing industries. The list of his awards from Vietnam is impressive. The Chairman of Imagis is Oliver "Buck" Revell who was Associate Deputy Director of the FBI. The list goes on. A nexus of people with significant intellectual and enormous political and industrial power have the courage and the capital to realise grand visions of technological order. Joseph Atick, for instance, envisions his technology being used to construct a "national shield" of face-recognition systems linked to government databases filled with images of known terrorists (*Washington Post*, 1 November 2001). For sublime technocratic missions like this, public opposition is a real irritation.

A new imagination
Clearly then, ignorant and even rash public opposition to such systems needs to be crushed immediately so that policy can proceed rationally and responsibly. As the IBIA's mission statement puts it, "[The growth of the industry] could be severely constricted… by misinformation as well as a lack of public awareness about biometrics. In particular, concerns about privacy can lead to ill-informed regulations that unreasonably restrict the use of biometrics on identity documents, in financial commerce, benefits administration, and other important consumer applications. In the absence of common and clearly articulated industry positions on issues such as safety, privacy, and standards, governments will react rashly to uninformed and even unfounded assertions about the function and use of biometric technology".

So as the products of these companies become an accepted part of the changes that are called progress, as they become banal rather than Orwellian – their technologies 'just' technology and their businesses 'just' business – they must also spawn new social visions and new aesthetics that give a rationale to the new directions. Anxious visions of ubiquitous threats, of once familiar places turned eerie, of people guilty and craven until verified otherwise. Aesthetics that privilege the deep, pure vision of technology over the inadequate corrupt realm of the human.

The companies who make facial recognition systems, whose purpose is to detect the presence of suspicious people in public places, have the most baroque imaginations of them all. The page devoted to Imagis' airport security systems says "Do you really know who's coming through your airport?" and has a picture of a middle-aged white man whose evil smirk and slightly-too-open shirt belie the openness with which he exhibits his passport. A few minutes surfing through the pages and pages of evil faces makes the need for protection provided by products like Trespass-ID seem completely natural: "Trespass-ID is a

biometric software application designed specifically for security professionals who need a better way to identify and track undesirables, their associates, and specific behaviours, before they commit crimes and do damage".

But even fingerprint or iris scanning companies, who require the cooperation of an individual in order to scan his or her data and therefore have to create a friendlier image, must fundamentally stoke fear to justify their existence. A representative from EDS interviewed by CNN at the Comdex technology show on November 15 explained that the company's palm reading device was "meant to ensure that the person sitting next to you on the plane is who they say they are". DigitalPersona, who provide a desktop fingerprint scanning device to allow Internet users to identify themselves to distant databases as they surf, hints more gently at the danger, "DigitalPersona provides its customers with a convenient and secure means of digital identification that ensures convenient interaction with digital systems, and a safe journey through the wonders of Cyberspace".

At the same time, these companies are aware that most people's first encounter with their products will be an anxious one, and they have to appeal to that other pillar of 'progress' – customer service and convenience – to plug their products over those of their competitors. Scanning devices are presented as if they were a new kind of friend; as DigitalPersona says, "Interactive digital systems present us with new, life-enhancing opportunities and experiences, and are becoming integral to our personal and professional lives. In order to make use of these product advancements we must be able to identify ourselves to them, and doing so must be as easy as reaching out to shake a hand".

"We never forget a face", declares Imagis' web site about its face recognition systems, in a phrase that is more warped than perhaps it intends. In a more slick formulation worthy of the industry dandy that he is, Joseph Atick says, "Facial recognition technology automates what humans have done since the beginning of time – recognise one another face-to-face". The CEO of DigitalPersona, Fabbio Right, echoes this futuristic nostalgia, "Over the course of hundreds of years, signing a piece of paper has become part of our lifestyles. We are trying to accomplish the same thing with biometrics. Little by little, people will get used to it".

What is interesting about this elegant but rather perverse humanisation of the technology is that it corresponds to a simultaneous technologisation of the human being, a vision of the individual in which his or her deepest truth had always been comprised of 1s and 0s, and it was not until the arrival of technologies that could detect these inner codes that human beings could truly be known. Thus the constant graphics throughout the marketing literature of these companies in which human beings are stripped of all inessentials and covered with 1s and 0s seem to represent their deepest essence. As they bask in the gaze of the recognition technology it seems to be a moment of ecstasy, of apotheosis of the self. Data basing human beings is not about intruding upon the lives of individuals but knowing them as they always wanted to be known.

The transformation of the everyday
The spread of such technologies will not be unobtrusive. Face recognition techniques, for instance, currently require the camera to capture a full-on image of a face in order to be

able to map it, and will therefore require either a very large number of cameras to guarantee that every individual (for instance in an airport) is caught thus by one of them, or the presence of roving cameramen with a device such as Xybernaut's "crowd-scanning headgear", which fits over one eye and allows the user to scan faces by looking at them while it compares the scanned images to those stored in a remote database via a wireless connection. But there is no doubt that there is significantly greater investment now in biometrics than was the case before September 11, and that these technologies and the social imagination that makes them reasonable will infiltrate the everyday to an increasing extent. A bill stands waiting for passage in the German Bundestag that would insist on biometric data being stored in German ID cards and passports. DigitalPersona's products are fully compatible with Microsoft's new XP platform so that companies can already require users to identify themselves with their fingerprint rather than with a password. The logic will become self-evident – how could one have imagined that a PIN number was enough to ensure the security of an ATM card? – ATM machines need face recognition too. And then, suddenly – "NEW! The PINless ATM card that goes entirely by face recognition. Now all you need is you. We don't treat our customers as a number – we never forget a face!" It won't be possible anymore to give your ATM card to someone else to get money out for you.

As biometric systems become part of the happy paraphernalia of travel or the caring solidity of banks they will indeed become banal. The Visionics press release quoted earlier also mentions, for instance, that the company's systems are already being presented as part of a drive towards convenience, "International Air Transport Association (IATA) special interest group on simplifying passenger travel – called SPT… SPT is a worldwide, forward-looking initiative consisting of airlines, airports, government authorities, system integrators and vendors who recognise that today's airports are not built to handle the massive throughput of travellers. SPT has outlined the vision of a future system that takes into account technological advances that can simplify passenger travel and make it more secure. As such, facial recognition is poised to play a major role, particularly since it has already been endorsed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) as the most suitable biometric for air travel".

As they sprout rapidly in such areas as airports, it will be important for these rather intimidating systems to explain their sudden presence. The companies will need to show the public high-profile examples of what dangers can be averted with a Trespass-ID system in place, and much zealous use will surely result in some dastardly individuals going where they deserve. As similar products become available for home security too, the public will also to some extent buy in to the notion that only biometrics offers true identification and authentication. Institutions of control will come to rely on the new kinds of data that will suddenly be available and the idea of removing all these expensive systems – of saying "No" to all this progress – will become unthinkable.

But these technologies will have a significant effect on interiority. By allowing your very face to be converted into a digital code that can be checked at any moment without the need for any consenting action from you (such as the swipe of a credit card), they alter the imaginary realm considerably. The possibility of being known at any point, of your identity being continually checked – in banks, shopping malls, airports etc. – against

everything else that is known about you will seem like a massive escalation in the obser-vation matrix from the more occasional 'checking-in' we currently do with each passport check or ATM withdrawal.

Surveillance is usually blind to what is prescribed as 'normal' behaviour. It triggers a reaction when it picks up an event that is considered abnormal for some reason or another. The effect on behaviour is thus to whittle away at the edges of the self and impose an anxious homogeneity. It will, as in *Gattaca*, lead to a more paranoid self in which the public realm will be a hostile and tiring place where you wonder constantly if you're looking innocent.

What are biometric systems?

Biometric systems are designed to verify the identity of a person by check-ing some unique biological characteristic against a database. They are used in two ways. Authentication: checking that this person is who they say they are – or what the industry calls 'one-to-one' matching. This would be used for border controls, access to physical environments such as offices, and access to web sites, bank account details etc – i.e. for any situation where currently a password or document proof of identity would be the norm.

Identification: finding out who a person is by checking them against a large number of stored identities – or 'one-to-many' matching. This is used for identifying sus-picious people in public spaces such as airports, shopping malls etc. Different systems use different biological traits as their basis. These include: fingerprint, DNA, voice, face shape, palm print and the pattern of the iris. All of these provide a reliability of close to 100%, though there is much industry wrangling over which the most reliable is.

Not all techniques are useful for all environments, however. Identifying people in a crowd necessarily relies on facial recognition, which can be carried out at a distance. Facial recognition works (in the case of Visionics' system) by mapping some 80 facial 'landmarks' and is supposedly unaffected by superficial alterations such as facial hair or glasses. It can be carried out by cameras that take several images a second, convert those images to a facial code and check that code against a database. Joseph Atick, CEO of Visionics, claims that images are not stored if there is no suspicious history in the data-base corresponding to that person. If you haven't done anything, you haven't got anything to worry about.

For authentication it is more common to get people to scan their fingerprints or irises, which can be captured more easily.

Advocates of biometric systems say that they offer cheap and effective protection against such threats as credit card fraud or impersonation on the Internet, and against crime and terrorist activities.

Everyday Surveillance
ID cards, cameras and a database of ditties

SHUDDHABRATA SENGUPTA

At first glance, a city like Delhi is not one that you would associate with a tight mesh of surveillance. We don't (as yet) have surveillance cameras at every bus stop in the New Delhi area, as is the case, say, of the City in London, or much of lower Manhattan. But does this mean that we (in Indian cities) are invisible (or inaudible, or untraceable) to the apparatus of information gathering, or the matrix, or whatever you may like to call it, that links all the government, corporate and civic agencies that have an interest in keeping an eye on things?

As someone who has been following (somewhat perfunctorily) the growth of the surveillance industry in India, I have grown accustomed to tracking the slight shadows of data gatherers that lurk at the unlikeliest of places. I have gathered, over the last year, a few observations and notes, my banal and everyday log of surveillance on surveillance, that I would like to present here, and they are as follows:

There are very comprehensive plans being made for a massive 'citizen database' to be owned and operated by the state. For some reason (intra-governmental) this could not be done in sync with the recently conducted census, but census data will no doubt be used for building this database. This exercise will climax in various schemes, either NISHAN (National Identification System Home Affairs Network) or the INDIA CARD, by which all citizens will have to carry identity cards containing identifying photographs, all relevant infor-

mation (including legal records) about them, and biometric date (data about their body measurements, handprints etc.)

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has commissioned Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), a software consultancy multinational based in India, to do a feasibility study for the National ID card scheme. The TCS report suggests that the whole exercise be made market friendly, and that the state actually make money out of it by selling information that it gathers about citizens to corporate bodies. This will no doubt be seen as a model mechanism of 'self-reliant' state control.

To find out more about NISHAN read the following news reports:

Dataquest Magazine: http://www.dqindia.com/content/top_stories/101022206.asp

The Hindustan Times: http://www.hindustantimes.com/nonfram/170900/detFEA03.asp

The other proposal – the INDIA Card Scheme – is put forward by a private Bangalore based company (Shonkh Technologies International Ltd.) which no doubt will be a major player in terms of making a bid for actually executing this scheme on an India-wide basis. To find out more about this, visit the Shonkh Technologies web site at http://www.shonkh.com/indiacard.html

In fact, the first instance of a comprehensive national computerised identity card system has been tried out in Thailand where it is now in operation. Pakistan has had a '*shanaqti card*' (Identity Card) system for decades. All Pakistani citizens must carry the photo ID card which also states their religion. The hated 'passes' in Apartheid era South Africa were basically ID Cards that also mentioned 'race'. The genocide in Rwanda was facilitated by the recently introduced Identity Card system that helped distinguish between Hutus and Tutsis.

It is not always the industrialised West that takes quickest to the dissemination of high-tech surveillance schemes on a 'nationwide' basis. Modernising elites in the so-called 'Third World' are often better placed (due to lack of constitutional safeguards to privacy, or lack of awareness at the public level of privacy issues) to put in place 'technologies of mass surveillance'.

An identity card scheme may seem innocuous, but its implications are very dangerous. Apart from the fact that in India pogroms (the Anti-Sikh pogroms of 1984, for instance) have sometimes been administered with the help of electoral registers, and computerised ID card systems would make such exercises that much simpler and more efficient, there are other serious implications of a regime of national identity cards.

Information about each of us is scattered in various data banks. These could be police records, medical records, electoral registers, taxation records, etc. Their collation in a single database has devastating consequences. Let us imagine that we all have our NISHAN cards already:

The entries in one set of data can influence other, unrelated parameters. Let me give you a hypothetical example: a centralised electoral roll could register whether or not someone has voted in any electoral exercise. I, for instance, don't vote. If 'not voting' were ever to be rendered a disqualifying factor in any other circumstance – applying for a passport, a phone, a gas connection, a job – then my non-voting behaviour would show up, every time I did any of those other things. Suppose I go for a job interview, I am asked for my NISHAN/INDIA card, which I submit, it reveals that I have not voted. I get disqualified.

Naturally my objective record as a non-active citizen influences the decision. I don't get the job.

A huge invasion of privacy gets legitimised. Suppose I am HIV positive, and my medical records register that on my card. I need to rent a house. New regulations stipulate that all landlords have to have prospective tenants cross-checked at the local police station. They ask for my NISHAN card, run it across their machine that hooks up to the centralised database, and of course it reveals that I am HIV positive. The landlord, (perhaps the whole neighbourhood) and the police station know that I am HIV positive, I don't get to be the tenant they choose.

Consider that the Indian Constitution does not recognise the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right. Consider also that the state will (if this scheme gets under way) have the freedom to farm and manipulate enormous chunks of data about citizens. Consider also that those who will not get the cards (perhaps they are emigrants or refugees – the Bangladeshi *ricksha* puller, the Afghan auto *ricksha* driver) will now have to face considerable police harassment at day-to-day levels because they will not be able to produce their cards when they are stopped on the streets.

Identity cards already operate in Jammu & Kashmir and other border areas, where you can be stopped routinely and asked to produce them. Jammu & Kashmir has the distinction, incidentally, of being the one state of the Indian Union where there is also no mobile telephony (notice how the Bharti Telecom Ads on Television speak of "Himachal to Kanyakumari" and not the customarily alliterative, "Kashmir to Kanyakumari"), where long distance telephony is curtailed, and where Internet access has recently been redefined in the direction of non-existence following rising tension on the India-Pakistan Line of Control and the international border.

The situation on the ground in cities like Delhi and Mumbai is admittedly different, but only to a degree. In Mumbai there already exists a police scheme by which you have to produce a passport, or an identity card to surf in cyber cafés,[1] and there are serious proposals to extend this scheme to Delhi as well. This is being done, we are told, to protect minors from accessing unsavoury web sites, and in the interests of national security. Apart from this, some segments of the population in Delhi, such as rag pickers, are now being issued identification cards that they must carry with them at all times.

Identity cards are only one element in the apparatus of surveillance. Even more crucial are the sweeping powers of a battery of legal instruments ranging from the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) to the Information Technology Act and the Communications and Convergence Bill, which authorise a spectrum of state agencies to 'intercept communications' in the interests of state security. POTO is innovative to the extent that it criminalises the failure to furnish information by ordinary citizens very stringently, and allows for the drawing of 'adverse inferences' if a person accused under POTO refuses to voluntarily offer blood samples and furnish other biological samples when asked for. This presupposes that the administrative and technological apparatus necessary to create large-scale biological databases for reasons of state security already exists, or is in an advanced process of construction.

Typically, high-tech interventions in the area of surveillance are initiated with the pur-

pose of keeping a watch on potential terrorists and others labelled criminal. For example, a Prisoner Identification and Tracking System is already being implemented as a pilot project at the Cherrapalli prison in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. The 150-acre prison houses over 3,000 inmates, and is the first prison in the country to experiment with this technology. The prison authorities have installed local positioning systems which provide real time information on the movements and whereabouts of the prisoner who has a label tagged on to him. If he removes the label, it triggers an alarm.

Very soon, genomic records, or electronic tags can find applications in workplaces – in offices, factories and public spaces. The high-tech surveillance industry actually sees India as one of the most lucrative potential markets with a growth potential of 25% in an industry that already has a turnover of close to US$ 120 million per annum.[2] The highest demand is predicted for high-tech 'access control' systems – precisely of the kinds that are being tried out on the inmates of Cherrapalli prison (for a detailed industy report on Surveillance Equipment and the rising demand for it in India, go to http://www.tradeport.org/ts/countries/india/isa/isar0019.html).

Surveillance cameras are already making their entry into our lives at various major traffic intersections and in all of central New Delhi, as well as in banks, apartments, offices and industrial areas. If you couple pattern recognition systems on to video surveillance footage, then you have the surveillance camera meeting the identity card in a database somewhere in a mainframe computer. It is most likely that a very large number of people in cities will get caught in the crossfire between the huge arrays of data produced by 'citizen databases' and surveillance technologies.

Incidentally, the kind of people who sell surveillance equipment are also often the kind of people who sell torture equipment (electrical appliances) which go under the name of 'crime control' equipment. If you look hard enough on the Internet, you will find the same companies selling this kind of stuff in India, Turkey, Brazil, and other democracies.

Finally, I would like to mention the fact that the information gathering apparatus acts concretely and at the most everyday and intimate level.

