“I am walking in my city”

The Production of Locality in Githa Hariharan’s *In Times of Siege*, Vikram Chandra’s *Love and Longing in Bombay*, and Amit Chaudhuri’s *Freedom Song*

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English

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A Note on Transliteration

In this thesis, I follow the primary texts in using a simplified transliteration system for words originally from the Sanskrit or Hindi languages. The transliteration system for the Devanāgarī script, with diacritics, will be used in quotations where the source material uses it. Thus, the words veerashaivism/virashaivism (simple transliterations, as used by Hariharan) and Vīraśaivism (diacritic transliteration) are the same, as are "raag" (used by Chaudhuri) and "rāg," both of which are transliterations for what in English is often spelled "raga," a particular form of music. In modern Hindi, the (implicit) "a" of the final syllable is often dropped, unless it is a long vowel; "ā". Thus, "artha" (used by Chandra) is pronounced according to its diacritical transliteration as "arth" (*Hindi-English Dictionary*). Translations and notes on pronunciation will be given where appropriate.

Introduction

"I am walking in my city" (*Love* 267) states Ranjit, the primary narrator of Vikram Chandra's novel *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997). I use his words as an opening into the present study of locality. "I am walking in my city" can be seen as an emblem of the three novels examined here, the phrase signifying much more than physical movement. Ranjit's comment is made at a moment when he has become acutely aware of the city, as he sets out to make his future in it, hoping to find "not heaven, or its opposite, but only life itself" (268). Shiv, the protagonist of Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* (2003), also plans a walk towards the end of the novel, after a fierce battle over intellectual integrity; the walk is his assertion of being a part of society. In Amit Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* (1998), finally, walking is intrinsic to the narrative, with its focus on flânerie in the city.[1]

The focus of this study is on the Indian cities that the characters are walking in: Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. My aim is to explore how the three texts engage with contemporary issues in the cities in which they are set, and I view them as responses (whether overt or not) to the political/social/cultural crisis that peaked in the early 1990s. The cities described are more than mere settings, having a function beyond being physical places. I approach these cities inspired by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's concept of "the production of locality" (*Modernity* 178-99), which provides a fruitful way of approaching what the cities represent and how they are made meaningful in these novels. Appadurai points out that fiction "is part of the conceptual repertoire of contemporary societies" and that "authors often contribute to the construction of social and moral maps for their readers" (*Modernity* 58). Hariharan, for one, echoes Appadurai's "social and moral maps": "The besieged artist – and citizen – has no option but to continue making maps of the world; not duplicating the world itself, but creating one map after the other of what she sees must be exposed, understood and changed" ("Governing the Tongue"). The maps created in *In Times of Siege*, as well as in the other two novels I will consider, do not describe the physical cities to any great extent (although *Freedom Song* does trace some streets, and *Love and Longing in Bombay* accounts for journeys through different parts of the city). Rather than creating novels which allow the reader to follow streets and trace the contours of the city, the authors provide maps of the experience and meaning of place.

One important reason for that mapping, Appadurai continues, is because "contemporary literary fantasies tell us something about displacement, disorientation, and

[1] While I have attempted to aquire the first editions of the novels, I was only able to do so with *Freedom Song*. (Note, however, that *Freedom Song* is also the title given to a collection of Chaudhuri's first three novels first published in the U.S. in 1999. In this thesis, *Freedom Song* refers to the novel, not the collection). For *In Times of Siege*, originally published in 2003, I have used the Penguin reprint from 2004. For *Love and Longing in Bombay*, originally published in 1997, I have used the Penguin reprint from the same year.

agency in the contemporary world" (*Modernity* 58). While Appadurai is discussing magical realism in this case, his observation can be extended to encompass other kinds of contemporary literature as well. Following his lead, I will investigate how the characters in the three novels face issues of displacement, and how they become active agents in the production of locality, thereby participating in the imaginary of these cities, both individually and in collectives.

By connecting particular places with notions of the past and with conflicting discourses, Appadurai's theory of locality makes possible my investigation of how the cities are constructed and perceived "as a dimension or value" (*Modernity* 179). I deliberately limit the scope of my exploration to the production of locality in its urban manifestations. The focus on cities does not exclude the role of various national ideologies, but places them in localized, urban surroundings. I will go on to discuss Appadurai's terms in more detail below, but first I will explain my selection of novels and the historical contexts that motivate my readings.

Selection of Novels

I base my exploration of "the production of locality" on the three novels that I have mentioned: Hariharan's *In Times of Siege*, Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay*, and Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song*. My selection of novels is based on their place (three different major Indian cities) and time (they are all set after the Ayodhya turmoil but before the Gujarat carnage, see below). All three are engaged with questions of secularism and the perceived threatening consequences of de-secularization and increased sectarianism. They respond to and interact with contemporary society and politics, as they engage with the ideology of *Hindutva* (Hinduness), which is advocated by the militant Hindu right.[2] The Hindutva ideology reached a peak in the winter of 1992-1993 with the destruction of the Babri Masjid (Mosque) in Ayodhya, and the following riots. In addition, 1997 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the independent Indian nation-state, and these novels engage with foundational ideas, such as the creation of the imaginary of India and its urban centers.

Set in the major Indian cities of Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta, each with its own particular set of geopolitical issues, these novels open up for a study that can be both specific and (within the given constraints) representative. Chandra's novel was published in 1997, two years after Bombay had been renamed Mumbai by the Maharashtrian party, the Shiv Sena. Chaudhuri's novel, set in Calcutta, appeared the year after, and Hariharan's

[2] Hindutva is translated in many ways. Appadurai calls it "land of Hinduness" ("Spectral" 629). *The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary* describes it as "1. Hindu qualities; Hindu identity. 2. Hinduism" (1071). Amartya Sen translates it as "literally 'the quality of Hinduism'" (*Argumentative* 51).

study of political power, set in Delhi, followed five years later, in 2003. What is more relevant than the dates of publication is that the settings span a troubled (near) decade in contemporary Indian history. In Chaudhuri's novel, the characters are affected by the news coming from Bombay of the riots going on there in the winter of 1992-93. Next in sequence, Chandra's text appears as an intervention at the "break" between Bombay and Mumbai. Lastly, Hariharan's novel, set in 2000, records and challenges the ongoing effects of the Hindu right with an empathetic call for a return to secularism. None of the novels can be read as a national allegory, a category otherwise often discussed in relation to Indian English fiction.[3] All three respond to contemporary issues, but they do so from city-centered perspectives, engaging with their respective cities through different narrative forms.

In Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* the complex relationship between power and cultural pluralism is played out in the national capital. Delhi is deeply imbedded in politics and power, and history is used as a divisive force in the novel. In order to participate in the production of locality, the protagonist needs to find the courage to dissent. In Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* issues of narration and storytelling are foregrounded. Here, identity as a Bombayite is gained through stories that create a narrative identity. To become an agent in the production of locality entails becoming a storyteller. In Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song*, finally, the production of locality is more overtly ambiguous, both in seeming to need protection from change, but also in needing change.

While the production of locality is a feature of some of the authors' other novels as well, it takes different forms than in the novels studied here. Hariharan's investigation of the uses and abuses of political power in *In Times of Siege* is even more urgent in her next novel, *Fugitive Histories* (2009), but locality figures differently in it. Set partially in Ahmedabad after the 2002 riots, the novel instead showcases the difficulty of producing locality when one's place has been occupied and burnt. Of her other novels, *When Dreams Travel* (1999) is set in a thinly veiled Delhi, but the story is an allegorical rewriting of *The Thousand and One Nights*. With *In Times of Siege*, Hariharan shifted focus from the power of storytelling to an acute interest in political power and the past.

Bombay is central in Chandra's novels *Love and Longing in Bombay* and *Sacred Games* (2006). His debut, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), covers a vast time span, and reaches from India to the U.S. Although different from each other, both of Chandra's first two novels highlight the act of storytelling. *Love and Longing in Bombay*, however, is considerably more focused on the contemporary, or near contemporary, city. In *Sacred*

[3] Lotta Strandberg argues that the "national allegory [is] a dominant interpretive strategy" in the works of Rege (2004), Peterson (2008) and Gopal (2009). She adds: "Since much postcolonial critique revolves around the power difference between coloniser and colonised, it unavoidably centralises the nation as a dominant theoretical and analytical category" (20, note 12).

Games, Chandra not only returns to Mumbai, but also to Sartaj Singh, one of the characters first used in *Love and Longing in Bombay*. As Sartaj was pivotal to understanding the production of locality in the story "Kama," it is no surprise that his association and identification with the city is continued in the later novel. However, *Sacred Games* is not as overtly preoccupied with locality as a value as the former novel.

Chaudhuri returns frequently to Calcutta in both his works of fiction and non-fiction. Yet, he also often notes that his image of Calcutta is not congruent with his experience of visiting and, in 1999, settling in the city.[4] Calcutta, Chaudhuri argues, is changing – a change we witness in *Freedom Song* – and while there is room for nostalgia, the past is not presented as a utopia. His continual interest in Calcutta is apparent not only in his novels and essays, but also, most recently, in his non-fiction work *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (2013). Out of Chaudhuri's Calcutta novels, *Freedom Song* meets the selection criteria of time and importance of place (Chaudhuri's debut novel *A Strange and Sublime Address* [1991] is set in Calcutta in the 1970s, while Calcutta in *A New World* [2000] has a different function than in *Freedom Song*). The setting of Chaudhuri's latest novel *The Immortals* (2009) is Bombay rather than Calcutta, and though both novels use the figure of the flâneur and focus on the everyday, the protagonist of *Freedom Song* participates in the production of locality, whereas the protagonist of *The Immortals* disdains what Bombay has to offer.

The Historical Context

In this section I discuss aspects of the historical contexts of modern India that are of importance in the novels, and which I will refer to in my subsequent analyses. I will focus on the simultaneous Independence and Partition of India, on the propagation for secularism by the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, and on the coming to power of the Hindu right in the 1980s and -90s.

India gained independence from Britain in 1947, when the subcontinent was partitioned primarily along religious lines into Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. Along with Amartya Sen and others, I am hesitant about the descriptions "Hindu India" and "Muslim Pakistan" since they neglect the cultural and religious diversity of the subcontinent (Sen, *Argumentative* 297). Millions were displaced in the wake of the Partition, as newly-made citizens who found themselves within the "wrong" country migrated voluntarily or by force: "Within a very few months, around 15 million people

[4] See, for example, Chaudhuri, *Calcutta*, "On Belonging," and "Diary 19 May 2011." In the latter he states "I felt the presence of a new city that had grown up where the old one had been …" (37).

crossed the new borders" (Khilnani 129).[5] The Partition also led to violence of all kinds, with women often the special targets (Bharucha, "Inhabiting" 95). The Partition, rather than containing the oppositions between Hindus and Muslims, "became a recurring motif in the subsequent history of the subcontinent and never died away: simultaneously a fearful spectre in the cultural memory and a perpetual challenge to the territorial authority of the successor states" (Khilnani 29). The subsequent territorial wars between India and Pakistan, as well as the Hindu right's obsession with where people belong, Sunil Khilnani terms "revisitations of this original faultline" (29).