If you want to know what a police identification form of a 'floating population' looks like, all you need is to download the marvellous form prepared by the Chandigarh Police at: http://chandigarhpolice.nic.in/vschandigarhpolice/b_form_4.pdf and see the meticulous detail with which it requires a beat constable to fill in data about *ricksha* pullers/auto *ricksha wallas*/*rehri* (handcart), *pheri* (itinerant vendors), *dhaba* (small eateries) *wallas*/maids/*malis* (gardeners) and labourers.

Similarly, the Delhi Police ("With You For You Always") also requires servants to be registered and verified, with the registration form containing details like "His/Her Favourite Ditty" and "His/Her Pet Words of Speech". This form can be downloaded at http://delhipolice.nic.in/home/servant-f.htm.

Somewhere, there are people in the Delhi Police who maintain a database of ditties.

On a slightly graver note, in the wake of the recent attack on the Indian Parliament, the apparatus of surveillance has now embraced every single e-mail that comes from Internet accounts in India. The report that details this extraordinary measure bears quotation at some length.

"The Intelligence Bureau (IB) has prepared a list of new keywords that are to be used to intercept mails emanating from IP addresses in India. Till now, the IB had concentrated more on e-mail IDs with reference to obvious giveaways such as Kashmir, Lashkar, Pakistan, Musharraf, etc. For example, an e-mail ID such as lashkar@hotmail.com should be under the surveillance of the IB. The IB has now gone further and prepared a new list of keywords used in the copy of mails that will be intercepted.

The system works like this: A software filters mails that repeatedly use the words that the IB has short-listed. The more obvious keywords would include Jaish, Kashmir, Lashkar. Others are attack, kill, rocket. Mails with repeated reference to Arab names will also be under surveillance.

Mails that carry names of Indian political leaders will also be under surveillance. However, the software can't decipher code words since they can be common words. Interestingly, the CIA is using the same software with a good success rate.

'The task of monitoring such mails is humungous. Hence, for now, we will be monitoring mails that have several references to the keywords that we have identified', says a senior IB official. According to the official: 'The IB is the only Indian intelligence agency that has the ability to intercept mails. None of the other agencies involved in investigations – the Delhi Police, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) – have the ability to intercept mails. Only the CIA has similar capabilities'.

Commenting on the issue of invasion of privacy of an individual, the official said: 'This exercise is similar to the secret cell phone tapping of suspects involved in *hawala* as well as cricket match-fixing, that was implemented by the Delhi Police. It met with a lot of success. The issue of intercepting mail is being done in the interest of national security'.

The official, however, also admitted that the exercise of intercepting mails would present a logistical nightmare given the huge mass of mails emanating from India".[3]

We can only hope that the logistics that inhibit a near total regime of surveillance continue to remain a nightmare, at least for a while.

NOTES

1. Leslie D'Monte, "Stop Cyber Surfer, where's your ID?" in *Zdnet India* (www.zdnetindia. com/news/ features/stories/22533.html, 16 May 2001).

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3. *The Times of India*, 24 December 2001.

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- For an "India Country Report on Privacy Issues" at the GILC site, go to http://www.gilc.org/privacy/survey/surveyak.html#India

Blind Intelligence

SAM DE SILVA

June 18, 1999 was an international day of action against corporate globalisation that focused on the G8 summit held in Cologne, Germany. Protests occurred in over 40 countries, but activists from London got the most attention, where actions were claimed to have caused massive criminal damage costing the city over 2 million pounds.

Following the J18 protests, police cut faces from video and photo surveillance and uploaded them on to the City of London web site: "Your help is needed to identify and locate the suspects depicted in the photographs on the following web pages", requested the site.

There is nothing new about the authorities using surveillance during protests, but J18 was the first time that faces of protestors had been lined up on a web site requesting the public's assistance with identification and location.

During the recent 9/11 incident in the US, the faces of the 19 terrorists were exposed to the world. The global media networks implored, "If these faces had been prevented from boarding those fateful flights, could the destruction and loss of life have been avoided?".

The providers of facial analysis systems seem to think so. The face-cam, the media buzzword for this technology, is a surveillance system that incorporates the camera with some computer software and a database of facial images of wanted criminals. The camera takes an image of a scene of people and the software extracts any faces that have been captured in the video frame. It then does a comparison against the database of criminal faces. If there is a match, the alarms go off.

Common sense makes us question the accuracy of such systems. Can a surveillance camera record a precise image of a face that may be obscured by hair, a hat or sunglasses?

However, the businesses peddling these systems insist they work. Already, some airports in the US have installed face-cams. Visionics Corporation provides technology solutions for Human ID at a Distance which, according to information from their web site, will automatically capture faces in the field of view, extract them from their background and compare them against a watch list or database of certain individuals.

There has been a concerted effort recently to develop automated facial analysis sys-

tems that are accurate. The Face Group, researching out of the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon, is investigating various strategies to analyse facial expressions and recognise faces. The facial expression analysis is based on a face language, which assumes that the way we smile and scowl is hard-wired. The recognition is also based on fixed data and works by comparing appearance or the geometry of the face with stored information.

The Facial Action Coding System, or FACS, is primarily the brainchild of academic Paul Ekman. FACS works on the premise that it is possible to use a formula to recognise facial expressions, even from faces belonging to different cultures.

In March of 1999, the Salk Institute for Biological Studies distributed a press release titled Computer Program Trained to Read Faces. Ekman and his FACS are integral to this project, which has attempted to develop an automated facial analysis system. Though not perfected yet, Salk claim that their software could efficiently analyse the micro-expressions on people's faces, which often expose their insincere emotions. Law-enforcement agencies are interested in the technology that, according to a recent e-mail from Salk, is still being developed and is not used for any practical application at this time.

In January 2001, for the SuperBowl in Tampa Florida, a number of companies specialising in surveillance and facial analysis products teamed up with local law enforcement agencies to showcase a system that claims to pick out mischief, criminal behaviour and larger threats.

As fans walked into the stadium, cameras captured their faces and compared them with a database of faces of known criminals. Predictably, many civil rights and privacy advocates were outraged by the Tampa operation. A strongly worded statement released by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Florida questioned whether the general public should be subjected to the computerised police line-up and asked what would happen to the captured images.

One way for the government to satisfy the privacy and civil liberties concern is to ensure a higher level of accountability and transparency through legislation. This is happening in many countries. As of mid-December 2001, Australia's Privacy Act will apply to the private sector as well as to public organisations and, according to the Federal Office of the Privacy Commissioner, facial images captured and stored by surveillance cameras form a personal record, which is covered by the Act. Agencies involved with facial analysis will therefore be required to advise people of the identity of the collecting organisation, that they are collecting the information, what the information will be used for, who they disclose the information to and how the individual can access the records the organisation holds about him/her.

Rather than arguing against the deployment of the face-cam throughout our cities, government legislation can help further legitimise its use. And as corporate interests and security threats increasingly influence government policy, exceptions will crawl into the rules. Initially face-cams may look out for a small number of known terrorists; but over time, the role of the system could expand to keeping tabs on many categories of people.

Following the 9/11 incident, support for face-cam technology increased significantly. In the following month, a number of airports in the US announced they would install software to automate the process of excluding known suspects. But like in the SuperBowl case

in Florida, there has been strong opposition. The ACLU spoke out again, this time releasing a detailed report on why face-cam technologies should not be used. Other than the privacy issues, the report cites a US Department of Defence study which found very high error rates even under ideal conditions, where the subject is staring directly into the camera under bright lights.

But when the majority of the public seemed to have swallowed the war on terrorism line, there is little reason for governments to consider what groups like the ACLU have to say.

Face-cams have been installed in some cities for many years. Casinos have also been using the system to exclude known cheats and punters who never lose. The first city to utilise face-cams was the London Borough of Newham, which had technology by Visionics Corporation installed in late 1998. The system utilises visual information from a network of over 140 surveillance cameras to identify target faces.

But a recent article from CBS News indicates that the technology can be tricked. When a clear shot of the target is presented, the system makes a match; but it fails when a cap and sunglasses are worn. In the article, privacy advocate Simon Davies suggests that surveillance makes people behave differently. It makes them cautious, neurotic. It changes their interactions. Everybody is brought to heel. Everybody's made to be good. It's like living in some giant shopping mall.

David Lyon's *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life* comprehensively explores the issues surrounding surveillance and provides fresh insights into discussing the issues which go beyond the privacy and the civil liberties discourse. Lyon refers to a number of major themes in his book, even exploring the idea that surveillance is an essential tool for evaluating and managing risk.

Face-cam surveillance claims to deliver identities at a distance or, in other words, the technology claims to be able to identify someone without their knowledge. These automatic systems could prevent people who displayed similar features to suspected criminals from crossing borders. The technology could also be used by insurance companies and marketeers to optimise their practices.

As face-cam technology becomes widely utilised, its cost will go down. Local convenience stores to stock exchanges may exclude people based on face-cam analysis results. If face-cams have the ability to isolate faces from a city streetscape and store that information in a database, it would not be too difficult to construct databases of faces sorted on where people live or spend a majority of time. An upmarket shopping centre might then, as an example, exclude or at least alert security when faces from a poorer part of the city tried to enter.

These are simply scenarios and could be dismissed as paranoia. But one of the aims of this article is to provoke thought around the subject of surveillance and to further investigate how it could be applied in future contexts. For example, what impact might face-cam technology have on civil disobedience?

While the freedom to assemble and protest are supposedly our democratic right, many of the recent protests in Melbourne, Australia have had official non-uniformed camera crews filming the people. This is most likely the same elsewhere and it certainly was the case

during J18 in London. It would not be difficult for facial analysis to be applied to protest footage, enabling the recognition of regular faces. Though the accuracy of such analysis is under question, authorities could claim to identify ringleaders. Faces of protestors could be packaged on to DVDs or made available through the Internet to potential employers. People would certainly think twice before attending protests if they knew face-cams would be in operation.

The scenarios above consider facial analysis technology in terms of recognising faces. But if Paul Ekman's FACS is incorporated into face-cams, could authorities then claim the ability to determine the motivation and thought patterns by evaluating expressions?

There is evidence to suggest that face-cam technology is far from perfect and common sense should tell us to be wary of a facial language that claims to be able to decipher our emotions. We also need to question the integrity of the database itself; and consider that facial analysis reinforces the idea that it is acceptable to judge someone by the way they look.

This article has focused on practical aspects of face-cam technology and has not explored the broader aspects of surveillance. It hopes to encourage more curiosity about these topics and provoke a broad discussion on the impacts of face-cam technology and life in the city.

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Surveillance
After September 11, 2001

D A V I D   L Y O N

The September 11 2001 'terrorist' attacks on New York and Washington prompted a series of responses, from military retaliation in Afghanistan, the country said to be harbouring Osama Bin Laden, to extensive anti-terrorist legislation aimed at domestic protection. Among the latter, one of the most prominent ongoing reactions is to enhance surveillance operations on a number of fronts and there has been no lack of proposals concerning the best way to achieve this. Public money is being poured into policing and security services, and high-tech companies are falling over themselves to offer not just 'heartfelt condolences' for the attack victims but technical fixes to prevent such attacks from happening again.

Sociologically, this raises many important and urgent questions. With surveillance, as in many other areas, it is frequently suggested that 'everything has changed', an idea that will stir the hairs on the back of any sociologist's neck. This sometimes reduces to a list of new gizmos on the everyday landscape, like iris scanners at airports, closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras on downtown streets and squares and so on, or it can refer to a 'new era' of political control that overrides previous legal restrictions on monitoring citizens. (Curiously, in this context, commentators in Britain and the USA have each warned against the 'police state' tactics of the other!
http://argument.independent.co.uk/leading_article/story.jsp and
www.nytimes.com/2001/10/07/magazine/07SURVEILLANCE.html).

So, has everything changed, or not? I shall argue that the answer is yes and no. The underlying continuities in surveillance are at least as significant as the altered circumstances following September 11.

Focussing on the aftermath of September 11 is a worthwhile reminder that big events do make a difference in the social world. As Philip Abrams wisely said, an event "is a portentous outcome; it is a transformation device between past and future; it has eventuated from the past and signifies for the future". (Abrams 1982: 191). To see events – and what I examine here, their aftermath – as sociologically important rescues our experiences in time from being merely moments in a meaningless flux. But the event is also, says Abrams, an "indispensable prism through which social structure and process may be seen". (1982: 192).

To take a notorious example, figures such as Hannah Arendt and, perhaps more socio-logically, Zygmunt Bauman (1987), have helpfully viewed the Holocaust as revealing not merely the human capacity for evil but also some of the key traits of modernity itself. The triumph of meticulous rational organisation is poignantly and perversely seen in the death camp, making this not just an inexplicable aberration from 'modern civilisation' but one of its products. The reason that this example springs to mind in the present context is that today's forms and practices of surveillance, too, are products of modernity, and thus carry a similar ambivalence.

Surveillance is not inherently sinister or malign. But the focussed attention to persons and populations with a view to influencing, managing or controlling them – that we call 'sur-veillance' – is never innocent either. At times, the need for greater vigilance becomes appar-ent and in that sense the events of September 11 acted as a 'wake-up' call. Heightened sur-veillance is not in itself questionable in terms of justice or freedom. Think, for example, of the use of closed circuit television cameras in police interrogation rooms, which may fos-ter, not impede, fair treatment of suspects (Newman and Hayman 2001). But under some circumstances, intensified surveillance may have socially negative effects which mean that proscription takes precedence over protection, control over care. The current anxious and tense situation following September 11, I shall argue, is helping to create a potentially dangerous augmentation of surveillance in several countries.

So what aspects of social structure and process may be seen through the prism of surveillance responses to September 11? I suggest that the prism helps to sharpen our focus on two matters in particular: One, the expanding range of already existing range of surveillance processes and practices that circumscribe and help to shape our social exis-tence. Two, the tendency to rely on technological enhancements to surveillance systems (even when it is unclear that they work or that they address the problem they are estab-lished to answer). However, concentrating on these two items is intended only to mitigate claims that 'everything has changed' in the surveillance realm, not to suggest that nothing has changed. Indeed, I think it safe to suggest that the intensity and the centralisation of surveillance in Western countries is increasing dramatically as a result of September 11. Such systems, once in place, are harder to dismantle than to install.

The visible signs of putative changes in surveillance have both legal and technical aspects. The USA and several other countries have passed legislation intended to tighten security, to give police and intelligence services greater powers, and to permit faster politi-cal responses to 'terrorist' attacks. In order to make it easier to find (and to arrest) people suspected of 'terrorism', typically, some limitations on wiretaps have not only been lifted but also extended to the interception of e-mail and to Internet click stream monitoring. In Canada (where I write) the Communications Security Establishment may now gather intelli-gence on 'terrorist' groups, probably using 'profiling' methods to track racial and national origins as well as travel movements and financial transactions. Several countries have proposed new national identification card systems, some involving biometric devices or pro-grammable chips; others have brought forward more limited ID card systems, such as the new Canadian Immigration Card ("New ID cards for landed immigrants", *Toronto Star*, 11 October 2001) or the 'smart ID' for asylum seekers in the UK (*The Guardian*, 30 October

2001, http://politics.guardian.co.uk/whitehall/story/0,,583304,00.html).

Some have questioned how new, while others have questioned how necessary, are the measures that have been fast-tracked through the legislative process. Sceptics point to the well established UK-USA intelligence gathering agreement, for example, and to the massive message interception system once known as CARNIVORE that already filtered millions of ordinary international e-mail, fax, and phone messages long before September 11. Debates have occurred over how long the legal measures will be in force – the USA has a "sunset clause" that phases out the anti-terrorist law after a period of five years – but few have denied the perceived need for at least some strengthened legal framework to deal with 'terrorist' threats.

In some respects bound up with legal issues, and in others, independently, 'technical' responses to September 11 have also proliferated. High-tech companies, waiting in the wings for the opportunity to launch their products, saw September 11 providing just the platform they needed. Not surprisingly, almost all the 'experts' on whom the media call for comment are representatives of companies. Thus, for instance, Michael G. Cherkasky, president of a security firm, Kroll, suggested that "every American could be given a 'smart card' so, as they go into an airport or anywhere, we know exactly who they are" (www. nytimes.com/2001/09/18/national/18RULE.html). Or, in a celebrated case Larry Ellison, president of the Silicon Valley Company Oracle, offered the US government free smart card software for a national ID system (www.siliconvalley.com/cgi-bin/). What a commercial coup that would be! He failed to explain, of course, what price would be charged for each access to the Oracle database, or the roll-out price tag on a national smart card identifier.

Other technical surveillance-related responses to September 11 include iris-scans at airports – now installed at Schipol, Amsterdam, and being implemented elsewhere in Europe and North America as well; CCTV cameras in public places, enhanced if possible with facial recognition capacities such as the Mandrake system in Newham, South London; and DNA databanks to store genetic information capable of identifying known 'terrorists'. Although, given their potential for negative social consequences (http://sg.news. yahoo.com/011102/12/lne83.html), there is a lamentable lack of informed sociological comment on these far-reaching developments, where such analyses are available they suggest several things. One, these technologies may be tried but not tested. That is, it is not clear that they work with the kind of precision that is required and thus they may not achieve the ends intended. Two, they are likely to have unintended consequences that include reinforcing forms of social division and exclusion within the countries where they are established.

A third and larger dimension of the technological aspect of surveillance practices is that seeking superior technologies appears as a primary goal. No matter that the original 'terrorism' involved relies on relatively aged technologies – jet aircraft of a type that have been around for 30 years, sharp knives, and so on – it is assumed that high-tech solutions are called for. Moreover, the kinds of technologies sought – iris scans, face-recognition, smart cards, biometrics, DNA – rely heavily on the use of searchable databases, with the aim of anticipating, pre-empting, preventing acts of 'terrorism' by isolating in advance poten-

tial perpetrators. I shall return to this in a moment, but here it is merely worth noting that Jacques Ellul's concept of *la technique*, a relentless cultural commitment to technological progress via ever-augmented means, seems (despite his detractors) to be at least relevant.

So what do these post-September 11 surveillance developments mean, sociologically? Before that date, surveillance studies seemed to be moving away from more conventional concerns with a bureaucratic understanding of power relations (Dandeker 1990) that in fact owes as much to George Orwell as to Max Weber. This puts a fairly high premium on seeing surveillance as a means to centralised power as exemplified in the fictional figure of Big Brother – the trope that still dominates many scholarly as well as popular treatments of the theme. Although some significant studies, especially those located in labour process arguments about workplace monitoring and supervision, see surveillance as a class weapon (Braverman 1980), this view is often supplemented with a more Foucauldian one in which the Panopticon plays a part.

Within the latter there is a variety of views, giving rise to a lively but sporadic debate (Boyne 2000). One fault-line lies between those who focus on the 'unseen observer' in the Panopticon as an antetype of 'invisible' electronic forms of surveillance, but also of relatively unobtrusive CCTV systems, and those that focus more on the classificatory powers of the Panopticon (an idea that is worked out more fully in relation to Foucault's "biopower"). The latter perspective has been explored empirically in several areas, including high-tech policing and commercial database marketing (Gandy 1993, Ericson and Haggerty 1997). Either way, data-subjects are seen in this perspective to be 'normalised' by surveillance, which is still thought of by many as an identifiable system of power.

While both aspects of the Panopticon offer some illuminating insights into contemporary surveillance, the latter has particular resonance in the present circumstances. In this view, persons and groups are constantly risk-profiled, which in the commercial sphere rates their social contributions and sorts them into consumer categories, and in policing and intelligence systems rates their relative social dangerousness. Responses to September 11 have increased possibilities for 'racial' profiling along 'Arab' lines in particular, the consequences of which are already seen in the American detention of several thousand 'suspects' and an FBI trawl of more than 200 campuses to collect information about 'Middle Eastern' students (www.nytimes.com/2001/11/12/national/12STUD.html).

Both the Weberian-Orwellian and the Foucauldian perspectives depend on a fairly centralised understanding of surveillance. However, given the technological capacities for dispersal and decentralisation, not to mention globalisation, some more recent studies have suggested that a different model is called for. The work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) offers some novel directions, suggesting through some striking metaphors that the growth of surveillance systems is rhizomic; more like a creeping plant than a central tree trunk with spreading branches. This has persuaded some to see surveillance as a looser, more malleable and flowing set of processes – a "surveillant assemblage" – rather than as a centrally controlled and coordinated system (Haggerty and Ericson 2000). This also relates to our daily experiences of surveillance, which occur in mundane moments rather than in special searches. As Nikolas Rose puts it, "surveillance is 'designed in' to the flows of everyday existence" (1999: 234).

In the assemblage, surveillance works by abstracting bodies from places, splitting them into flows to be reassembled as virtual data-doubles, calling in question once again hierarchies and centralised power. One important aspect of this is that the flows of personal and group data percolate through systems that once were much less porous; much more discrete and watertight. Thus, following September 11, surveillance data from a myriad of sources – supermarkets, motels, traffic control points, credit card transaction records and so on – were used to trace the activities of the 'terrorists' in the days and hours before their attacks. The use of searchable databases makes it possible to use commercial records previously unavailable to police and intelligence services and thus draws on all manner of apparently 'innocent' traces.

This brief survey of surveillance studies shows how the once dominant model of centralised state informational power has been challenged by socio-technical developments. The result is newer models that incorporate the growth of information and communication technologies in personal and population data processing, and more networked modes of social organisation with their concomitant flexibility and departmental openness. But it is a mistake to simply leave the other kinds of explanation behind, as we move up (to the next plateau) using something like Wittgenstein's ladder. To illustrate this, I shall simply offer a series of questions that once again allow the prism of September 11 aftermath to point up aspects of structure and process that relate in particular to surveillance.

Is surveillance best thought of as centralised power or dispersed assemblage? The responses to September 11 are a stark reminder that for all its changing shape since World War Two the nation-state is still a formidable force, especially when the apparently rhizomic shoots can still be exploited for very specific purposes to tap into the data they carry. Though the Big Brother trope did not in its original incarnation refer to anything outside the nation-state (such as commercial or Internet surveillance that is prevalent today) or guess at the extent to which the 'telescreen' would be massively enhanced by developments first in microelectronics and then in communications and searchable databases, it would be naive to imagine that Big Brother type threats are somehow a thing of the past.

Draconian measures are appearing worldwide as country after country instates laws and practices purportedly to counter 'terrorism'. Attorney General Ashcroft warned Patrick Leahy, one of the only American senators seriously to raise his voice against the new police powers, that "talk won't prevent terrorism". Panic responses such as these, that both silence critical discussion and impose restrictions on civil liberties through policing and security crackdowns, are likely to have long-term and possibly irreversible consequences. They permit extraordinary measures, which include appropriating data on everyday communications and transactions – phone calls, e-mail, the Internet – while implicitly discouraging the use of these media for democratic debate. The surveillant assemblage can be co-opted for conventional 'strong state' purposes.

With regard to the experience of surveillance it is worth asking whether intrusion or exclusion is the key motif. In societies that have undergone processes of steady privatisation it is not surprising that surveillance is often viewed in individualistic terms as a potential threat to privacy, an intrusion on an intimate life, an invasion of the sacrosanct home, or as jeopardising anonymity. While all these are understandable responses (and ones that

invite their own theoretical and practical responses), none really touches one of the key aspects of contemporary surveillance, "social sorting" (Lyon, forthcoming). It is hard to get an adequate theoretical handle on this, and it does not help that no compelling metaphor – such as 'Big Brother' – has yet been proposed to give it popular cachet.

Yet the increasingly automated discriminatory mechanisms for risk-profiling and social categorising represent a key means of reproducing and reinforcing social, economic, and cultural divisions in informational societies. They tend to be highly unaccountable – especially in contexts such as CCTV surveillance (Norris and Armstrong 1999) – which is why the common promotional refrain, 'if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear' is vacuous. Categorical suspicion has consequences for anyone, 'innocent' or 'guilty', caught in its gaze, a fact that has poignant implications for the new anti-terror measures enacted after September 11. It is already clear in several countries that 'Arab' and 'Muslim' minorities are disproportionately and unfairly targeted by these measures.

The experience of surveillance also raises the question of how far subjects collude with, negotiate, or resist practices that capture and process their personal data. Surveillance is not merely a matter of the gaze of the powerful, any more than it is technologically determined. Data-subjects interact with surveillance systems. As Foucault says, we are "bearers of our own surveillance" but it must be stressed that this is not merely an unconscious process in which we are dupes. Because surveillance is always ambiguous – there are genuine benefits and plausible rationales as well as palpable disadvantages – the degree of collaboration with surveillance depends on a range of circumstances and attitudes. Under the present panic regime (towards the close of 2001) it appears that anxious publics are willing to put up with many more intrusions, interceptions, delays, and questions than was the case before September 11, and this process is amplified by media polarisations of the 'choice' between 'liberty' and 'security'. The consequences of this complacency could be far-reaching.

I have mentioned technological aspects of surveillance several times, which points up the question, are these developments technologically or socially driven? To read some accounts – both positive *and* negative – one would imagine that 'technology' really has the last word in determining surveillance capacities. But this is in fact a fine site in which to observe the co-construction of the technical and the social (Lyon, forthcoming). For example, though very powerful searchable databases are in use, and those in intelligence and policing services are being upgraded after September 11, the all-important categories with which they are coded (Lessig 1999) are produced by much more mundane processes. Database marketeers in the USA use crude behavioural categories to describe neighbourhoods, such as "pools and patios" or "bohemian mix", and CCTV operators in the UK target disproportionately the "young, black, male" group. The high-tech glitz seems to eclipse by its dazzle those social factors that are constitutionally imbricated with the technical. At times, it also eclipses the fact that surveillance may occur with no added 'technology' at all.

Still on the technical, however, a final question would be are the proposed new anti-terrorist measures pre-emptive or investigatory? Over the past few years an important debate has centred on the apparent switch in time from past-oriented to future-oriented surveillance. Gary T. Marx predicted in the late 1980s that surveillance would become more pre-

emptive and in many respects he has been vindicated. This idea has been picked up in a more Baudrillardian vein by William Bogard who argues that surveillance is increasingly simulated, such that seeing-in-advance is its goal (1996). A glance at any promotional platform of high-tech surveillance devices confirms that prevention of future occurrences is the supposedly clinching claim. However, this kind of argument easily loses sight of actual data-subjects – persons – whose daily life chances and choices are affected – often negatively – in reality by surveillance (Graham 1998) as well as resting on dubious and seldom independent empirical tests.

Unfortunately, the attraction of new technologies that will be able to prevent future 'terrorist' acts is strong in policy circles. It would be nice to believe in this anticipatory and preventive capacity – and as one who was in mid-flight over North America at the time of the attack, I would love to think it true, but the overwhelming evidence points in the other direction. Surveillance can only anticipate up to a point, and in some very limited circumstances. Searchable databases and international communications interception were fully operational on September 10 to no avail. The likely result will be that internal surveillance of citizens by the state will increase. And if 'terrorists' are apprehended it will be by other means.

Surveillance responses to September 11 are indeed a prism through which aspects of social structure and process may be observed. The prism helps to make visible the already existing vast range of surveillance practices and processes that touch everyday life in so-called informational societies. And it helps to check various easily made assumptions about surveillance – that it is more dispersed than centralised, that it is more intrusive than exclusionary, that data-subjects are dupes of the system, that it is technically-driven, that it contributes more to prevention than to investigation after the fact.

Sociologically, caution seems to be called for in seeing older, modernist models simply as superseded by newer, postmodern ones. For all its apparent weaknesses in a globalising world, the nation-state is capable of quickly tightening its grip on internal control, using means that include the very items of commercial surveillance – phone calls, supermarket visits, and Internet surfing – that appear 'soft' and scarcely worthy of inclusion as 'surveillance'. And for all the doubts cast on the risk-prone informational, communications, and transport environment, naive faith in the promise of technology seems undaunted by the 'failures' of September 11. Lastly, in the current climate it is hard to see how calls for democratic accountability and ethical scrutiny of surveillance systems will be heard as anything but liberal whining. Yet democratic accountability starts with a willingness to listen to the voice of the other. And ethical scrutiny begins with care for the other, to relieve and to prevent suffering. The sociology of surveillance discussed above sees neglect of these as a serious mistake, with ramifications we may all live to regret.

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Portable, Tripod mounted, Mobile ground installations

Comprehensive Control Capabilities

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Night Observation Device Long Range

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Long Range Observation System

Compact Multi-Purpose Advanced Stabilized System

SAMPLE AVAILABLE

New Rules, New Actonomy

GEERT LOVINK + FLORIAN SCHNEIDER

That the world is changing wasn't really noticed for a while, and if at all only in positive ways – at least for as long as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the overcoming of the Cold War gave rise to great hopes, the Boom of the New Economy hid its bad points, as long as the postmodern fun spread nothing but good vibes. Nowadays the signs have become more obvious that there are many political, cultural, economic and social conflicts simmering under the cover of digitalisation, infotisation and globalisation; the extent and breadth of these conflicts cannot yet be estimated.

Seattle, Melbourne, Prague, Nice, Davos – Quebec has just been added to this list, and Genova soon will be, where the G-8 meeting will take place at the end of July, and Qatar, where the next WTO will be, and a global day of action will be carried out. At first glance, it seems as if a new global protest generation is emerging, which endeavours to equal, include and battle against that of 1968.

However no one should yield to this illusion. The great social movements of the past centuries from labour to environment seem to be exhausted. Simple recipes have lost all credibility, of course. The ways back to familiar models is obstructed, and the complex cohesion of an ever more closely networking global economy and of ever more differen-tiated living conditions seem to be immune against any form of criticism.

The field of the political has collapsed into thousands of single fragments, but it is exactly in this chaos that a new activism with new ways of political articulation and action is breaking through. All these new beginnings are extremely flexible and operate with tacti-cal and strategic plurality. They strive for up-to-date notions of solidarity and self-deter-mination, and they try to link and to short-cut immediate and local conflicts with global ones.

So what has changed?
In former times, it was all about imprisoning people somewhere in order to discipline them (in schools, the army, factories, hospitals). Nowadays people are monitored in real time practically everywhere. In all political, social and cultural fields networking techniques of control replace the former techniques of power exertion. Chip-cards, biometric systems, electronic collars control the access to proprietary and privileged areas. Borders are subjected to a special change of meaning in this context. At electronic frontiers and virtual borders everything is about matching user-profiles and instead of in- or exclusion: network-ing against one's will.

There is no outside anymore and that is why the Archimedal point of criticism has vani-shed, to settle exactly on the border and to risk a glance into the circumstances without really being a part of the controversy. The 'New Left', as it emerged from the student set-

tings of the 1960s and 70s, had made its ideological criticism from these safe positions. Little wonder that the remains of such a protest culture excel at complaining, winging, griping and if it really gets radical, at making someone feel guilty.

Work that is no longer calculable and measurable anymore is certainly nothing really new. But their meaning for production process is pivotal.

What some call 'Affect Industry' covers work in hospitals and in the film industry, in software sweatshops and kindergartens, in the entertainment industry and in nursing homes. Classic reproduction work, which aims to stir emotions and create a feeling of well-being. The newest development in the emotion industry opens up a bio-political dimension where the most riddling aspect that exists on earth – life itself – becomes the object of production.

Nowadays, almost all habits of political thinking and action are more or less radically questioned. Necessary is a redefinition of the political practice and its theorising, not starting from point zero but from where we are now. In this context it is extremely exciting not to abandon all insights, but on the contrary to investigate experience from a new historical upheaval and to recapitulate and to develop new terms and refuel old ones; to let struggles communicate with each other, regardless of if they are old or new, regardless of where they are physically located, and how they will end.

Resistance always comes before Power and sabotage derives from the French word *sabot*, which is a wooden shoe that is secretly introduced into a machine and blocks the production temporarily. This interruption aims to reduce the efficiency of the machine to such an extent that the emerging material damage underlines the concrete demands or a general disgust at the condition of exploitation.

As the normal strike, sabotage as a means of direct action aims directly at the pickpocket of the corporation in order to achieve the realisation of certain conditions. Particularly when workers were robbed of their right to strike, sabotage was an appropriate although illegal means of struggle within the factories. Sabotage is a direct application of the idea that property has no rights that its creators are bound to respect. That way sabotage can be seen as a sort of anticipated reverse engineering of the open source idea.

Indeed, in the current political debate about direct action there are several parallels to the situation of the late 19th century which can be made. Sabotage is radically antagonistic to the representative discourse, i.e. in the institutionalised contexts of the working class or social movements. Those representative forms have always referred to a nation-state while spontaneous, un- or better-organised forms of resistance (e.g. the Industrial Workers of the World – IWW) have expressed a global class consciousness. What is nowadays called direct action re-presents sabotage.

From "No Logo" to "Ruckus Society", from wild strikes in the hardware, Hi-Tech and service industries to the semiotic guerilla of indymedia, RTmark or Adbusters. We suspect: current forms of activism attempt a redefinition of sabotage as social practice, but not in the usual destructive sense, rather in a constructive, innovative and creative practice. Such a constructive approach results in a movement without organs or organisation. In a variety of perspectives – self-determined cybernetic thinking that spurs on different approaches and connections, which refers to a social antagonism refers to the level of production, and

that is constituting a collective process of appropriation of knowledge and power.

So far three layers of net activism appeared in a still rudimentary way: Networking within a movement: The first level of net activism consists of facilitating the internal communication inside the movement. It means communication on and behind mailing lists, setting up web sites which are designed as a toolbox for the activists themselves. It leads to creating a virtual community, whose dynamics do not so much differ from romantic off-line communities, besides the fact that people do not necessarily need to meet physically, but very often they do afterwards.

> Networking in between movements and social groups: The second level of net activism is defined by campaigning and connecting people form different contexts. It means joining the forces, collaborative and cooperative efforts, creating inspiring and motivating surroundings, in which new types of actions and activities may be elaborated.

> Virtual movements: The third level of net activism means using the Internet vice versa as a platform for purely virtual protests, which refer no longer to any kind of off-line reality and which may cause incalculable and uncontrollable movements: E-protests like online demonstrations, electronic civil disobedience or anything which might be seen as digital sabotage as a legitimate outcome of a social struggle: counter-branding, causing virtual losses, polluting the image of a corporation.

Time is running out for reformism.
This is the golden age of irresistible activism. Accelerate your politics. Set a target you can reach within 3 years – and formulate the key ideas within 30 seconds. Then go out and do it. Do not despair. Get the bloody project up and then: hit hit hit. Be instantly seductive in your resistance. The moral firewalls of global capitalism are buggy as never before. Corporations are weakened because of their endemic dirty practices, mad for profits. The faster things are changing, the more radical we can act. The faster things are changing, the more radical we have to act.