As mentioned above, Nehru advocated that religion be separated from politics. Nehru realized that the Indian population included a wide variety of faiths, and he argued against India being defined as a Hindu nation. Thus, one of the founding notions of the nation was secularism. Sen elaborates on the Indian sense of secularism which, he argues, "contains strong influences of Indian intellectual history, including the championing of intellectual pluralism" (*Argumentative* 19). However, defining India as a Hindu nation became increasingly common in the 1980s, when "there is a self-inflated, venomous redefinition of India in terms of the ideology of *Hindutva*" (Khilnani x). Hindutva is the ideology of the right wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).[6] The BJP and its cohorts, Khilnani argues, "are forgetful not least of the fact that India is the second largest Muslim country in the world – and that India contains the largest body of Muslims living within a liberal democratic order" (xiv). Chaudhuri discusses how "Hinduism" and the "mainstream" are made synonymous, and elaborates:

> 'Mainstream': the word that would mean, in a democratic nation, the law-abiding democratic polity, is cunningly conflated, in the newspeak of our present government, with the religious majority; and those who don't belong to that majority become, by subconscious association and suggestion, anti-democratic, and breakers of the law. ("Thoughts" 20)

For Chaudhuri, Hinduism is instead coupled with "a middle-class humanism that decreed tolerance towards all faiths, regardless of whether or not you adhered to one yourself" ("Thoughts" 22). Consequently, "those of us who mourn the passing of secularism must also believe we are witnessing the passing, and demise, of the Hindu religion as we have known it" ("Thoughts" 21). Caroline Herbert argues that "[t]he Indian city has been a privileged site for staging the 'secularism debates' and we can identify a substantial body

[5] Khilnani notes the census figures: "in 1951, 7.3 million refugees were registered in India, and in 1952 the Pakistan census counted 7.2 million *muhajirs* or refugees" (129).
[6] Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) [Indian People's Party] describes itself as a Hindu nationalist party (www.bjp.org). Khilnani argues that the BJP is "dedicated to a redefinition of nationalism in exclusively Hindu terms" (56).

of Indian fiction in English that uses the city-space to interrogate the crisis of secularism …" (Herbert, "Spectrality" 944-45).[7] "The crisis of secularism" has also been frequently debated in Indian politics and society over the last decades. Sen differentiates between two different approaches to secularism. The first approach focuses on "*neutrality* between different religions" whereas the second approach focuses on "*prohibition* of religious associations in state activities" (*Argumentative* 19).[8] The Indian approach, as propagated by Nehru, coincides with the first example. Yet, C. Herbert argues that "'Anti-secularist' commentators … while vehemently opposing the communalisation of Indian identity, are sceptical of the adequacy – or cultural appropriateness – of state-sponsored secularism" ("Spectrality" 944). They see secularism as a Western import, and as the cause of communal violence inherent in the system itself, rather than violence being a sign of its failure. On the other side of the argument are those who critique the "majoritarian underpinnings" of secularism, "and its tendency to reproduce a majority-minority framework" ("Spectrality" 944). Not only is there a majority-minority framework in society, but as Paul Brass explains, "The consolidation of the heterogeneous Hindu and Muslim groupings on the subcontinent and the politicization of the differences between them are overwhelmingly a modern phenomenon …" (25) deriving from the time of Partition.

As an effect of the political power gained by the BJP, on December sixth, 1992, the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was demolished by a Hindu mob who argued that it had been built on the site of a previous temple to Rama.[9] The demolition was an act of symbolically charged violence, preceded by agitation and public manifestations, and followed by violent riots throughout India, mainly targeting Muslims (Bacchetta 269-71). The "incident" of the Ayodhya mosque brought issues of secularism and sectarianism to the foreground. Sectarianism (especially between Hindus and Muslims) has been recurring in the history of independent India, and was indeed most prominent during the violent 1947 Partition. Yet, while the event in Ayodhya is not a singular, isolated occurrence, I focus especially on it because of its magnitude and its influence on ideas of India in the 1990s. This is a seminal event to the novels under study.[10]

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[7] Other writers that use "the city-space to interrogate the crisis of secularism" are Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, and Vikram Seth (see Herbert, "Spectrality" 945).

[8] Emphasis in the original in all quotations unless otherwise noted.

[9] The earlier Hindu temple was (is) claimed to commemorate and celebrate Rama's return to Ayodhya after his exile and liberation of Sita. However, many religions claim the site in Ayodhya, which indicates the long history of religious multiplicity within India. The Babri Masjid was constructed in 1527. For an overview of the history of the Babri Masjid, see Paola Bacchetta's "Sacred Space". Ashis Nandy provides an account of the destruction and its aftermath in *Exiled at Home*, esp. pp. 156-206.

[10] Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* was published in 2003, thus after the pogrom in Ahmedabad, Gujarat (but see also Hariharan's *Fugitive Histories*, 2009). Appadurai views the Babri Masjid in 1992 and Gujarat in 2002 as markers of a decade troubled with brutal ethnic violence (*Fear of Small Numbers* 64)

In this thesis I use the terms sectarianism and communalism synonymously. Communalism, mainly between Hindus and Muslims, has been a present fact through the years of independent India. Hariharan, for one, calls the word communalist "the made in India brand … for professional other-community haters" (*Siege* 57), and equates it with fundamentalist.

Cities are important sites where communalism is acted out. Khilnani attributes special significance to India's urban areas: "They have become the bloated receptacles for every hope and frustration reared by half a century of free politics and exceedingly constrained and unequal economic progress" (109). Within these cities around 250 million people live, about one fourth of the population of India, and as Khilnani notes, the figure for the urban population of "some 250 million people" was by 2010 estimated to instead "exceed 400 million" (109). The cities are "dramatic scenes of Indian democracy: places where the idea of India is being disputed and defined anew" (109). However, Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi, the cities of this study, are markedly distinct, as Chaudhuri suggests: "Bombay is about money; Delhi about power; Calcutta is about parents …" (*Calcutta* 249). Bombay and Calcutta were both colonial ports founded in the seventeenth century. New Delhi on the other hand was established in the second half of the nineteenth century, "a monument to the display of power and order," and designed as "a sublime fantasy of imperial control over the boundaries and definition of urban space …" (Khilnani 111, 122). Simultaneously with the creation of a new political center, many pre-colonial structures were demolished in Delhi (Khilnani 116-17). The Partition greatly affected the cities: "Delhi became a Punjabi city; Calcutta had to absorb hundreds of thousands of refugees from East Bengal; Bombay's Muslim élite was decimated" (Khilnani 129). With the influx of people, the cities' populations expanded and issues of housing and economic security became acute.