The green-liberal idea of slowly changing capitalism from within no longer works. Not because the Third Way parties powers have 'betrayed' the cause. No, simply because their project is constantly running out of time. Global systems are in a state of permanent revolution, and so is subversive politics. Society is changing much faster than any of its institutions, including corporations. No one can keep up. There is no time anymore for decent planning. The duration of a plan, necessary for its implementation is simply no longer there. This mechanism turned the baby boomers into such unbearable regressive control freaks. There is no more time to go through the whole trajectory from research to implementation. Policy is reduced to panic response.

Government policy is reduced to panic response. For the complex society its enemies are the blueprints of five years ago. The future is constantly being redefined, and renegotiated. Global systems are in a state of permanent flux between revolution and reaction – and so is subversive politics. Society is changing much faster than any of its institutions can handle. In short: no one can keep up and here lies the competitive advantage of today's mobile actonomists.

Instead of crying over the disappearance of politics, the public, the revolution, etc.

today's activists are focussing on the weakest link defining the overall performance of the system: the point where the corporate image materialises in the real world and leaves its ubiquity and abstract omnipresence. Short-cut the common deliberations about the dichotomy between real and virtual. Get into more sophisticated dialectics. It's all linked anyway, with power defining the rules of access to resources (space, information or capital). Throw your pie, write your code. Visit their annual stockholders' meeting, and do your goddamned research first. What counts is the damage done on the symbolic level, either real or virtual.

The new actonomy, equipped with pies and laptops, consists of thousands of bigger and smaller activities, which are all by themselves meaningful, manageable and sustainable. For this we do not need a General Plan, a singular portal web site, or let alone a Party. It is enough to understand the new dynamics – and use them. Create and disseminate your message with all available logics, tools and media. The new actonomy involves a rigorous application of networking methods. Its diversity challenges the development of non-hierarchical, decentralised and deterritorialised applets and applications.

Laws of semiotic guerilla: hit and run, draw and withdraw, code and delete. Postulate precise and modest demands, which allows your foe a step back without losing its face. Social movements of the last century were opposing the nation-state and disclaimed its power. In the new actonomy, activists struggle against corporations and new forms of global sovereignty. The goal is obviously not so much to gain institutional political power, rather to change the way in which things are moving – and why. The principle aim is to make power ridiculous, unveil its corrupt nature in the most powerful, beautiful and aggressive symbolic languages, then step back in order to make space for changes to set in. Let others do that job, if they wish so. There is no need for a direct dialogue in this phase. Exchanges on mediated levels will do. Complex societies have got plenty mediators and interfaces. Use them. Indirect contact with the power to be does not affect your radical agenda as long as you maintain and upgrade your own dignity, both as an acting individual and as a group.

Radical demands are not by default a sign of a dogmatic belief system (they can, of course). If formulated well they are strong signs, penetrating deeply into the confused postmodern subjectivity, so susceptive to catchy phrases, logos and brands. Invent and connect as much intentions, motivations, causalities as possible.

These days a well designed content virus can easily reach millions overnight. Invest all your time to research how to design a robust meme, which can travel through time and space, capable of operating within a variety of cultural contexts. The duality between 'small is beautiful' and 'subversive economies of scale' is constantly shifting. Low-tech money-free projects are charming, but in most cases lack the precision and creative power to strike at society's weakest link. Be ready to work with money. You will need it for the temporary set-up.

Think in terms of efficiency. Use the staff and infrastructure on the site of your foe. Acting in the new actonomy means to cut the preliminaries and get to the point straight away. A campaign does not rely on ones own forces, but on those of your allies and opponents as well. Outsourcing is a weapon. It is a means of giving someone else the problems you cannot solve yourself. Remember that you won't get very far without a proper infrastructure such as offices, servers, legal frameworks to receive and pay money, etc.

However, you can also treat these institutional requirements as flexible units. You do not need to own them, the only thing you need is temporary access so that you can set up the machine ensemble you need for that particular project.

Radical demands are not by default a sign of a dogmatic belief system (they can, of course). If formulated well they are strong signs, penetrating deeply into the confused postmodern subjectivity, so susceptive to catchy phrases, logos and brands.

Invent and connect as much intentions, motivations, causalities as possible. Nowadays activists use multi-layered and multiple voice languages that reach out far beyond the immediate purpose of a campaign or a concrete struggle, and in doing so they create a vision much larger than what is accessible right at the moment. This mechanism needs a reassessment of rhizomatic micro-politics, which sprung up in a response to the centralised macro-politics of the decaying communist parties in the seventies.

Act in a definite space and with a definite force. Dramaturgy is all that matters. Precision campaigns consist of distinct episodes with a beginning and an ending, an either smooth or harsh escalation and a final showdown. Accept the laws of appearance and disappearance. Don't get stuck in structures, which are on the decline. Be ready to move on, taking with you the (access to) infrastructure of the previous round. Action is taking place in a variety of locations and thus refers in a positive way to a new stage of people's globalisation from below. One that is not just an empty, endlessly extended market, but full of energy.

Refuse to be blackmailed. If attacked, make one step aside or ahead. Don't panic. Take all the options into account. No one needs cyber heroes, you are not a lone hacker anymore. The attack maybe be done by a single person but remember we are many. The corporate response may be harder than you expect. It may be better to evade a direct confrontation, but don't trust the media and the mediators. Ignore their advice. In the end you are just another news item for them. If trouble hits the face, scale down, retreat, reorganise, get your network up, dig deep into the far corners of the Net – and then launch the counter campaign.

Program and compile subject-oriented campaigns! These days a lot of people talk about a global upraising, which is only in the very beginning and definitely not limited to running behind the so called battles of the three acronyms: WTO, WB and IMF. But the urgent question of that movement is: what new types of subjectivity will rise out of the current struggles? Everybody knows what's to be done, but who knows what are we fighting for and why? Maybe it doesn't matter anymore: net activism is of a charming fragility. In the end it means permanently revising and redefining all goals.

The revolution will be open source or not! Self-determination is something you should really share. As soon as you feel certain strength on a certain field, you can make your power productive as positive, creative and innovative force. That power opens up new capacities, reducing again and again unexpected and incalculable effects.

Ignore history. Don't refer to any of your favourite predecessors. Hide your admiration for authors, artists and familiar styles. You do not need to legitimise yourself by quoting the right theorist or rapper. Be unscrupulously modern (meaning: ignore organised fashion, you are anyway busy with something else). Create and disseminate your message with all avail-

able logics, tools and media. The new actonomy involves a rigorous application of networking methods. Its diversity challenges the development of non-hierarchical, decentralised and deterritorialised applets and applications. In the meanwhile leave the preaching of the techno religion to others. Hide your admiration for everything new and cool. Just use it. Take the claim on the future away from corporations.

Remember: they are the dinosaurs. Read as much business literature as possible and don't be afraid it may affect you. It will. Having enough ethics in your guts you can deal with that bit of ideology. Remember that activism and entrepreneurial spirit have a remarkably lot in common. So what? Benefit from your unlimited capacity of metamorphosis. With the right spirit you can survive any appropriation. Free yourself from the idea that enemy concepts are compromising the struggle. You don't have to convince yourself, nor your foe. The challenge is to involve those who are not yet joining the struggle. The challenge is to use resources, which may not belong to you, but which are virtually yours.

Sydney/Munich, June 2001.

Random Thoughts
About the Indymedia network, tactical media…

EVAN HENSHAW-PLATH

Indymedia is the eclectic combination of web sites, community media centres, and networks of media and activist groups. The purpose is to create an environment through which we can coordinate, fight, and hopefully win the war of ideas. RAND, the right wing think tank, has coined the term Netwar, to couch the struggle over ideas and the political realm, the struggle for hegemony, within the language of military conflict. In some ways they are right. The development of high-tech weaponry has removed the possibility of armed struggle within the industralised world. Netwar, the playing out of social, political, and economic conflicts through the realm of information has opened up a new terrain through which the struggle over power in society is played out.

Netwar is about the struggle over ideas and ideology played out in a highly connected and networked communication based society. The process of revolution is not that of storming the seats of power, but of creating the environment whereby popular notions of society, power, and legitimacy shift out from underneath those seats of power. Indymedia is a vehicle through which the ideological basis of present power structures can be subverted. We are countering the corporate media establishment which serves as both creator and beneficiary of our neo-liberal consumerist society.

Indymedia is a disorganisation, decentralised and loosely networked. Countering both the traditional left media and the capitalist media. Arising out of the anti-globalisation movement, Indymedia reflects many of the values, organisational methods, and contradictions of the larger movement. In some way we are movement media, but given the nature of the movement, we don't advocate a particular ideological perspective. Rather we have a terrain of ideologies which are both contradictory and complimentary, but reflect the postmodern undercurrents of the anti-globalisation struggle. There is no editorial voice, aside from general vague agreements about direction. For some the struggle is to put a human face on capitalism, or to create 'mindful markets', for others it is the elimination of capitalism, or the whole of both the state and markets, or civilisation itself. All of these views coexist within a framework of the networked coalition. We don't agree on what we want, but everybody agrees that the monolithic hegemonic domination of the current neo-liberal globalisation needs to be shattered. There struggle for a planet that allows many truths, the localisation of ideology within a globalised world.

Indymedia is a network of media collectives, centres, journalists, activists, commentators, and media makers who are using this technology to subvert the legitimacy of the global corporate media and their "washington consensus", not by providing one alternative, but by creating a space through which many voices can rise up in a cacophony of dissent.

The Case For Biolinuxes
And other pro-commons innovations

K. RAVI SRINIVAS

Due to the lack of Vitamin A, more than a million children die every year and many more are affected. To overcome this, scientists have developed "golden rice", and this variety of rice has sufficient quantities of beta-carotene, a good source of Vitamin A. When a study was done to look at the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues involved in utilising the relevant technologies for the production of this rice, it revealed that about 30 groups of patents have been issued over various processes and products needed to produce this variety. In other words, unless the IPRs are waived, or at least licences are given without expecting any royalty, the rice will never be available at affordable rates.

This is just one example.

Over the last few years, the tendency to apply for patents and other Intellectual Property claims has grown so rapidly that today no researcher can be sure whether the processes they use are patented, and whether they are unknowingly infringing somebody's patents. Patents now cover a wide variety of processes, research tools, techniques etc. It is estimated that patents related to rice were less than hundred per year till 1995 but they jumped to more than six hundred per year between 1996 and 2000. The increase in the number of patents coupled with broad patent claims has emerged as a major challenge to researchers all over the world.

IPRs for plants and plant varieties are a relatively recent development. In many countries they are still not covered by any IPR regime, although the USA permits even the patenting of plants. This is not surprising since until the Uruguay Round, IPRs on plant and plant varieties was not an issue discussed under GATT; the inclusion of IPRs on plant and plant varieties under TRIPS has much more to do with development trends in biotechnology, and private sector investment and involvement in the seed industry. The US Plant Variety Protection Act (PVPA) of 1970 made it possible to provide patent-like protection for both sexually and asexually propagated plants. Under PVPA a certificate of protection can be granted to anyone who applies for it, provided the plant in question fulfills the criteria of novelty, uniformity and stability.

Different countries have different norms for evaluating claims for patentability. Plant Breeders' Rights were first proposed in 1956, and in 1957 the French government organised a conference to discuss the issue. The Convention, signed in Paris on 2nd December 1961 by Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and the United Kingdom, resulted in the founding of *Union Pour La Protection des Obtentions Vegetables* (UPOV). Although these countries ratified the convention, there was no consensus on the crops to be covered. The stated objective therefore, was that the Convention would eventually work for the inclusion of all crop plants but that to begin with, each state was to make its own decision to cover or leave out specific crops. The TRIPS Agreement is based on the assumption that plants may be considered inventions, and hence can be made eligible for protection under IPR regimes.

For the purposes of granting patents, an innovation must result in an invention, although the definition of an invention is vague. In case of plants, an invention can be claimed only if it is proved that no such variety exists in nature. Under the UPOV Treaty, protection could be given for plants and seeds as long as the plant constituted a new, stable and homogenous variety.

But matters relating to patents and patentable matter took a decisive turn after the landmark decision given in *Diamond vs Chakrabarty* by the United States Supreme Court, which declared that "everything under the sun made by man was patentable". Thus the distinction between inanimate and living things, for the purpose of being eligible for patent production, was reduced to whether it was a handiwork of man or not, and anything under the sun, as long as it was man-made and fit the parameters of an invention, could be patented. This ruling was affirmed in subsequent cases (*ex parte* Hibberd, 1985 and *ex parte* Allen, 1988) and the scope for granting patents was widened in Europe by a landmark case in

1983. With these two decisions, it is possible to get patents for plant varieties and modified micro-organisms irrespective of the technique involved (genetic engineering or plant breeding).

According to article 27(2) of the European Patent Convention (EPC), member states are permitted to exclude from patentability such inventions, the prevention of whose commercial exploitation is necessary for protecting the *ordre public/*morality (including human health, plant or animal life and environmental damage). But patentability cannot be denied for the reason that such exploitation is illegal in the member state. The necessary condition has to be understood in the context of decisions given by GATT involving cases under Article XX (a), (b) and (d), and the decisions of WTO's Dispute Settlement Understanding. A reading of the decisions indicates that it is difficult to provide exclusion on the grounds of *ordre public* or morality or on human health grounds. The European Patent Convention does mention *ordre public/*morality, but the extent of *ordre public/*morality exclusions and their meaning is not clear. TRIPS too does not explicitly outlaw patenting life in general on these grounds.

Hence it is difficult at this juncture to understand how the WTO Dispute Settlement will interpret 'intention'. According to Paragraph 3 of this text, members may exclude from patentability: "diagnostic, therapeutic, and surgical methods for the treatment of humans or animals; plants and animals other than micro-organisms, and essentially biological processes for the production of plants or animals other than non-biological and microbiological processes. However, members shall provide for the protection of plant varieties either by patents or by effective *sui generis* system or by any combination thereof".

Legislation on Plant Breeders' Rights, patentable matter and plants, and plant varieties has been influenced by developments in science and technology. Laws have tried to stay tuned with breakthroughs in science by expanding the scope and coverage of the subject matter of IPRs. How the provisions of TRIPS will be interpreted will depend on developments in both legislation and in science and technology. Developments in biotechnology and genetic engineering have altered the boundaries between animate matter and inanimate matter. Genetically modified organisms – plants modified to have specific traits – are becoming more and more common.[1]

As a result of these kinds of developments, and others such as consolidation in the agrochemical sector, the global seed sector is becoming an area in which multinational corporations (MNCs) dominate the inputs needed by farmers – be they seeds, herbicides, insecticides, genetically modified seeds or other agrochemical inputs. For example, just five companies control 75% of the global vegetable seed market. Two companies – Dupont and Monsanto – together have a 73% share in the US corn seed market. In case of genetically modified crops also, the top three companies control more than 75% of the market. Over the past decade there have been so many mergers and acquisitions in this sector that today a company like Monsanto has a stake in almost in every crop and in every region of the world.

The tendency to get broad patents has resulted in what is called 'anti-commons'. In 1968, Hardin argued the "tragedy of commons". Today, Heller and Eisenberg have argued that people actually under-use scarce resources as too may owners and too many claims

block each other.[2] Proliferation of patents results in researchers having to obtain licences from too many parties in order to use materials and processes; so while in theory it may seem that stronger patent protection will foster innovation, in practice it may not be so at all. Rather, stronger patent protection makes companies seek broader claims and restrictive licensing practices. In certain industries like biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, patents matter even more. But stronger patent protection does not mean that varieties will be available for longer periods than before, or that the number of varieties will increase significantly. According to a study, the average age of wheat varieties in the UK has come down from more than six years in the late 1960s to less than three years in the early 1990s.

In fact, plant breeding as an organised industry is not even two hundred years old, but farmers have been experimenting, conserving and disseminating varieties since time immemorial. The sheer diversity in the varieties of every food crop is the handiwork of these farmers who, over centuries, have improved upon what nature created in the first place. But these time-tested practices of seed saving and exchange and trade in seeds by farmers have now become issues of debate. Under the revised UPOV treaty of 1991 it was left to the national lawmakers to permit the right to use saved seeds.

This decline in diversity and the hegemony of the MNCs is being challenged in many ways. I will briefly describe them and point out their relevance.[3]

One way is to organise farmers and recover and retrieve seed varieties that were in use or that are still in use, and popularise them among farmers. This helps farmers not only in rediscovering old varieties, but also in preserving them.

Another possibility is to switch over to organic agriculture, use sustainable agricultural practices and reduce dependency on modern plant varieties. This also means that farmers and communities start re-using varieties which have fallen into disuse, or varieties which are used marginally.

Another solution is to develop new varieties and work with farmers, taking into account their specific needs and demands. This method – known as Participatory Plant Breeding – is a solution whose logic can be extended from the development paradigm of open-source and free software.

Farmers have developed seed varieties by experimenting over centuries and sharing the improved varieties with others. As a result of this continuing experimentation, testing, selection, propagation and exchange, diversity was made possible. Participatory plant breeding tries to mix the best in modern science with the wisdom of farmers in order to develop varieties that are both farmer-friendly and meet the needs of different agro-climatic zones. Participatory plant breeding is also a learning process. Farmers evaluate seed varieties by various criteria and decide what to choose and which improvements to make. Participatory plant breeding can also be used to make traditional varieties more suited to meet the needs of today's farmers.

These three methods are not exclusive choices. They can be used together to conserve biodiversity and to develop new varieties. An obvious question can be: if these possibilities are already available, why are they not widely used? The answer would have to be that policy frameworks do not give them much importance. Moreover, the sheer size of the

Research and Development budgets of the MNCs is so enormous that even governments are found wanting. For example Monsanto has a bigger R&D budget than what the government of India allocates to the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Open-source software, free software and GPL[4]

Over the years, free software movements have proved that good quality software can be made widely available without costing the earth, and that software can be developed to meet the wide variety of systems in use. In the process they have questioned the hegemony of Microsoft and the myth that there are no alternatives to wintelism.[5] In fact, the Internet would not exist but for open-source and free software.

Copyleft is an innovation that tries to overcome barriers that restrict the freedom of users and the exclusivity of claims, based on the principle that software is for the public good and should be available in the public domain. Further improvement in the software should not be at the cost of developers or users. Thus, under Copyleft, both the code and the freedom associated with it come together and are legally binding. Copyleft is put to use in different forms, and one such form is the GNU General Public Licence (GNU GPL).

Recent studies have questioned the notion that stronger patent protection is a must for software development. Rather, it has been observed that strong property rights can limit the provision of complex public goods like software.[6] We need to see the issue of open-source and free software as a part of the larger political issues of access to information and technologies, rather than merely as issues relating to software and IPRs.[7]

What could a biolinux model look like?

A biolinux model will also be based on the logic that farmers are both users and innovators of technology, coupled with the idea of Copyleft. A biolinux model can be applied for the development of plant varieties, agro machinery and sharing of information and knowledge. A biolinux model for a new variety developed using participatory plant breeding will be as follows. The variety will be made available with a GPL or a similar document explicitly stating rights and claims. The varieties will be in the public domain or covered under plant breeders' rights without restricting the rights of others to experiment, innovate, share the seeds or exchange seeds. There will be no restriction on using this to develop new varieties or to experiment with but it is essential that the variety derived from this should also be available without any monopolistic claims and restrictions on further development.

Implementing such an idea can be done in many ways. There can be an agency which can coordinate such activities and act as an agency for bringing together breeders and farmers and for guiding farmers on aspects related to IPRs. There could be a common pool to which farmers can contribute and from which they can ask for samples; and this common pool of germ plasm can also exchange materials with others under Material Transfer Agreements (MTAs).

There can be crop specific agencies which collect information, support innovations and provide support to breeders and farmers working in participatory plant breeding. Such agencies can also draw on the collection of germ plasm in various CGIAR centres, national gene banks and facilitate the development of new varieties. UN agencies or private foun-

dations can buy important patents to ensure that important technologies are available in the public domain and both public sector and small farmers benefit from this. There can be a clearing-house mechanism to facilitate access to information on IPRs, patents issued and technologies in the public domain, and to keep track of developments related to agricultural biotechnology.[8] What is needed is a detailed examination of the IP and access policies of various CGIAR centres, centres under ICAR, agricultural universities etc. Based upon this examination, these institutions can be requested to formulate IP policies that ensure that varieties developed by them are available to other breeders and farmers under a licence similar to Copyleft principle.

In case of open-source and free software also there is much scope for trying out such strategies. Just like farmers, users also vary and often have a very good idea about what exactly they need.

Of farmers and software users

Like farmers, software users have criteria to evaluate a software. Their requirements vary. Just as there are farmers who cultivate in small land holdings, often using their family as labour, there are users who need a suitable software without a steep learning curve, that doesn't cost the earth and which can run on systems which fit their budgets.

The market for such software may not be huge and in many cases the potential will be exploited only in the future. It is a Catch-22 situation – the user does not get the appropriate software because it is not available off the shelf, and the developer is reluctant to invest money because the market size is too small or he has no idea of the exact needs of the users. One way to break this vicious circle is development of software that can be tested first with users, evaluated by them, modified and tested again and then the final version released. But once a product is tested and found suitable by users then it is easy to refine it further, make it functional in different Operating Systems and release it. Here too the developer can certainly apply for IPRs over the product. He can price it in such a way that one version of the application is available freely, or its source is in the public domain and this version can easily meet the essential needs of an average user. The sophisticated version targeted for use in institutions, government departments and corporate sectors can be priced higher. As the source of one version is in the public domain, that will enable further development. Obviously, a condition that the source of the developed application remain in the public domain can be imposed.

To facilitate such a process it is essential that the users and developers are brought together and enter into a dialogue. Further, depending upon the complexity of the application, the development of software can be split across various groups. One possibility is to develop the core of an application, say an Indian language word processor, and test it with various users and refine it and use the core as the base to build a better software. The source code of the core should be public. Various groups should be at liberty to build upon it and use it for product development. The funding for this first and critical stage can come from the government which, as a matter of policy, will give preference to products built upon this core, or using this application.

We need applications which are small, functional and beautiful without bloatware. Such

applications can be developed by adopting methods from participatory plant breeding. For example, a version of Linux that is sturdy with an interface in an Indian language, which can be run on a Pentium PII will be very useful to many students who want to learn Linux and experiment with it. Such a version of Linux with icons and help in Indian languages will enable many to understand and appreciate Linux better. In the process the language will also be enriched. IT will never reach the masses unless IT is made available to them in their mother tongues. One way to overcome the problem is to develop software tailored to specific needs and requirements. Software like Star Office or Easy Office in Indian languages with source code in the public domain will allow for higher access and further innovation.

In Tamil there is a software called *Murasu* with the facility to send e-mail. Murasu is an editor and word processor and there is no need for any special templates. The English keyboard is sufficient and the software has facilities for conversion to other Tamil software formats also. As a result it is easy for any user to write in Tamil, even exchange e-mail in Tamil, without much difficulty. Murasu is available for free downloading and hence it is widely used. Such innovative products should be developed for other Indian language applications also. Moreover there is an urgent need for browsers and search engines which will display results in Indian languages. Such products will be possible only if there are efforts to make software available in the public domain – as free software or as open-source products.

We have a good pool of human resources and every year the colleges and various institutes of technology produce hundreds of graduates in computer science and electronics, not to speak of the MCAs, MTechs and PhDs. If at least some of them are chosen and organised as groups to develop software in Indian languages, with user participation, the next five years could see the creation of a substantial base.

Just as the thousands of varieties of rice were made available by the hard work and intelligence of countless number of farmers who, over the centuries, enhanced, conserved and created the diversity we need to develop flavours, biolinux and other models will facilitate development on innovations which are not anti-commons but, in fact, pro-commons and which facilitate further development. In such models, there is much scope for creativity to flourish, knowledge to enrich civilisation and making the best of both modern science and the knowledge and wisdom of farmers.

Finally our visions of information society and knowledge society should not be mere imitations of what Bill Gates thought. What is good for Microsoft need not necessarily be good for us. We need to think of developing institutions and innovations that work against anti-commons trends. Rather we need a society where knowledge is not available to only those who can pay for it.

NOTES

1. The literature on this is large. I have cited only a few. For more details please write to me.
2. See the article by Rangnekar.
3. See Whealy (2001); Tripp and Pal (1998); *Biotechnology and Development Monitor* No 42, Bunders et al (1996); The Crucile II Group (2001); Sperling and Loevinshon (1996) for details. Again the literature on this is vast, I have cited only a few.
4. For reasons of space I am not discussing this in detail.
5. For a discussion on Wintelism see Hart and Kim (2001).
6. See Bessen (2001) and Pfaffenberger (2001). I am not familiar with the mathematical/econometrics part of the article by Bessen.
7. On this see "Information as a global public good: A right to knowledge and communication", downloadable from http://danny.oz.au
8. For discussion on this see Michaels (1999), www.southernvoices.nl; Douthwaite et al (2000); Ayers (1998)

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Open Publishing

MATTHEW ARNISON

Open publishing means that the process of creating news is transparent to the readers. They can contribute a story and see it appear instantly in the pool of stories publicly available. Those stories are filtered as little as possible to help the readers find the stories they want. Readers can see editorial decisions being made by others. They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions. If they can think of a better way for the software to help shape editorial decisions, they can copy the software because it is free and change it and start their own site. If they want to redistribute the news, they can, preferably on an open publishing site.

The full rave

Open publishing is the same as free software. They're both (r)evolutionary responses to the privatisation of information by multinational monopolies. For software it's Microsoft. For publishing it's CNN. For both software and publishing it's AOL Time Warner.

Free software gives away programs. They come at no cost. Let's call it free beer. But this alone is not free software. Free software is also free as in free speech, not just free beer. The source code, the genetic blueprint, the internal mechanics are open for others to see (hence free software is also called open-source). So others can take it and change it and pass on their changes to other people. The product is free, and the process of production is free and transparent. If someone doesn't like it, they can take it and change it. The one thing they can't change is whether it is free. The GNU copyleft, a viral subversion of copyright laws, which guarantees freedom for a piece of code and all its mutations. The means is the end. The journey is the destination.

You might think this process wouldn't produce anything truly creative, awe-inspiring, staggering, huge, complex, simple, small, pedantic, reliable, random or enjoyable. If you thought that, you'd be drastically underestimating what humans get up to for fun. Because all of these adjectives apply to free software. Geeks like to joke about what free software needs to do next to achieve world domination.

Microsoft doesn't think this joke is very funny. Microsoft is one of the biggest corporations in the world. Microsoft spends billions of dollars to pay programmers to keep their software closed and internals secret.

Free software is overwhelmingly written by volunteers. Free software runs the Internet and Microsoft does not. The number and diversity of people using free software is accelerating. Microsoft usually responds to such threats by buying them out and assimilating them. Free software cannot be bought. Free software is not frugal with its genetic code.

Free software spreads itself like a benevolent microbe after an evolutionary leap forward.

Microsoft assumes people are stupid and holds focus groups to determine exactly in what way are they stupid. They then pay a small number of people a lot of money to engineer that stupidity into software. Sometimes this works well, because everyone is stupid sometimes. But it doesn't cater well for everyone being smart.

Free software assumes people are smart and creative and can choose for them to swim in the shallow or the deep end of the technology pool. Even the geekiest programmer might want to have their feet planted on the bottom sometimes, and the freshest beginner might make the biggest splash diving into the deep end. Free software programmers still manage to eat despite giving away their code. Software is information. So are news stories. So are opinion pieces. Maybe information wants to be free?

Under the dominant multinational global news system, news is not free. News is not open. It is very expensive. It is highly secretive. To see the news you need to pay with money or with your time spent watching ads (usually for cars) or both. To create the news you need to pay expensive public relations consultants. To write the news you need to obey corporate news values, making stories on a production line, for maximum advertising impact at minimum cost. To edit the news you need to be a global stock market newswire service or a multinational media company. To distribute the news you need to have one of 6 TV transmission towers in a city of millions.

Media corporations assume the viewers are stupid. In their eyes the total creative potential of the audience is Funniest Home Videos. Creative people do not buy more stuff, they make their own. This is a problem for media multinationals. They do not trust their audience to be creative. It might be bad for profits, bad for executive salaries.

But it's OK. The audience doesn't trust the corporate media either. This situation has led to rampant confusion and alienation of society. We are disconnected from our ecology and ourselves. Our planet is functioning as a global ecosystem more than ever before due to the global nature of human activity, yet the humans don't have any way of communicating with each other. Systemic problems go unseen and unsolved by billions. Only the issues that are important to sell ads or grease the stock exchange have reliable global news impact.

What we have is a very complex system within which the humans have recently gained enormous power but as yet they have no correspondingly powerful network of communication infrastructure to support it. We have no neural network to process information. Not so much a global village as a global megaphone.

Then the Internet was added to the global communications pool. If you can read the Internet, you can also write to it. If someone else has told a story on the Internet, you can choose to hear it. Information flows between the net and other communication systems: the phone, the TV, the radio and newspapers, forming a much more balanced web of information transfer. This is a global village where you can climb out of the traffic jam and bump into people on the electronic street and have a chat.

The Internet makes possible open publishing on a city-wide and global scale. Citizens finally have access to the same cheap and powerful two-way global communication that colonial governments and multinationals have had access to for centuries.

What is open publishing?

Like free software, with open publishing the news is distributed at no charge. There are no ads to eat up your time and corrupt the content. But that is not the most important thing.

Open publishing means that the process of creating news is transparent to the readers. They can contribute a story and see it instantly appear in the pool of stories publicly available. Those stories are filtered as little as possible to help the readers find the stories they want. Readers can see editorial decisions being made by others. They can see how to get involved and help make editorial decisions. If they can think of a better way for the software to help shape editorial decisions, they can copy the software because it is free and change it and start their own site. If they want to redistribute the news they can, preferably on an open publishing site.

The working parts of journalism are exposed. Open publishing assumes the reader is smart and creative and might want to be a writer and an editor and a distributor. Open publishing assumes that the reader can tell a crappy story from a good one. That the reader can find what they're after, and might help other readers looking for the same trail. We trust the audience and it seems that the audience trusts us in return. Open publishing is playing at the opposite end of the trust spectrum to the corporate media. We are not working to convince people that this is a good way to do things. We are providing a space in which people might decide themselves if this is a good way to do things.

The journey is the destination.

Open publishing is not new. It is an electronic reinvention of the ancient art of storytelling. Open publishing is free software. It's freedom of information, freedom for creativity.

Open publishing is overwhelmingly done by volunteers.

Who will do the investigative journalism? How will people give a perspective from overseas? What will provide a sense of overview, connectedness and common identity? Will anyone get paid for their work? What will become of motion pictures? Of musicians? Where will be the sustained efforts by hundreds of people?

I am hoping the above questions about open publishing have already been answered by free software. And partly by 'Indymedia' and thousands of other open publishing web sites. Open publishing is merely taking an existing trend and identifying it, amplifying it, and strategically applying it to weak points in the global monopolies on power and information.

The pyramids are awe inspiring. They were also built by slave labour. We've evolved as a species. We can do a lot of amazing things without brutal Egyptian slave handling techniques. We can do without new pyramids.

We are in the middle of a mass extinction of species. We need to figure out how to live in harmony with the ecosystem of this planet before the ecosystem goes into negative feedback and kills life forms by the billions. We're not going to get there by sacrificing our lives for the motor car, trading our human rights for shoes, killing our people for drug companies, hiding our creativity for the multinationals.

We can do better. Forget the pyramids. Bypass world domination.

Free software is wiring the globe. Open publishing just might help us use those wires to save the planet.

Examples of open publishing:
www.active.org.au; www.indymedia.org; www.kuro5hin.org

NOTES
- None of the above meets all the criteria above for open publishing. But they're pretty close. There'd be heaps more out there. Suggestions welcome.
- Note that while slashdot.org has many open publishing features, and was an important inspiration for open publishing, I don't think it really is open publishing. Significantly, the stories (as opposed to the comments) are taken from reader contributions, but are processed behind closed doors.
- Obviously I think we can learn a lot from the free software movement. One idea we haven't developed much yet is an open publishing copyleft, similar to the free software copyleft. The copyleft defines how the information can be shared, hijacking the copyright laws to ensure that the free information may only be re-used in a free context. This encourages growth of free spaces, autonomous zones, as the process of sharing information is spread along with the information itself. This may be a key part of what we need to define open publishing to potential collaborators and ourselves. It doesn't have to be legally watertight to be useful. That can be evolved in later. The most useful thing would be to start playing with the definition. This is partly what we are doing with our work on defining the Indymedia network. But I think we will also need to define how we share chunks of information smaller than that involved in total membership of the network. And the basic chunk of information is a story and the copyleft licence that applies to it.
- The most interesting idea to me so far in this area applied to news stories, is the idea that a story can be re-used anywhere, but only if all readers/viewers exposed to it can easily identify and reach the source of the news story. For example, by a subtitle on the picture with the web address of the Indymedia site the story came from. This means the viewer can not only verify the original version of the story, but also add creative juices to the flow. This would help ensure that wherever the story goes, there is a solid link back to the working parts, the raw process that made it possible and allows new people to contribute and mutate and evolve.
- This does involve giving up the right to demand payment for every copy made. Free software sacrifices the same thing and it turns out there that it really works. We need to try it for news stories and documentaries, and see if it works equally well.
- One key point is that you can still charge for copies of copyleft information. You just can't stop someone else from giving away the copy they bought, including access to the source materials. And the source materials have to be available for no more than the raw cost of distribution.
- And it turns out that people still do buy free software. An awful lot of it in fact. And that in addition, the reputation of free software spreads very quickly if it is good. Which benefits the software project by providing more feedback, more volunteers to help improve it, and in some cases more money.
- The analogy for a video documentary would be placing it under copyleft so that anyone could copy it as long as the copy prominently said it was copyleft and any viewer could find a link back to the source (e.g. the Indymedia web address for the city it came from). But the video maker could still charge for copies to be made. They could charge especially high rates for multinational TV networks that want copies urgently, for example. The TV network would have to pay if they wanted the footage quickly without chasing down someone else who had it and was willing to copy it fast. And regardless of how badly they edited the piece, because of the copyleft licence, they would legally have to give over some of the attention of their viewers to a web address for the source. That viewer attention is an extremely valuable resource for the

network, because it is extremely powerful. It can also be powerful for us. If they fail to give the web address, they can be sued for the value of that viewer attention. That's quite a liability.