Chaudhuri has repeatedly drawn attention to the Indian tradition of modernity and cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, he argues,

> has to do with the notion of inner exile at the core of the 'high' cultures of the twentieth century. If one were to keep this notion in mind, the city of Calcutta would come powerfully into the frame; and a history of Bombay cosmopolitanism would beg to be written that is more than, or distinct from, an account of variegated urban co-existence. ("Cosmopolitanism's" 96)

The cosmopolitan cities are thus encompassing something more or other than a multiplicity of ethnic or linguistic groups, and Chaudhuri argues for their Indian tradition.

However, I will also use 'cosmopolitan' in a more generic sense, arguing that it denotes a sense of a pluralistic and open society.

The cities were also affected by discourses about the nation. The cities' "economic inequalities and their political opportunities," Khilnani argues, "had sharpened contradictions, and had produced more partial, if more intensely held, conceptions of what a political community was" (144). There were primarily two reasons for this. The first was the development of a "new urban type" (145) of provincial town that is more parochial than the established mega-cities and the second was the changes caused by the liberalization of the Indian economy. In the following chapters, I discuss city-specific and novel-specific contexts. The challenges to Nehruvian secularism through the rise of the Hindu right and the Hindutva ideology will run as a theme through all three chapters, whereas liberalization is mostly discussed in relation to Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song*.

All three novels go against any attempt to simplify history: Chandra through insisting on multiple levels of narratives, and inscribing Bombay as a multivoiced locality with many truths; Hariharan through showing how institutionalized power and revisions limit the ideas available for imagining the present and future; and Chaudhuri, more implicitly than the others, through inscribing the past in the present which complicates definitions and segregation along religious lines. The novels advance the idea that the cities in which they take place not only are under continual change, but that the change now is of an acute nature.[11] The expansion of the Hindutva ideology appears to be alienating, and to become agents in the production of locality the characters have to grapple with a sense of deterritorialization that does not come from the moving to and fro (or within) the cities, but from the changing ideology of the cities.[12]

The Production of Locality and the Uses of Fiction

As stated, I will approach the novels in this study through the concept of the production of locality, which allows for an investigation into the meaning and value of place. The concepts of space and place have undergone a considerable development in the past two decades,[13] though the concept of the production of locality has received relatively little attention in literary studies so far. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga discuss the interest in studies of place as "consistent with and draw[ing] on an abundance of research

[11] For Appadurai, locality is "an inherently fragile social achievement" (*Modernity* 179), thus constantly under change.

[12] The large ideological changes addressed in the novels were intimately related to the destruction in Ayodhya, which Appadurai noted, was a watershed "in the history of secularism in India, in the context of a big effort to Hinduize India and to link local ethnopolitics and national xenophobia" ("Spectral" 645).

[13] Important theorists behind place and space are Lefebvre and Soja, whose works Appadurai relates to in his exploration of modernity, globalization, and locality.

and theory generated in disciplines outside anthropology, including geography, history, philosophy, and sociology" (1). They further acknowledge that "space is an essential component of sociocultural theory. That is, anthropologists are rethinking and reconceptualizing their understandings of culture in spatialized ways" (1). As Suman Gupta points out, "The incorporation of a humanistic, and particularly literary, emphasis on culture into the sociological/anthropological approach to globalization is evidenced in Arjun Appadurai's work" (88). Appadurai, S. Gupta further explains, "suggest[s] that sociology should attend to the 'work of the imagination' *as* social processes and relations rather than regarding products of the imagination as deriving from existing social relations and processes" (88). Appadurai notes the cross-disciplinary nature of studies within space/place in the flourishing use of social sciences in literature departments (*Modernity* 51, 58). A remarkable occurrence within the academy, Appadurai comments, "is the hijack of culture by literary studies" (*Modernity* 51), and he focuses his work especially on "the relationship between the word and the world, where "[*w*]*ord* can encompass all forms of textualized expression and *world* can mean anything from the means of production and the organization of life-worlds to the globalized relations of cultural reproduction" (*Modernity* 51). The anthropological approach to literature also allows for a wide contextualization of the novels, and I will give special attention to how the respective localities are produced within the primary texts. While my methodology is anchored in close readings of the literary texts, in line with this interdisciplinary approach I will also draw on theories from anthropology, history and politics. The theories of the work of the imagination and locality will be used to explain and investigate literary texts.

In order to fully account for Appadurai's theory of the production of locality, I need to first outline his perception of the world as constituting a number of "scapes" and neighborhoods. It is within the interaction of scapes in neighborhoods that locality can be produced. The contemporary world, Appadurai argues, is characterized by the disjunctures between "five dimensions of global cultural flows" (*Modernity* 33). These five dimensions he terms ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (*Modernity* 33).

The ethnoscape is "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live" (*Modernity* 33). An ethnoscape, in Appadurai's sense, is not the same as a "primordial" ethnic group.[14] What the term implies is instead a level of belonging or identification. In connection with the ethnoscape Appadurai also borrows the concepts of "de- and re- territorialization" from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (10). They see deterritorialization as that which occurs when a rhizome is "broken, shattered". A "line of

[14] See "Life after Primordialism" in *Modernity* for Appadurai's critique of the "primordialist thesis" (141).

flight" can then occur, which is what eventually enables reterritorialization (9).[15] For Appadurai, deterritorialization "is one of the central forces in the modern world" (*Modernity* 37) and migrants are both deterritorialized and reterritorialized as they inhabit their newly adopted countries. I will discuss de- and reterritorialization by focusing on how the characters negotiate feelings of home and belonging in cities to which they may or may not be native. While Appadurai sees reterritorialization as a two-way process, both in reterritorializing in the new city, and as refiguring the place of origin ("Historical Memory" 33), I will focus on reterritorialization in relation to the current place in my subsequent analysis of the novels.

Of the other four scapes, the technoscapes relate to technology and the financescapes encompass global capital, currency markets, stock exchanges and related aspects of economy (*Modernity* 34-35). Mediascapes "refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information" as well as to "the images of the world created by these media" (*Modernity* 35). The latter aspect is of greater relevance in the present thesis as mediascapes

> tend to be image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. (*Modernity* 35)

Appadurai draws on Benedict Anderson's elaboration of print culture here,[16] but the mediascape also encompasses visual images that are especially effective in film and television media. Ideoscapes are similar to mediascapes, "but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it" (*Modernity* 36). The main difference from mediascapes thus lies in the sender: an ideoscape is in this context not commercially driven media.

The scapes are in a disjunctive relationship – they are all parts in the "imagined worlds" (*Modernity* 33) that people construct – but different scapes can have more influence than others, depending on outlook and traditions, etc. The disjunctive nature of the scapes indicates not how their different spheres are independent from each other, but how they are both influenced and conditioned by each other in a non-synchronized

[15] I return to the rhizome below.
[16] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983). See also Rafael, "Regionalism" (esp. pp. 1216-20) for a comparison of Anderson and Appadurai.

manner. "[T]he critical point," Appadurai states, is that the relationship between the scapes is "deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable because each of these landscapes is subject to its own constraints and incentives …, at the same time as each acts as a constraint and a parameter for movements in the others" (*Modernity* 35). Appadurai's emphasis on disjunctures has been criticized, however. Josiah McC. Heyman and Howard Cambell, for example, argue that his "his insistent drumbeat of 'disjuncture' … fails to grapple with the interaction between different flows drawing on different logics and having different causal weights" (134). However, when taking Appadurai's notion of neighborhood into account, it becomes clear that the disjunctive scapes relate also to the local, or the nation, as Mike Featherstone explains: "Individual nation-states may attempt to promote, channel, or block particular flows with varying degrees of success …" (64). In the novels I see oppositions and differences between different productions of locality as reflecting conflicting scapes or disjunctive imaginaries.

While the scapes are disjunctive, they can still be viewed as parts of what Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* have termed a "rhizome". Appadurai adopts the concept of the rhizome to fit an anthropological context, by viewing culture as a rhizomatic structure (*Modernity* 29). Deleuze and Guattari state that "any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (7). Unlike the tree, Deleuze and Guattari's image for linearly structured thought with its hierarchy of roots, stem, and branches, the rhizome instead shows how things are interconnected in a non-linear, transverse, fashion: "A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles" (7) and can therefore reflect the nature of a city, the relationship between locality and neighborhood, and the relationship between "the book and the world" (11). Whereas the tree image reflects hierarchy and linearity, the rhizome is non-hierarchical, spreading both outward and upward/downward simultaneously, and is centrally "a process of making and breaking connections" (Sprouse 83). Anthropologists Thomas Blom Hansen and Oskar Veerkaik elaborate on the concept, connecting it to various aspects of collective culture: "The rhizome is not an essential property of the popular or even the urban, it is the inevitable and often highly unwelcome double of any form of regular or formalized organization of any stability and duration" (19). The tree-like structure of law and order co-exists for them with a disruptive rhizomatic structure (19).[17] The rhizome also applies to the novels in different ways, where the texts, the cities, the characters, and the scapes interact in a rhizomatic manner. I return to the rhizome particularly in my readings of *Love and Longing in Bombay* and *Freedom Song*.

[17] In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, "There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots" (*Plateaus* 20), which shows how the concepts are interrelated and dependent upon each other.

For the production of locality to be understood it is useful to consider Appadurai's distinction between "neighborhoods" as actual existing social forms (which can also be virtual), and "locality" "as a dimension or value" (*Modernity* 178-79), "a property of social life" and "a structure of feeling" (*Modernity* 182). Neighborhoods "are always to some extent ethnoscapes" (*Modernity* 183), since neighborhoods, as places, are made up of and by people; yet an ethnoscape does not need to be grounded in a specific neighborhood. However, as Appadurai also notes, there is a risk of taking an established word such as neighborhood and giving it a specific, slightly different meaning. When he states that "[t]here is no ideal way to designate localities as actual social forms" (*Modernity* 204, note), he is further complicating the two contrasted concepts, since the "localities" in this case simply means "places." Yet, the greatest advantage, as I see it, of using the term neighborhood is that it avoids "the confusion between locality as the singular form of localities and locality as property or dimension of social life" (*Modernity* 204, note). Thus, the term neighborhood is in normal usage synonymous with terms such as "*place*, *site*," and "*locale*," but for Appadurai neighborhood indicates "sociality, immediacy, and reproducibility" (*Modernity* 204, note). Neighborhoods are "situated communities" with a "potential for social reproduction" (*Modernity* 179).

Discussing Appadurai's notion of neighborhood, Tessa Valo asks in a blog post:

> If neighborhoods are referring to 'situated communities characterized by their actuality', then … how are we to delineate them or else where are the boundaries that neighborhoods and localities so sorely try to guard …? …. Does the existence of a particular neighborhood depend on the perception of particular actors within or outside it? Is it thus as relational and contextual as locality? … How large can a neighborhood be …? Are all answers to these questions context-dependent (if it is so – dependent on which or whose context)?

However, as Appadurai goes on to explain, neighborhoods are contexts, require contexts, and produce contexts because "they provide the frame or setting within which various kinds of human action … can be initiated and conducted meaningfully" (*Modernity* 184). For the neighborhood to be meaningful, it requires other contexts, while simultaneously, the contexts within a neighborhood allow for "meaningful social action [to] be both generated and interpreted" (*Modernity* 184). Thus, neighborhoods are both context-providing and context-generative. Following Appadurai's emphasis on flows, the newly generated contexts will in turn lead to new contexts. Such flexibility I find congenial to novels in which the neighborhoods are not always described in much detail. I understand

neighborhoods to be the place of outlook, and will discuss the term on many levels; as sections of cities, as smaller residential areas, and, on a micro level, as houses.[18] Cities may contain many neighborhoods, but can also be approached as a single one.