- There are ways to play the system. I'm not sure if this would work, but it might be fun and I think it's worth a try!
- Ideals and reality: many of the things I say above are ideals. They do not match reality exactly. But they are useful as a way of thinking about different approaches.
- For example free software and open publishing are not actually free of charge, but the charge is reduced to the bare cost of distribution. This is hundreds of times less than the previous cost of purchase, which tended to include the cost of luxury cars, houses and jets for multinational executives. There is a real difference.
- Another important point with free software is that programming is a skill in very high demand, which gives programmers an unusual amount of power as a group of people at this point in history. Historically I think this has lead to great social change. A flaw in this rant might be that programmers may become far less in demand and that storytellers and journalists are already in oversupply in economic thinking.
- However, once we turn down various patterns of overconsumption, we can create a virtuous circle that gives us more leisure time, greater quality of life for both people living in other countries poorer (financially) and us. For example, getting rid of a car creates a huge amount of leisure time because you no longer need to spend all that time earning enough money to sit in traffic jams. Again, this is simplistic, there are urban planning issues to consider, but I believe a lot of it is cultural, and information exchange is part of changing our culture to be more responsive to our own needs as well as the planet's.
- In other words, with any luck and lots of hard work and fun, things might just start falling into place in time to grow and evolve as a species and a global ecosystem.
- It seems many parts of society are being privatised. Health, water, communications and community media. Being owned by the government or a non-profit is no guarantee. Sometimes there are some benefits from privatisation. But I'm not convinced it's the only way to get such benefits, and there are heavy costs. Particularly in poorer countries, where prices for basics (such as water in Bolivia) can become suddenly way out of reach.
- Free software can't be privatised.
- Especially copyleft free software.
- Corporations can use it, improve it, but they can't get an exclusive hold of it, they can't deny others from using it and changing it.
- Can open publishing be privatised? I think the right definition will be strong protection against privatisation. But the large effects of the subtle difference in licensing between copyleft and BSD show how important the definition can be. Let's play with a few and see which ones work best.
- Many ideas in here are shamelessly ripped off from other places. I really should credit those places and people. Or, if you like an idea in here, please assume I ripped it off, and do a web search and find it (actually you might have to wait a few years for search engines that can actually find ideas as opposed to phrases).

Openlaw

Openlaw is an experiment in crafting legal argument in an open forum. With your assistance, we will develop arguments, draft pleadings, and edit briefs in public, online. Non-lawyers and lawyers alike are invited to join the process by adding thoughts to the 'brainstorm' outlines, drafting and commenting on drafts in progress, and suggesting reference sources.

Building on the model of open-source software, we are working from the hypothesis that an open development process best harnesses the distributed resources of the Internet community. By using the Internet, we hope to enable the public interest to speak as loudly as the interests of corporations. Openlaw is therefore a large project built through the coordinated effort of many small (and not so small) contributions.

Openlaw continues to experiment with various collaboration tools to connect its participants.

Copyright's Commons
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/cc/
Copyright's Commons is a coalition devoted to promoting a vibrant public domain. It is a group of students, teachers, authors, filmmakers, archivists, publishers, and other members of the public who believe in widespread access to creative works. We maintain the web site as a forum for discussion of the public domain. We welcome all comments.

The importance of the public domain
Public access to literature, art, music, and film is essential to preserving and building on our cultural heritage. Many of the most important works of American culture have drawn upon the creative potential of the public domain. Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* is a classic example of a film that did not enjoy popular success until it entered the public domain. Other icons such as Snow White, Pinocchio, Santa Claus, and Uncle Sam grew out of public domain figures.

Copyright's Commons seeks to invigorate the public domain through a number of projects:
> *Promoting access to the public domain*
   The public domain grows richer as it becomes more accessible. Copyright's Commons provides links to sites that provide widespread dissemination of public domain materials.

> *Fighting against unlimited copyrights*
Last May, Copyright's Commons joined as a plaintiff in the Eldred vs. Reno lawsuit challenging the recent Copyright Term Extension Act. The statute has restricted access to thousands of works that helped define the 20th century, and that had been at last slated to enter the public domain.

> *Finding open space*
Cyberspace greatly expands the boundaries – and the creative potential – of the public domain. The 'open-code' and 'openlaw' projects are pioneer efforts to expand the public domain into cyberspace.

> *Launching a counter-copyright campaign*
By marking their works with a [cc], and a link to the Copyright's Commons web site, authors invite others to use and build upon their works. A counter-copyright does not replace a copyright, but strips it of its exclusivity.

About counter-copyrights [cc]
http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/cc/cc.html
As an alternative to the exclusivity of copyright, the counter-copyright invites others to use and build upon a creative work. By encouraging the widespread dissemination of such works, the counter-copyright campaign fosters a rich public domain.
The idea surrounding the counter-copyright campaign is fairly easy to understand. If you place the [cc] icon at the end of your work, you signal to others that you are allowing them to use, modify, edit, adapt and redistribute the work that you created.
The counter-copyright is not a replacement for an actual copyright; rather it is a signal that you as the creator are willing to share your work. The counter-copyright strips away the exclusivity that a copyright provides and allows others to use your work as a source or a foundation for their own creative ideas. The counter-copyright initiative is analogous to the idea of open-source in the software context.

[cc]

<ALT/OPTION>
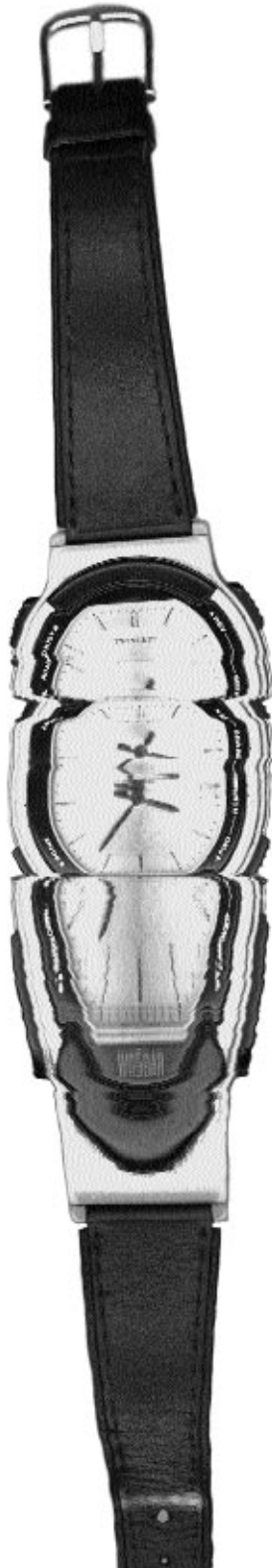
The Alt key on a computer keyboard is something that allows you to modify the parameters of any event triggered by pressing any key on the board. Like the blank in scrabble it can change the meaning of any combination of letters by altering a single value.

The universe of discourse is often a keyboard with a missing Alt key. What passes for theory often leaves practice with very few options. In the *Sarai Reader 01* we inaugurated a section called Alt/Option with texts by Bruce Sterling ("The Manifesto of January 3, 2000") and Hakim Bey ("The Net and the Web"). Through these texts, Alt/Option became an argument for a change in the way we look at, and act in, online and off-line worlds.

In a world where the lowering of trade tariffs and the exponential growth of dispersed international factories of immaterial labour go hand in hand with the electrification of border fences, the call for the re-emergence of a global/non-national subjectivity of mobile working people, stateless refugees, permanent exiles and 'illegal' migrants is an Alt key in need for urgent usage. So is a process of the 'general secession of intellectual and intelligent work' from the conditions of global war, which threatens to shade into a quiet permanence of global panic. The anxieties of not knowing when you will be made an outsider, an alien, and of not knowing when to stop processing the data streams of a world at war need to give way.

In reminding us that "we no longer have roots, we have aerials" and that the war of panic can undermine its own reality, Mckenzie Wark, and Franco Berardi Bifo give us two options in the texts that follow, of re-inserting the Alt key in the keyboard of discourse.

SHUDDHABRATA SENGUPTA

Panic, War & Semio-Kapital

FRANCO BERARDI BIFO

Globalisation stands reframed in the dark light of the global war. This means we need to reconceptualise the change that is taking place in the social, economic and anthropological form of globalisation. During the past two centuries, global control was the general techno-utopia of capitalist society and modern culture. Now, the time of global control is over. We are completely out of this framework today. The new governing framework of capitalism is global panic. If we want to understand what panic means we have to talk about the 'attention economy' and about 'digital labour'. This is where the source of contemporary panic is, in the organisation of time in the digital sphere, in the relationship between cyberspace and cybertime.

What is panic? We are told that psychiatrists have recently discovered and named a new kind of disorder – they call it "Panic Syndrome". It seems that a widespread form of panic, of "Panic Syndrome", is something quite recent in the psychological self-perception of human beings. But what does panic mean?

Once, 'panic' used to be a nice word, and this is the sense in which the Swiss-American psychoanalyst James Hillman remembers it in his book on Pan. Pan used to be the god of nature, the god of totality. In Greek mythology Pan was the symbol of the relationship between man and nature.

Nature is the overwhelming flow of reality, things and information that we are surrounded by. Modern culture is based on the idea of human domination, of the domestication of nature. So the original panic feeling, which was something good for the ancient world, is becoming increasingly terrifying and destructive. Today, panic has become a form of psychopathology. We can speak of panic when we see a conscious organism (individual or social) being overwhelmed by the speed of processes he/she/it is involved in, and has no time to process the information input. In these cases the organism, all of a sudden, is no more able to process the sheer amount of information coming into its cognitive field, or even that which is being generated by the organism itself.

Technological transformations have displaced the focus of the capitalist form of the organisation of labour from the sphere of the production of material goods towards the Info-sphere, the sphere of semiological goods. With this, Semio-Kapital becomes the general form of the economy. The accelerated creation of surplus value depends on the acceleration of the Info-sphere. The digitalisation of the Info-sphere opens the road to this kind of

acceleration. Signs are produced and circulated at a growing speed but the human termi-nal of the system (the embodied mind) is put under growing pressure, and finally it cracks under pressure. I think that the current economic crisis has something to do with this imbal-ance in the field of semio-production and in the field of semio-demand. This imbalance in the relationship between the supply of semiotic goods and the socially available time of atten-tion is the core of the economic crisis as well as the core of the intellectual and the politi-cal crises that we are living through now.

We can describe this situation in terms of the relationship between cyberspace and cybertime. Cyberspace is the infinite productivity of collective intelligence in a networked dimension. The potency of the general intellect is enormously enhanced when a huge num-ber of points enter into connections with each other thanks to the telematic network. Consequently, info-production is able to create an infinite supply of mental and intellectual goods. But while cyberspace is conceptually infinite, cybertime is not infinite at all. I call cybertime the ability of the conscious organism to actually process (cyberspatial) informa-tion. This ability cannot be indefinitely expanded, because it has limits that are physical, emotional, affective. The relationship between infinite expansion of cyberspace and limited capability of processing of cybertime becomes, in my opinion, the most important problem in the present capitalist crisis.

During the last year we have been witness to a sort of telecom-crash. Telecom cor-porations have invested a huge amount of money in order to buy the frequencies of the UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System). Huge amounts of money have also been invested in the creation of technical infrastructures like the fibre-optic cable network. But all this is not actually in use. According to the *Financial Times* (6 September 2001, "Information Glut"), only 2.5% of the existing network of fibre-optic cable is being utilised. The rest is dark fibre. In the same issue of the *Financial Times* we learn that only 3% of the capability of the telephone system all over the world is actually used.

So, what can we make of this?

We could remember that Karl Marx had once expressed the concept of an 'overpro-duction crisis'. You know what this means. You have an overproduction crisis when the machinery and the labour of workers produce an amount of goods that the market cannot absorb. During the history of the industrial system the overproduction crisis was recurrent, and capitalism was pushed to destroy goods, destroy productive capacity, and also destroy human lives, in order to overcome this kind of economic crises.

What is going to happen now? Should we see a relationship between this big imbalance and the war that is raging and obscuring the horizon of the world?

Let's go back to the concept of panic.

Semio-Kapital is in a crisis of overproduction, but the form of this crisis is not only eco-nomic, but also psychopathological. Semio-Kapital, in fact, is not about the production of material goods, but about the production of psychic stimulation. The mental environment is saturated by signs that create a sort of continuous excitation, a permanent electrocution, which leads the individual mind as well as the collective mind to a state of collapse.

The problem of panic is generally connected with the management of time. But we can also see a spatial side to panic. During the past centuries, the building of the modern urban

environment used to be dependent on the rationalist plan of the political city. The economic dictatorship of the last few decades has accelerated the urban expansion. The interaction between cyberspatial sprawl and urban physical environment has destroyed the rationalist organisation of the space.

In the intersection of information and urban space we see the proliferation of a chaotic sprawl following no rule, no plan, dictated by the sole logic of economic interest. Urban panic is caused by the perception of this sprawl and this proliferation of metropolitan experience. In modern times, at least since the Italian Renaissance, urban space used to be built on the image of *kosmos* (*kosmos* is 'order' in Greek). Now, we are experiencing a proliferation of spatial *lignes de fuite* (lines of flight), and the social organism feels lost in space, unable to process the overwhelmingly complex experience of metropolitan chaos.

The metropolis is a surfeit of complexity in the territorial domain. The proliferation of lines of communication has created a new kind of chaotic perception. In their book A*ttention Economy*, Davenport and Bleick say that the central problem of the cognitive worker, and generally of people who are living in hyper-saturated informational environments, is this: we have no more time for attention, we are no more able to understand and process information input because our time is saturated by a flow of hyper-information.

We don't have time for attention in the workplace. We are forced to process far too large amounts of information and our body-mind is completely taken by this. And further, we have no time for affection, for communication, for erotic relationships. We have no more time for that spatial kind of attention that means attention to the body – to our body, to the the body of the other. So, more and more, we feel that we have run out of time, that we must accelerate. And we feel simultaneously that acceleration leads to a loss of life, of pleasure and of understanding.

This collapse in the relationship between cyberspace and cybertime may also be seen as the special feature of the current political situation. The world is rushing into a global war whose reasons are not clear, whose limits are not known. Some are speaking of a long lasting war, possibly an infinite war.

Nonsense? Yes, Nonsense. But at the same time, this nonsensical war is the most alarming symptom of the panic syndrome.

Collin Powell, some days after 9/11, spoke about the rumours that the intelligence services had received some information about bombings and hijackings of airplanes before September 11th.

"Yes, it's true", he said, "Yes, it's true, we have received information about something like this, we have received information about bombings and so on. But we always receive lots of information we are not able to process or even to see. We had too much of it, this is the problem. We have too much of information".

This is precisely the effect of info-saturation, which is the consequence of the unbounded expansion of cyberspace. So, the panic I spoke of is becoming social panic, and we are entering a phase which seems to me the phase of panic war.

On one hand, war is a way by which Capital deals with the economic problems of over-production. But thanks to the war, technological production attains a new dimension, and capital can be invested in weapons and tools for security, security and even more security.

On the other hand war is made inevitable by the mental confusion of the ruling class. They do not understand what is happening because the reality has become too complex and too aggressive. So they react in a primary way. The world's ruling class is overwhelmed by the very complexity of the world they have built for themselves. They are no more able to understand, and to rule in a rational way.

So I see two sides to the war. The first is the classical reaction of the capitalist system to the economic crisis of overproduction. "Capitalism brings war like the cloud brings the tempest", said an old guy called Lenin. Overproduction creates the need for a new kind of use of all these capabilities of production, of the intellectual potencies and the technological infrastructure that lie unused. The militarisation of the general intellect is the main danger we are facing nowadays, the militarisation of the intellectual capacity that has been created by the development of collective intelligence, and supported by the technicalities of the Net.

At the same time, I see another aspect to the panic war. Here I mean the relationship between complexity, rather the over-complexity, of the present world and the pretension of control – i.e. the claim that reality can be reduced to the rules of capitalist economic principles, and the further pretence that a global imperial government can administer a complex world which is escaping both political rule and economic control.

In other words, the relationship between 'economic' regulations and infinite production, or productivity, of networked intelligence – this is the problem.

Deleuze and Guattari talk about chaos in *Qu'est-ce que c'est la philosophie*, saying that chaos occurs when the world goes too fast for your brain. This is chaos. So, the problem is in the relationship between the brain and the world, between cybertime and cyberspace.

But the problem, first of all politically, is in the attempt to govern or rule this relationship. If we pretend to be able, like capitalism wants us to do, to control the infinite productivity of networked intelligence, we enter panic world, in panic mode.

But you know, I have good news for all of us. The liberal dictatorship on the one hand, and its twin, religious fundamentalism, de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation, are launching a suicidal war. It seems that the father of Osama bin Laden and the father of the president George Bush (Jr.) are old friends. So goes the story. This is the end. This is the end of the neo-liberal dictatorship. You know, when a giant is too strong to be beaten by someone, there is only one way to beat the giant: to pit the strength of the giant against the giant himself. This is what they are doing (to themselves). Hallelujah!

And now we have the problem of what needs to be done. It's a political problem that we are facing, and it's a problem of self-representation of mental work, of general intellect.

What is to be done? I would say that we should transform the global war into a process of general secession of intellectual, of intelligent work.

First of all, we have to launch the global movement that began from Seattle, from Genoa, onto a new phase. We have to direct this movement against the militarisation of mental work.

Secondly, we have to destroy the rule of the general connection between different affective and social strata of intellectual work. We have to break the rule and the war. This war, the panic war, is creating the conditions for a successful move in this direction.

Globalisation From Below
Migration, sovereignty, communication

MCKENZIE WARK

It's the customary law of the sea: if a vessel is in distress, the nearest ship comes to the rescue. Such a pity it doesn't work that way on land. On 26 August 2001, the Norwegian container ship the *MV Tampa*, on its way from Perth to Singapore, answered the call of a sinking ship, and rescued 433 people. The nearest port was Merak, in Indonesia, but the people the *Tampa* saved from the water did not want to go there. They were mostly Afghan refugees. They wanted to go to Australia. The captain, Arne Rinnen, sized up his desperate guests and turned the boat around.

When the Australian government heard of this, the Prime Minister, John Howard, took a personal interest in the case, but not out of any great sense of compassion. He was determined not to let the *Tampa* into Australian waters. If he did, these asylum seekers would have rights. They could claim refugee status.

Howard was facing a difficult election. His conservative coalition was unpopular. Ordinary working people were feeling the pressure of his dry economic policies. But Howard saw his chance. Skilled juggler of political footballs that he is, he exploited it. He made the *Tampa* a front-page story by refusing to let the ship in. He cast himself as a friend of the 'battler', the mythical Australian everyman, resisting the swelling tide of 'refos' supposedly heading for Australian shores. And it worked. By refusing natural justice to 433 seasick and homeless people from the other side of the world, he scraped home in the 2001 Australian federal election.

The *Tampa* incident became a *cause célèbre* for Australia's public intellectuals, and many ordinary people of left or liberal persuasion, or of just a plain compassionate nature, expressed their outrage at Howard's antics. But while the feelings were genuine and the numerous actions, legal, political and symbolic taken on the asylum seekers' behalf sincere, there was not a lot of analysis of what the events might suggest. Many Australians pride themselves on their multiculturalism, and in the wake of the *Tampa* vigorously asserted and defended a vision of Australia as what its official policies still proclaim it to be: a multicultural state.

But defending a plural notion of Australia that its Prime Minister had abandoned, necessary as such a tactic may be, doesn't really think through the contradictions of such a position. The problem is not just that an 'opportunist' Prime Minister exploited insecurities in the Australian electorate, as Guy Rundle and others have argued. While Rundle is quite right to hold Australian Prime Minister John Howard's behaviour up to a critical light, there is a much

deeper problem, the problem that the boat person, the asylum seeker, the refugee, poses to the very concept of national sovereignty.

And not just Australian sovereignty, although the historical absurdity of this European state that sits at the bottom of the world may be the reason that this crisis is particularly acutely felt there. As Anthony Burke argues in his book *In Fear of Security*, the construction of Australian statehood and nationhood is inextricably linked to the way that what is outside its borders is conceived.

The construction of a national history is also the construction of a space of internal consistency, marked off from an outside. This outside then appears as that which threatens internal consistency. We become the opposite of what we oppose.

We have an excellent emblem of the workings of power within the state in Michel Foucault's *Panopticon*. But as Giorgio Agamben has recently pointed out, this internalised power of discipline now appears quite secondary to an externalising power of security. To which one can only add: perhaps it always was. One of Bentham's pamphlets was called *The Panopticon or New South Wales*. As every Australian knows, British power took the latter route – transportation – not the former, the Panopticon.

A much more profound understanding of the modern power of security, or what I would call vectoral power, may be found in Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific*, where Smith brilliantly exposes the way in which the British warship traversed and mapped the open space of the globe. Perhaps Australian anxiety about 'boat people' stems from the nagging memory of the fact that most of us are descendents of boat people. For most of us, our ancestors followed the vectoral line opened up by naval power.

It's a paradox of security that the mapping and navigating of the world not only secures an imperial state's place in it, but sets in motion flows of information, people, goods and weapons that create still new spaces, which in turn undermine security and require still more vectoral power. Thus, with the technologies of vectoral power, from the 18th century warship to the 21st century Raptor unmanned surveillance aircraft, experience accelerated development.

Sovereignty, or the autonomy of a centre of power, rests both on security, the externalising power, and discipline, the internalising power. But these are times in which disciplinary regimes are breaking down, not least because of the effectiveness of vectoral technologies in mapping routes of movement and opening up territories. The vectoral techniques that have their roots in the power of security are breaking away from the security function, and becoming an autonomous power. The same vectoral technologies that secure lines of movement for imperial powers also undermine the integrity of their relations of dominance in the world, setting loose unmanageable flows and demands for flows.

I know that the free flows often characterised as 'neo-liberalism' are a taboo subject: denounce it first, ask questions later. But I tell you, we haven't seen anything yet. The world will become much more vectoral if it is to become any more just. The boat people are the symptom of an aporia in left-liberal thinking on vectoral power.

Illegal migration is globalisation from below. If the 'overdeveloped' world refuses to trade with the underdeveloped world on fair terms, to forgive debt, to extend credit, to lift trade barriers against food and basic manufactured goods, then there can only be

an increase in the flow of people seeking to get inside the barriers the overdeveloped world erects to protect its interests. While sovereignty equals self-interest, there can be no security.

The 433 people rescued by the *Tampa*, their very presence in this stateless state, was testament to the absence of effective international justice. Trade between states, taking place as it is in the absence of justice, can only produce injustice, which in turn produces flows of people who come to exist outside the space of justice. The most telling human critique of globalisation is not the black-clad protesters in Seattle or Genoa, it is the still, silent bodies of the illegals, in ships, trucks or car boots, passing through the borders. The placeless proletariat. The involuntary border-hackers.

Those 433 people, which the media for the most part rendered nameless, are a critique of the limits of sovereignty. Asylum seekers are in the paradoxical position of being a standing critique of the failings of a regime of sovereignty, and at the same time totally dependent on finding a state that will accept their claims to refugee status.

Some asylum seekers demand access to CNN and the Internet. It is the vectoral flow of information around the world, along ever proliferating vectors, that creates the possibility of seeking this leave of absence from the space of the nation and the state. The overdeveloped world feels free to advertise its charms – and yet withholds access to the trade in the very goods it advertises through its domination of the trade in images.

The Australian state takes a hard line against asylum seekers so as not to encourage others to test their borders. But it is the rule of the border in general that the refugee challenges. Every state seeks to secure itself at the expense of other states. While the Australian government deserves special condemnation for its callous disregard for suffering, it is not the only state that stands accused by refugees of a foreclosure of justice. It is the justice of national sovereignty in the abstract that the body of the asylum seeker refutes in particular. The asylum seeker is a force in revolt against the privileges sovereignty grants us.

Many who put themselves in the way of globalisation – the so-called anti-globalisation movement – do so in the name of some local and particular demand. These demands are not always just. Why should French farmers have more rights to grow food for the French than Brazilian farmers? Why should American steel workers have more rights to make steel for Americans than Polish steel workers? But that is what the return to protectionism that many anti-globalisation protesters demand would amount to. A demand for more local and particular privileges.

The asylum seeker who is outside the state, rather than the local interest inside the state, is the body that calls upon the absence of a global justice, who calls for it. Those who seek refuge, who are rarely accorded a voice, are nevertheless the bodies that confront the injustice of the world with a total critique of it. They give up their particular claim to sovereignty and cast themselves on the waters. Only when the world is its own refuge will their limitless demand be met.

That may be a utopian demand, but the possibility of what Hardt and Negri call 'global constitutionalism' are now firmly on the horizon. It is evolving out of particular interests. Clearly, a global regime of trade is far more strongly developed than a global regime of jus-

tice. Global trade without global justice ends up being unfair trade, trade that tries to strengthen the sovereignty of interests within some states at the expense of others. Global justice without global trade merely secures the interests of the overdeveloped world against the interests of the rest. However, these limitations to global constitutionalism are precisely the reasons to push further, to demand a global justice adequate to the challenge posed to it by the figure of the asylum seeker.

In his famous work on postmodernism, Jameson calls it an "effacement of the frontier". It was the frontier between high and low culture that he was referring to in that context. But as is clear from his writings, this is not the only frontier that disappears in the shift from a modern to a postmodern sensibility. The frontier between inside and outside, on which sovereignty is founded, is also the fault-line where it founders.

While theory works out the end game of modernist fables of inside and outside, the boundary has already imploded. It's simply not helpful to call it hybridity, when there's no way of assigning origins to any of the elements in cultural formations in the first place. We no longer have roots, we have aerials. It's not helpful to propose extension to the logic of the Panopticon, when it is not the disciplinary apparatus of internalising an external potential for observation that is the dominant form of power. We no longer have origins, we have terminals.

Vectoral power, which is forever exceeding the limits of the inside/outside boundary, has been the dominant form of sovereign power from Botany Bay to Afghanistan. What those in the old world think of as modern power, disciplinary power, was always a subsidiary institution built on the back of the expansive and expanding vectoral power, of which we in the antipodes are the direct product.

As September 11th makes chillingly clear, vectoral power has broken away from its origins in regimes of security. Even counter-powers to an emerging regime of global constitutionalism take a vectoral form. Even totalising negativity has become globalised. This is the great paradox of Osama Bin Laden – how much his anti-Western rhetoric appears to mimic very Western forms of anti-modern reaction, but couple it with vectoral technology.

So what is the progressive position in all this? These are times when two hypocritical positions face off against each other. The right wants to open the borders to flows of goods, but close them to flows of people; the left wants to open the borders to flows of people, but close them to flows of goods. Both positions rest on attempts to secure an inside against an outside, and both partake of curious new rhetorics to achieve it.

But at the end of the day, neither position is coherent or consistent. It makes no difference whether one discriminates against the passage of the body of another across one's borders, or the passage of the efforts of his or her labour. Both are discriminations, and both are, *prima facie*, unjust. Thus the argument between right and left in Australia, as elsewhere, comes down to an argument over the mode of discrimination that secures interiority and sovereignty. Neither is a progressive position. The debate is further muddled by the existence of a clearly more reactionary position, one that would secure the borders and assert a radically secured interiority against flows of both goods and bodies. By pointing to a more reactionary position, both the right and left obscure their compromises.

One can map these three positions as a diagram: two are progressive on one count,

and reactionary on the other; one is reactionary on both counts. But where is the position that would count as progressive on both counts? That is in favour of a just and open globalisation, of flows of people and flows of the products of their labour?

Slavoj Zizek has called for the building of "transnational political movements and institutions strong enough to constrain seriously the unlimited rule of capital and to render visible and politically relevant the fact that local fundamentalist resistances to the New World Order, from Milosevic to Le Pen and the extreme right in Eruope, are part of it". But this doesn't go far enough in addressing the critique that the asylum seeker poses to national sovereignty – the total critique of a privileging of the insider over the outsider – a privileging of which the transnational anti-globalisation movement is not entirely innocent.

As Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze say: "perhaps the flows are not yet de-territorialised enough, not decoded enough". Perhaps one needs "to go further". Globalisation as it exists may offend the reactionary left as much as the reactionary right, but "the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet".

What if we have not thought far enough down the road to what Deleuze and Guattari call de-territorialisation? This is the call to which I would like to answer, and that I think the body of the asylum seeker calls us. Where can the asylum seeker actually find asylum? She or he cannot find it where they seek it. It is surely better to be admitted to the country than to languish in detention, but there is no guarantee of security even if one gets inside the border. In the US, Arabs, even Sikhs, have been assaulted, even killed, over the panicky need to police the interior of sovereignty.

It is right and necessary to draw attention to the racist dimension in these attacks. But race, as left-liberals understand it, is no longer an adequate category for understanding injustice, either within the space of sovereignty, or without. The deployment of race is changing. What the asylum seeker confronts everywhere is what Balibar calls "racism without race". The global constitution as it stands recognises states as sovereign, but no longer associates the state with a nation as a one to one relationship.

One of the perverse developments in cultural practice around the world is the rarity with which racism is now explicitly argued in terms of race. Even racists have understood and adopted the social constructionist critique of the essentialism of race. Now almost everyone is agreed that differences are socially and culturally constructed – even racists. The difference now is between those who see differences as something that can coexist, and those who don't. Race is not the problem; sovereignty is the problem. Sovereignty purged of its racist baggage, sovereignty with a culturalist, even multicultural rhetoric, is still an obstacle to justice.

As Michel Feher argues, a striking characteristic of the (non) responses to the Bosnian and Rwandan crises on the part of a would-be system of global justice is the extent to which policies of inaction were justified in culturalist terms.

Due to the supposedly intractable historical roots of cultural differences in the Balkans, there's nothing one can do but sit on one's hands. One simply takes at face value the claims and counter claims of competing cultural groups, one acts as a 'peacekeeper' for a non-existent peace, and by default lends support to the more aggressive party, by virtue of treating the parties as equal – but different.

The monstrous policies of NATO powers in the Balkans faced only a very incoherent and inconsistent critique from the left. On the one hand, when they failed to act, the Western powers would be accused of neglecting genocide. On the other hand, when they did act, they were accused of acting like imperialists. There were exceptions, but all too often, what one got was hardly a consistent critique of modern sovereignty.

The world won't wait for politics any more than it will wait for theory. Whether one backs intervention – let's say, in Afghanistan – or opposes it, either way, the "effacement of the frontier" proceeds apace. Either there are interventions in oppressive states, thus challenging their sovereignty; or there are flows of asylum seekers, thus challenging ours.

Either way, social forces are emerging that push against the limits of sovereignty. Two kinds of social forces are abstracting themselves from local and contingent ties, and may have an interest in a new global justice. One does not do so entirely by choice. The asylum seeker runs out of options, and while he or she chooses flight, it is hardly against the background of a wealth of choice. Nevertheless, the asylum seeker is a social force that challenges the form of the nation state. The asylum seeker is an objective challenge to sovereignty, a vectoral challenge. Nothing depends on the asylum seeker's identity, only on his or her disposition.

There is another social force that breaks out of the bounds of national sovereignty, but unlike Negri and Hardt I don't see it as a resurgent mobilisation of the labouring and multiple masses. Marxists always say that the concept of class will make a comeback – and for once I agree. But in much of the 'overdeveloped' world, the labour movement cut a deal with capital within a protected national market. While the envelope of the nation appeared relatively secure, people worried instead about the envelopes of communal or self-identity. The cultural politics of racism without race emerges out of the shelter of a historic compromise between labour and capital, which lasted from the '40s to the '70s.

With the class compromise secured, other differences became points of antagonism. But in the '80s and '90s, class is back on the agenda, partly because of the success capital has enjoyed in breaking out of its national compacts, and decamping to the newly industrialising world. But also in part because of new developments, as yet barely understood.

Deleuze and Guattari once argued that "it is capitalism that is at the end of history, it is capitalism that results from a long history of contingencies and accidents, and that brings on this end".

But there is a tension in their historical thinking between the notion of capital as the end of history, and the possibility of the world becoming still more abstract. I would argue that the abstraction of the world is a process without end, but one that has taken a significant leap beyond the abstraction of capital already. First land, then moveable property, then information has formed the basis of regimes of commodity production and accumulation. Let's not forget that in much of the underdeveloped world, accumulation based on land as property is still going on. Its conflict with the overdeveloped world accounts for two of the great global struggles of our time. Agricultural accumulation seeks to open the markets of the overdeveloped world, against the stubborn resistance of the state-protected farmers in Europe, America and Japan.

The other great movement for land based accumulation is resource based. Here the

overdeveloped world acts to secure its interests at the expense of the sovereignty of the underdeveloped world. One great exception is the OPEC cartel, which succeeded in securing a rent from a partial resource monopoly, but at the expense of the arrested development of the commodity economy of the oil-dependent states.

Accumulation based on capital as property is, curiously, migrating out of the overdeveloped world, into the newly developed world. If you buy a car or a computer, chances are a lot of it was made in Korea or Taiwan. If you buy sneakers or a sweater, chances are it was made in Indonesia or China. The brand name might say Honda or Nike or Sony or Apple, but increasingly the wealth of these corporations is invested in the intellectual property it commands – its trademarks, patents and copyrights – not in the making of things, which is of so little strategic importance to these companies that it can be contracted out elsewhere.

So what does the accumulation of wealth in the overdeveloped world increasingly rest on? Not land or capital as property, but information. And not just on intellectual property, but also on the capacity to realise its value, in other words on communication vectors, on a vectoral power breaking free from regimes of security. But media vectors have gone beyond troubling the boundaries of self and community, and now trouble national boundaries just as much. The proliferation of ever faster, cheaper, more flexible media vectors with a more and more global reach makes possible the colonisation of more extensive spaces by commodity relations. The national space, and the national compromise between labour and capital come undone. So too does the international space, as a space governed by rival national sovereignties.

This shifts the anxiety toward one of two options. Either towards a resurgent nationalism, or towards a resurgent class awareness. Either one fends off one's anxiety about the permeable borders of the nation, community, and self by hardening the national boundary against the other. Or one follows the vectoral line that traverses self, community and nation and discovers the class interest that potentially forms along it. One either demands more boundary, or one starts to question who owns and controls the vectors that both traverse and incite the boundary.

This is the problem that bedevils the 'anti-globalisation' movement which, even on the left, falls into anxiety about borders rather than seeking a New Deal for the vectoralisation of space, one that abandons the dialectic of inside and outside and takes up instead an embracing of the vector. An open world with plural forms of ownership, not just private ownership, in which justice and well-being has a place alongside profit and 'productivity'.

But we need a new concept of class to grasp vectoralisation. Marxists still think only of the force of production, steel and concrete, as being material. The forces of communication – media vectors – are also material. And like the forces of production, they and their products can be turned into property – intellectual property. If commodification starts with the enclosure of land, continues with the accumulation of capital goods as private property, its next phase grows out of intellectual property.