"Locality," on the other hand, while intimately connected to the neighborhood, is as stated "a property of social life" and "a structure of feeling" (*Modernity* 182). Appadurai describes locality in the following way: "I view locality as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial. I see it as … constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts" (*Modernity* 178). Locality is not something given, but always something being produced; it is place in its capacity of a value (*Modernity* 179). The "property of social life" highlights how locality relates to the imagination (to which we shall return), and how it is produced through interaction between humans and through the "work of culture." As Appadurai points out, when "local subjects engage in the social activities of production, representation, and reproduction (as in the work of culture), they contribute, generally unwittingly, to the creation of contexts that might exceed the existing material and conceptual boundaries of the neighborhood" (*Modernity* 185). As locality is produced within specific neighborhoods, it relates also to the different scapes. Since the scapes are not stable entities, but always in flow, each individual locality is also multiple, depending on who perceives it from where. Arjen Mulder notes that for Appadurai, a city is not perceived as one locality, but as "a complex of localities" (Appadurai, "The Right" 35). Thus, a neighborhood may have different senses of locality, where, for example, someone feels alienated by an increasingly sectarian ideoscape, and another may find it to be a source of belonging.

The notion of "structures of feeling" originates with Raymond Williams, who describes them as reflecting "meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt." Structures of feeling contain "characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind …" (132). Anna Maria Guasch explains: "Williams used this concept to characterize the experience of quality of life in a specific space and time. And although it maintains a structural level, it operates at the most delicate level of our activities" (1, note 3). Like Appadurai, I see the structure of feeling in tandem with locality. Both locality and structures of feeling indicate the importance of the imagination and are essentially collective, social constructions. Locality as a structure of feeling encompasses, in Williams'

[18] Sarah Nuttall has a similar approach in her study of Johannesburg as a "literary city". While not using the concept of neighborhood, Nuttall explores the "fictional infrastructures" of "the street, the café, the suburb, and the campus" (200).

formulation, the "consciousness of a present kind." Different neighborhoods, such as homes, streets, and official areas, can have different structures of feeling associated with them. While Williams used literature to investigate and explain structures of feeling, the concept has relevance beyond literary studies, as argued by Josh Dickins:

> Williams goes part way to proposing an ethnography, or at least a social history, which takes as its primary sources literary texts. In this way, the structure of feeling, or structure of feeling analysis, can propose literature as an essential tool to the historian or anthropologist, potentially giving the literary text (not to mention literary critics) much greater methodological importance across the study of the humanities.

The notion of locality as a structure of feeling will be particularly relevant for my subsequent readings, where the desired structure of feeling generally is a sense of belonging, of being a local subject. Since locality is not static but always being produced, the structure of feeling can, and does, change. However, Appadurai points out how there is also a "'structure of feeling' in ethnic violence," since sectarian sentiments, as parts of macroevents, can become parts of "highly localized structures of feeling by being drawn into the discourse and narratives of the locality …" (*Modernity* 153). I stress the potential of sectarian and violent uses for the structures of feeling at this point, even if in my later analyses I will explore different, more constructive uses as the characters experience alienation and belonging within the cities during times of increased sectarianism, and as they engage with the production of locality. Because this production relates to feelings which are both personal and social, it affects the characters' experience of agency and feelings of inclusion or exclusion.

Locality is, in Appadurai's terms, a "phenomenological quality" (*Modernity* 178), that relates to how place is experienced both as natural and cultural phenomena (Klaver 157). In line with this observation, Jo-Anne Lee notes that "Appadurai contrasts the phenomenological nature of locality [as a structure of feeling and a work of the imagination] in relation to the materiality of neighbourhoods as a way of posing questions about how localities are produced" (63). In addition to being a structure of feeling and a property of social life, the production of locality is therefore also "an ideology of a situated community" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 189). The ideology can vary between different cities as well as in different parts of cities. Producing locality is a continuous process which involves both gradual change and maintenance of the ideology and feelings towards and of a place. Furthermore, cities (as neighborhoods) can both reflect and contest ideologies of the nation-state, as they "are ideally stages for their own self-

reproduction" rather than being "exemplars of a generalizable mode of belonging to a wider territorial imaginary" (*Modernity* 191). Neighborhoods are thus both parts of a national imaginary, as well as more intimate or more accessible places of identification.

Producing locality is a "work of the imagination" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 83). The imagination, Appadurai explains,

> is a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary people in myriad ways …. On the one hand, it is in and through the imagination that modern citizens are disciplined and controlled—by states, markets, and other powerful interests. But it is also the faculty through which collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life emerge. As the imagination as a social force itself works across national lines to produce locality as a spatial fact and as a sensibility …, we see the beginnings of social forms without either the predatory mobility of unregulated capital or the predatory stability of many states. ("Grassroots" 6)

Appadurai therefore argues that "the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility" (*Modernity* 31). The work of the imagination is intrinsic to everyday life, as people imagine their lives and their possibilities. Elaborating on the imagination in another context, Appadurai argues that it is "a collective tool for the transformation of the real, for the creation of multiple horizons of possibility" ("The Right" 34). He sees locality as "a structure of feeling that is produced by particular forms of *intentional activity* and that yields particular sorts of material effects" (*Modernity* 182, my emphasis). The intentional activity indicates how locality is a specific aspect of a conscious imagination. Furthermore, Appadurai describes the scapes (outlined above) as the building blocks of "*imagined worlds*" (*Modernity* 33). This is important, because many who "live in such imagined worlds … are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind and of the entrepreneurial mentality that surround them" (*Modernity* 33). Thus, the work of the imagination is connected to agency. Hylton White observes in a blog post that Appadurai has "an interest in identifying, not so much how culture shapes the behavior of human others, but rather, almost the opposite, how culture allows human actors to make worlds otherwise through their practical activities." In regards to locality, "to make worlds otherwise" entails both reproducing existing feelings of place, as well as contesting and changing unwanted aspects.