The commodification of information, which begins to accelerate with the invention of the telegraph, has two dimensions, a technical and a legal one, both form the basis of a new regime of accumulation, and, arguably, a new kind of ruling class. No longer a pas-

toralist ruling class, extracting rent from landed property, no longer a capitalist class, extracting profits from fungible things as property, but what I would call a vectoralist class, whose accumulation of wealth is based on ownership and control of information.

If the asylum seekers are globalisation from below, then the vectoral class is most definitely globalisation from above. With its rise to power within the ruling block, the ruling block as a whole frees itself in an unprecedented way from all local and contingent constraints. The vectoral ruling interest provides the means for other branches of the ruling class to extract themselves from national compacts with subordinate classes. It is not quite, as Ghassan Hage says, that capital becomes transcendental; rather it is that a vectoral class-power transcends the limits of capital, abstracting commodification still further.

Pop open the back of your television and you will find components from Ireland, Nigeria, Indonesia or Peru. Pop open a television of the same make made a year later, and the same components may be from Hungary and China. The sourcing of components may be based on nothing more than fluctuating exchange rates, or slight variations in the spot markets for capacitors. Either way, it's the technologies and services of the vectoral class that create the imaginary 'global' space within which these components are traded.

However, both primary and secondary producers in the peripheral world confront the overdeveloped world of Europe-USA-Japan which secure their internal class compromises at the expense of peripheral states. Peripheral states also confront a new global ruling class, which uses its monopoly over intellectual property as a form of imperial leverage. And the peripheral world also confronts what one might call the 'undevelopable' world – those states now left out of all pretence of incorporation in a vectoral space of trade and security.

Part of the challenge for the left-liberal position is to put the illegals in the context of these three linked developments, to prevent the collapse of the issues of globalisation into the demand for a new disciplinary response for the illegals, who are just an element of this larger pattern of development. Punishing the bodies who are globalisation from below does nothing to address the inequities posed by globalisation from above. But ultimately, the refuge seeker poses just as much of a challenge to left-liberal discourses that have not thought through their investments in sovereignty.

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This Year/This City

[Internal] This Year, This City
From: Shuddhabrata Sengupta <shuddha@sarai.net>
To: internal@sarai.net

> If you think about it, a year is the 1,811 casualties that entered the signboard of traffic related mortality statistics at the ITO crossing on the 31st of December 2001.

> A year is the now forgotten summer of the Monkey Man. When East Delhi stayed awake to battle a simian cyborg adversary that rose from the city's unconscious.

> A year is the drive to displace small industrial units, to make for a cleaner city that put hundreds of thousands of jobs on the line.

> A year is the record number of slum demolitions that might have surpassed even the demolitions of the emergency in 1975.

> A year is the assassination of Phoolan Devi at her doorstep as she came home for lunch from the Parliament.

> A year is the slowly advancing bridge of the Metro and the dug up roads – with signs advertising a "Dream Coming True".

> A year is the mushrooming of coffee bars.

> A year is the shootout outside the Parliament on the 13th of December

> A year is the gradual drawing up of a net of surveillance in the city, in the wake of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance and the transplantation of the Maharashtra Combat of Organised Crime Act on to Delhi.

> A year is the killing of a man in a midnight raid in Okhla, in the wake of the attack on the Red Fort on the evidence that he frequented cyber cafés too often.

> A year is the feeling, ever since September 11, and then December 13, that New Delhi begins where New York ends.

> A year is the drive by the Delhi police to collect information about tenants and outsiders.

> A year is a year of identification of Afghan refugees and Bangladeshi immigrants.

> A year is a year of overnight queues of Auto *Rickshas* for CNG outside petrol pumps.

> A year is a year of looking at multiplexes mushroom and cinema halls crumble.

> A year is a year of the enactment of a law that prohibits posters, hand-bills, banners and graffiti on the walls of public buildings, flyovers and on electric poles in Delhi

> A year is a year of Internet surfing rates reaching the all time low of Rs. 10 per half-hour.

> A year is the growth in the number of installations of Linux machines in people's homes.

> A year is the time we have spent talking to people at street corners, in cinema halls, to the young people in the LNJP *basti*, to ourselves.

> A year is a year of talking about and listening to people and the tele-vision talk about war.

> A year is all this, and a short time in the life of a city that has been around for more than a thousand years.

From: Supreet Sethi <supreet@sarai.net>

One of the events that marked the last year is Internet connectivity by local cable *wallas*. These are a bunch of TV cable providers joining hands with some ISPs to provide Internet connectivity in neighbour-hoods. Most of these providers are using Ethernet network which has a potential bandwidth of 10 Mbps (roughly 20 times the ordinary 56 kbps of connection). These Ethernet based infrastructures have a potential which hasn't been exploited yet. The most interesting part of this network is that a content once saved in a certain machine in this network can be retrieved at a very high speed. An example could be video content that would be downloaded once and then others could access that movie on demand. This way people can share the pool bandwidth for efficiency. This could also lead to formation of a social network on the basis of need, i.e. an efficient use of Internet access. People could actually start using various open-source tools for genera-tion, storage and retrieval of content. This would provide for viewing pleasure of users and it could, potentially, also lead to the generation of much more interesting content.

Ethernet based infrastructures have a potential which hasn't been exploited yet

From: Joy Chatterjee <joy@sarai.net>

Last year on a winter night after half an hour of net surfing I was walk-ing in the streets in front of my house. Two teenagers were walking in front of me. Each of them was trying to describe the size of their home.
  "How big is your room, is it smaller than my *paan* shop?"
  "No, it is much smaller, and how big is yours? Is it bigger than my kitchen?"
  "It is smaller than your toilet". And they continued.
  I said to myself, yes, the world is truly becoming smaller and smaller.

yes, the world is truly becoming smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller

From: Ranita Chatterjee <ranita@sarai.net>

I guess I'd finally figured out last year (like most *Dilliwallas* do), that you *cannot* live with a daily fear of violence... there's got to be a point when you get comfortable with it and go about your lives.

This comfortable existence was shattered after 12/13, not by what actually happened, but by my law-fearing landlord who suddenly demanded a fresh account of my 'activities' and my background. His reasoning was simple – the Delhi Police demanded that all tenants had to be verified!

Totally offended, I tried to explain that he'd known me, and of my 'activities', for the past one and a half years that I had been renting his premises. These protestations went completely unheard.

It 's been more that a decade since I've made Delhi my home. But to be suddenly told that I was, after all, an outsider – that I needed to prove that I was a legal domicile – came as a rude shock.

I've got the papers to justify my presence within the city – but I wonder why I have to go through it all only to be able to go home.

> my law-fearing landlord who suddenly
> demanded a fresh account of my 'activities'
> and my background

From: Tripta Chandola <tripta@sarai.net>

I was driving back after a late night show. The drive from Chanakya was enveloped in silence. Just after crossing the Nehru Place flyover my senses were jolted by flaring lights from the opposite direction.

"Delhi people! I tell you, have to drive on high beam".

As we approached the light, I knew something was wrong. Got the feeling. Could not articulate it. Could not avoid it either.

There, being saluted by the headlights of a Police Enfield motor-cycle and guarded by roadside bricks on the deserted road, lay a man not yet dead but dead enough.

Next morning while driving to work, the ISBT crossing greeted me with

...Died Yesterday

...Since Jan 1 2001

You could be a figure hung on the board. You could be someone lying on the road. Always a part of the city but never enough to claim your right.

It is the shadow cast over the city which defines its dynamics. Between the do's and the don'ts. Between the limits and the limitations. Between the haves and have-nots. Between the real and the reality. Between the real and the rational. Welcome to the city!

You could be a figure hung on the board. You could be someone lying on the road

From: Pankaj Kaushal <pankaj@sarai.net>

10 o'clock in the morning on a long and lonesome highway east of Dhaula Kuan (bless Bob Segar). A young guy (me) boards an almost empty bus. And the bus is ten minutes earlier than it should be. He wonders why?

He has forgotten that it is the 26th of January. The city is on Red Alert for Republic Day. And he is just a citizen in a Sovereign Democratic Republic with a Constitution to guide the Republic's destiny.

The empty, early bus passes the empty Dhaula Kuan roundabout. He gets off to switch routes, and just then a cop asks him *"Yahan kya kar rehe ho?"* ("What are you doing here?").

The cop is suspicious. He wants to know what the boy is doing out at 10:20 in the morning on a major city roundabout when he should be celebrating Republic Day at home, in front of the TV, like everybody else.

The empty city at standstill for the Republic on TV. Ironic.

The empty city at standstill for the Republic on TV

From: Jeebesh Bagchi <jeebesh@sarai.net>

Delhi in the last few months has become a place where every time you seek to represent it, you encounter men in uniform asking for credentials. Simple polite questions: Why are you shooting? Where are you from? What's your car number? Do you have any authorisation?

Sometimes these questions lead to conversations.

On 31st December we thought we would shoot the plaque at ITO that lists accident numbers. It was late afternoon. A tall and distinguished policeman started, expectedly, with a question. Over the next

half-hour I learnt that the displayed numbers are primarily about 'spot deaths' (later deaths are not 'accounted'), the winter fog kills more people on the train lines than on roads (light and sound become asynchronous in the fog), all big car owners seem to be related to the higher police bureaucracy, politeness is a sign of inadequate authority, and the colour difference that the taking off of a pollution mask produces on one's face makes one look like a monkey!

Why are you shooting? Where are you from? What's your car number? Do you have any authorisation?

From: Monica Narula <monica@sarai.net>

She is an attractive 28-year-old, who has already been in jail for 5 years, but her case is nowhere near closure. She does not know yet if she will be out soon, or in for life (which by law is incarceration for 20 years, almost always commuted to 14). She is jailed as an accomplice to murder. The story is long and messy, and it will take me a while to find out its contours.

When I first meet her, I know nothing. She sees me, a woman of the same age, and a similar background, and starts talking. She speaks of things that are familiar to both her and me. Days spent in Delhi University, restaurants, so on. She is simultaneously reserved about her life and very open. Life in the prison is tough, not because the food is inedible, or of other physical hardship – these are myths of jail before her time – but because "there is no one who comes enough from a world like yours to become a friend, and because in jail you stop planning for tomorrow".

"in jail you stop planning for tomorrow"

From: Ravikant <ravikant@sarai.net>

One way of feeling your city is to get out of it. I like to wander away from Delhi, and enjoy the difference. The clean air, the lack of noise, the stars in the night, the languid existence, the identity you acquire in another place as *Dilliwalla* – all of this is fascinating and instructive at the same time. It is a special relationship of envy you come to form with

other city *wallas*. You mourn the loss of everything that your city does not have anymore and they seem to be admiring everything you have come to acquire. You dig deeper and start comparing notes about the relative advantages and disadvantages. You go further and wonder if you could exchange places and immediately realise that it is not really a choice.

Away from the basic sentiments of nostalgia and longing such comparisons usually evoke, my newspaper reading sensibilities received a severe jolt in Bhopal recently, by a news item placed prominently in a box on the front page, which reported a stabbing incident. The CISF guard from Eastern UP who was taking us around confirmed this: "There hasn't been a single incident of murder here in the last one and a half years".

What a contrast to this city's calendar of this year.

You mourn the loss of everything that your city does not have anymore and they seem to be admiring everything you have come to acquire

From: Shveta Sarda <shveta@sarai.net>

I returned, after two years, to a Delhi where strangers speak with one another. Strangers in buses, on whether I've heard the prediction that following 9/11, India will be the next superpower. Auto drivers on the lines for CNG and the metro affecting their lives. Strangers in the mushrooming coffee houses, about their work, and life in general.

Is it that the spaces where people meet have altered? or the changing landscape? events of earth shaking relevance that have forced people out of their shells? or just me, returning home from afar?

a Delhi where strangers speak with one another

From: Bhrigu <bhrigu@sarai.net>

I returned to Delhi in late September 2001, having been away for exactly one year. I couldn't help but marvel at the transformation – the speed at which things had slowed down in this one year for the promise of a faster, cleaner, safer future. Space, time and people are at loggerheads here because Delhi 2001 is a city in transit.

Overheard conversations have changed too. People are more interested in international relations now and a lot surer of the malevolence of the enemy. Sunny Deol had bravely taken on the mantle in the meantime, of protecting our dystopian borders. He stares at me threateningly every morning, eyes bulging, from an occasional hoarding or newspaper.

I dealt with the shock of the new by clinging to the familiar. I sighed with relief when Minto Bridge still flooded at the slightest hint of rain, celebrated my bourgeois-dom in Khan Market, ate oily mutton *korma* at Kareem's, drank over-sweet *chai* at Mandi House, relieved myself on the long corner wall heading to bus *adda* and on the way back home watched the conductor of the 502 abuse an overtaking Blueline bus.

Past imperfect is present continuous in millennial Delhi.

People are more interested in international relations now and a lot surer of the malevolence of the enemy

From: Parvati Sharma <parvati@sarai.net>

On the 28th of December 2001, I spent 13 hours in the Indira Gandhi International Airport. Every half-hour a crackling voice instructed us to await future announcements. Every half-hour a smoker challenged the signs that proclaim smoking a punishable offence, until eventually the airport staff began bumming cigarettes off dazed passengers. I spent 4 of those 13 hours in the plane: both the meal and *Gadar* were served before take-off.

A steward explained:

"We are waiting for a pilot – our pilot has refused to fly, you see. And it is now evening: at 6:30, it's difficult to find a pilot who hasn't started drinking".

Airports in Singapore, Hong Kong are transit lands, located nowhere. IGI is located in New Delhi.

it is now evening: at 6:30, it's difficult to find a pilot who hasn't started drinking

From: Awadhendra Sharan <sharan@sarai.net>

The arrogance of city power brokers coupled with anxieties of 'security', radically refashioned our experience of the everyday over the last year. But there was hope too. As I travel home from Sarai to East Delhi, I witness the steady progress of the Metro. I know not what shape this public transport will take (personally, whether it will provide opportunities to read and reflect while on commute). But what I do see is a remarkable economy of operations, silence despite constant work, an absence of dust despite mounds of mud, and smooth traffic flows despite long stretches of barricades with the word Metro neatly displayed on mellow yellow boards. And this gives me hope, of the possibility of working in another fashion, of combining change with dignity and of creating a new Delhi without doing violence to the old.

possibility of combining change
with dignity and of creating a new Delhi
without doing violence to the old

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Cybermohalla:

Ayesha was a quiet, withdrawn and shy girl. She was studying in class VIII. She died of an undiagnosed disease in the summer of 2001.

Azra Tabassum, 20, shares her self with all by weaving together in words and word-images the worlds she inhabits. Confident and confused, she is comfortable with ideas and engages with them constantly, also infecting the group with them. Hyperlinking excites her and she finds that it reflects her relationship with ideas. She coordinates the activities and organisaton of the Compughar.

Bobby, a skillful storyteller, is easily enthused by the new and unfamiliar. Convinced of the veracity of tele-visual narratives and event-narratives circulating within the *basti*, she narrates herself through these. This mode is under pressure from others in the group for being removed from what is 'real' and 'experienced' and for making Bobby gullible to the power of others' narratives.

Mehrunissa is as adept with the mouse as she is with the pen, which she uses both to draw and to write. Unable sometimes to express the complexity of all she experiences in words, she has found in Gimp (image manipulation free software) an outlet, and an inspiration.

Neelofer, and her ability to abstract, brings into the group a conceptual sharpness and a comfort with collectively thinking through an idea. She dropped out of school and writing is the medium she is extremely at ease with. She has recently started exploring Gimp as another mode of expression. She uses the tape recorder as a tool to move into spaces.

Shahjehan attends school regularly. And takes it very seriously. Between homework and housework she has found in the Compughar a spaces for reflection.

Shamsher Ali is comfortable with video games, Gimp and Star Office (text and html editor free software),

shy with written words and playful with tape recorders, camera and animation. Sharp observations about things around are always made light by constant reference to being young.

Suraj Rai, 15, enjoys making layered animation in Gimp. His restless energy makes him a quick learner and so, a difficult student. He is the youngest in the group, and seems to be attending school.

Yashoda Singh leaves behind a difficult year. Her neatly wrapped notebook is her companion in the exploration of her experience and surroundings. She keeps two notebooks, a rough and a fair. It's from the fair that she tells her stories, her ideas. The Roman script keyboard was for her no obstacle in transferring on to the screen her writings from Devanagri.

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Fran Ilich is author of the novels *Metro-Pop* and *Tekno Guerrilla*. Was editor @ large of *Sputnik* magazine, screenwriter of *Interacción*, founder of Nettime Latino, as well as director of many cyberculture festivals in México (including *Cinemátik 1.0*, the 1st cyberculture festival in Latin America). He recently curated the Borderhack Attachment Online Exhibition. He is now a researcher at Centro Multimedia del Centro Nacional de las Artes in México City, editor of *Undo* online magazine, and is producing an interactive film. ilich@de-lete.tv, http://de-lete.tv

Franco Berardi has been known as "Bifo" since he began to sign his abstract paintings at school with the name. He later became a left-wing anarchist, joining the group Potere Operaio (Worker Power). He founded the magazine *A/traverso*, which became the paper of the Bologna creative movement, and has been associated with Radio Alice and Semiotexte. He is the author of several books, including *Against Work, More Cyber than Punk, Exit - Our Contribution to the Extinction of Civilisation, The Factories of Unhappiness*, and *The Ill Fated History of Worker Power*. The relationship between communication technology and social movements has become increasingly central to his thinking and action. lop1912@iperbole.bologna.it

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