In relation to locality, Appadurai's concept of "collective agency" ("Airoots") is crucial.[19] Agency, Appadurai explains, "should not always be seen as an aggregate of individual choices but as something essentially social or collective" ("Airoots"). Collective agency means that the production of locality "is more than the sum of the intention, wishes and energies of any individual in the group" ("Airoots"). Individuals can be agents, but the production of locality is a collective effort. The collective aspects relates back to being "empowered to act socially" (*Modernity* 181), as no individual can exist outside of society. Appadurai connects agency with the "work of the imagination" (*Modernity* 4) and views the imagination as "central to all forms of agency" (*Modernity* 31). The imagination "allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries" (Appadurai, "Grassroots" 6). As with agency then, the work of the imagination is something done consciously.

After having described Appadurai's imagined worlds as consisting of scapes, neighborhoods, and locality, it is time to briefly connect the three concepts. As I understand it, the scapes are experienced by individuals within neighborhoods, who then produce locality through the collective integration of the scapes in the neighborhood. Locality is what gives neighborhoods meaning and value, the social production undertaken by individuals who as part of a collective perform the work of the imagination.

Applying the theory of the production of locality to literature involves the interaction between the actual historical cities and their textual representations. The cities within the novels are of course grounded in actual neighborhoods, but the novels concern themselves with how these cities can be imagined and produced. While the texts themselves are interpolations in the production of locality, they are in turn conditioned by it. I will analyze the neighborhoods of the cities as they are portrayed in the novels, but will also contextualize my readings by frequently addressing the social and political contexts of the actual cities. Thus, the novels' neighborhoods are not contained by the bindings of the books, as the logic of the production of locality is largely the same in literature and anthropology. I am not implying that the authors have deliberately created anthropological studies of the respective cities, but that their investigations into the meaning and value of place as perceived and produced by characters (people) can be approached and translated through the anthropological theory of locality. The novels are both the authors' descriptions of how they perceive the localities of the cities, as well as

[19] Appadurai confesses that collective agency was not so much a focus at first: "At that time [when writing *Modernity*], I did not articulate the idea of agency as part of the argument. … However, if I had to do that now – and it certainly begins with the idea of labour in the context of social survival – the mediating idea would be that of 'collective agency' (in the way that theorists like Roy Bhaskar have articulated)" ("Airoots").

their own contribution to the production of locality. There is thus a dual aspect to the production of locality through literature, where one relates to the novel in the world (which could become an anthropological study of how novels influence the neighborhoods in which they are set, or be a reader-response study of the influence on the production of locality in literature on readers, for example) and the other which relates to the world in the novel (which is what I am doing here by focusing on the production of locality through a literary study of novels). The cities are in both cases central to the construction of cultural identity; the three novels of this study do not merely use them as settings, but engage with them as socio-cultural productions which involve structures of feeling and ideologies.

Appadurai's work is centered on globalization, and locality is for him situated within a discourse of the global and the local. As he sees the modern world as greatly influenced by the rapidity of migration and mediation, the local is conditioned by the global. However, he strongly argues that there is nothing hegemonic about the global: it is reworked, adapted, and "filled with ironies and resistances" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 29) in different neighborhoods. The production of locality in these neighborhoods is influenced by the constant flows and disjunctures of the scapes, as the neighborhoods are situated within historical contexts, and differentiated from other neighborhoods.[20] There is constant outward and inward motion.

It follows that the novels dramatize localities as works of the imagination which reach beyond their respective neighborhoods, and into the larger context of India and the world. The cities are separate and different entities, but they are also parts of a larger structure. It is thus clear that the scapes which are invoked go beyond the city limits; for a tolerant Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta to exist, their surroundings have to incorporate some of the same aspects of the imaginary. What is "India" in this context, and in these novels? Appadurai warns against what he sees as a "disjunctive relationship between nation and state … with state and nation seeking to cannibalize one another" and argues that this disjunctive relationship "is the seedbed of brutal separatisms – majoritarianisms that seem to have appeared from nowhere and microidentities that have become political projects within the nation-state" (*Modernity* 39-40). These "brutal separatisms" provide the context for the novels of this study and I will in particular focus on the disjuncture between the local and the national, rather than on the disjuncture between nation and state. I am also aware that speaking of an 'Indian imaginary' is problematic due to India's

[20] Sociologist Roland Robertson discusses a similar aspect of locality: "[M]uch of the promotion of locality is in fact done from above or outside. Much of what is often declared to be local is in fact the local expressed in terms of generalized recipes of locality. Even in cases where there is apparently no concrete recipe at work – as in the case of some of the more aggressive forms of contemporary nationalism – there is still, or so I would claim, a translocal factor at work" ("Glocalization" 26).

diverse ethnoscape and cultural traditions.[21] Yet the question of "India" has certainly been discussed by the authors in this study. Chaudhuri comments that "[a]s far as the question of belonging is concerned, I think I belong to India but the moment I say that it becomes much more problematic, because I don't know exactly which India I belong to" ("On Belonging" 46). Chandra makes a similar claim when discussing "Indianness" and "regional writing":

> It's a curious term, this 'regional writing.' It clumsily clubs together dozens of literatures, and thousands and thousands of writers. The attempt to locate Indianness in 'regional writing' is inevitably problematic, since – in a nation battling numerous secessionist movements – regional specificity is inevitably in conflict with generalized national traits. ("Cult")

Yet Chandra defends himself against accusations of lack of authenticity by claiming to be a regional writer: "I must respectfully submit that I too am a 'regional writer.' I will not presume to claim Maharashtra or even the entire city of Bombay as my region. I will only claim part of the western suburbs …. This is my region. I live in it, in the locality of Andheri, in the colony called Lokhandwalla" ("Cult"). Hariharan offers a more political perspective, when discussing another side of Indianness:

> There is a virus that seems to be going around…. This virus ensures that its host cannot tolerate dissent of any kind. All views other than those from its small, official (and self-serving) window suddenly become anti-national, obscene, or a threat to law and order. State censorship in its aggressive mode can be exercised in all kinds of ways, from phone-tapping to banning books, films, plays and art that try to enlarge the state's one-eyed vision.
>
> ("Governing")

There is a tension between different perceptions of India here. Chaudhuri intimates the difficulty of asserting one's Indianness through associating to the many different cultures which make up India. Chandra defends the right to claim Indian authenticity even when writing with a regional focus and in English, and Hariharan points to the dangers of the state and the idea of India becoming totalizing.

Each situated neighborhood in the three novels has its own particular creation of locality, where the contexts of the nation-state are engaged. Thus historiography and

[21] See also Appadurai, "The Grounds of the Nation-State".

politics as power are the focus of Hariharan's Delhi, where the national capital becomes a center for dissent; in Chandra's Bombay, storytelling and a narrative identity are foregrounded which positions the city as a narrative locality; and tradition and the heritage of the imagined India are at the center of Chaudhuri's Calcutta, which places the past in the present.

Previous Research

In the following section, I will outline the background for the present thesis by first exploring some general issues and concerns regarding Indian English fiction. I will then relate Appadurai's theory to earlier research on space and place, focusing on anthropology concerning cities. Other relevant research which pertains to the works of each author I will discuss in the following chapters.

Indian English literature, of which the three novels discussed here are a part, has generated substantial literary criticism.[22] Hence, Priyamvada Gopal can start her overview in *The Indian English Novel* (2009) with the observation that "[f]ew postcolonial literary genres have been either as prominent or as contentious as the Indian novel in English" (1). She concludes by summing up some of the questions frequently addressed in contemporary Indian English fiction:

> what shape does 'India' take fifty or more years after the independent nation-state officially came into existence on the world stage? How are older narratives of nation being rewritten or replaced by new ones that seek to break, remould or interrogate the former in the face of migration and globalization? Who owns 'the past' and what is the writer's responsibility in relation to it?" (Gopal 177)

These questions are highly relevant to the primary texts discussed in my study, and I shall have reason to return to them in the analyses below.

[22] "Indian English Literature" is the descriptive term used by the Sahitya Akademi (The National Academy of Letters in India). As has been frequently pointed out, none of the other language literatures in India are given the epithet "Indian," thus "Hindi Literature" rather than "Hindi Indian" (see Strandberg 6, note 2). "Indian English" is also frequently used by scholars and critics, such as Priyamvada Gopal, whereas "Indian [writing/literature/novel] in English" is used by scholars such as Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and Geetha Ganapathy-Doré, while Priya Joshi reverses the terms and talks about "the English novel in India." Saikat Majumdar instead terms it "Anglophone Indian." For good overviews of the field of Indian English literature, see *A History of Indian Literature in English* (2003), edited by A. K. Mehrotra. Of particular relevance to the period covered in the present thesis is Jon Mee's chapter "After Midnight: The Novel in the 1980s and 1990s." Priya Joshi's *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* (2002) and Rashmi Sadana's *English Heart, Hindi Heartland: The Political Life of Literature in India* (2012), provide two sociological perspectives of Indian English literature, examining the production and consumption of literature in India.

The authors concerned in this study have contributed to the staunch defense of the value and validity of Indian English literature, Chandra, in "The Cult of Authenticity" and Chaudhuri, in "The East as a Career."[23] Hariharan has also pointed to the limiting perceptions of Indian English literature: "My experience is that if you go to three different events [in the U.S.], … you find that in one, you are being whipped on stage for writing in English, in another you are the third world writing back, in another you are the woman taking on patriarchy in all languages, in east and west…" ("Conversation"). I use "Indian English" as a denominator indicating simply that the novels chosen are set in India and written in English by Indian authors. However, I do not intend to present these novels as representative of the entire field of Indian English fiction, nor do I imply that this study should be seen as encompassing the whole field. I agree with Stuti Khanna that Indian English as a category "is far too diffuse to enable any focussed analysis" (83). Accordingly, rather than engaging in a genre study, I focus on the concept of locality in my reading of the three selected novels in this thesis. These novels, as I have pointed out above, specifically engage with the production of locality, and by limiting my study to these three novels I am able to pursue a more focused investigation. In a research paper on the theorization of postcolonial literature, Pablo Markin draws on Appadurai's work and argues that postcolonial literature as a work of the imagination is a "source of agency alternative to that of the colonial centers" (5), thus offering another perspective on literature and agency, or perhaps of literature *as* agency, a relevant aspect in my study of the production of locality. In respect to the novels studied herein, I would add that they are not so much alternative to the colonial centers, as they are alternative to hegemonic discourses within the nation-state.

Appadurai's concepts of locality and neighborhoods as "social forms" need to be situated within the broader concepts of space and place. Of the two, "[p]lace is specific and location (or space) is general" (Agnew 318). A very basic definition gives us space as that which is out there, and place as space occupied by people. Space thus becomes place through people. By extension, the production of locality then gives place a value and makes it into a structure of feeling. John Agnew delineates two diverging perceptions of the concept of place: either "as nodes in space simply reflective of the spatial imprint of universal physical, social or economic processes" or "as milieux that exercise a mediating role on physical, social and economic processes and thus affect how such processes operate" (317). The first approach explains place primarily by its physical location. The

[23] Sadana (158-165) gives an insightful comment on Meenakshi Mukherjee's critique of the lack of authenticity in Indian English fiction, and Chandra's engaged response. Nivedita Majumdar, on the other hand, argues that Chandra and Chaudhuri both misunderstand the critique of Indian English literature: because they write in English, "exoticism results [not] from a dissonance between writer and audience but rather *from a dissonance between the writer and his subject matter*" (4).

second approach "is constituted by the impact that being somewhere has on the constitution of the processes in question" (317). Agnew gives an example: "The first sense [of place] is of having an address and the second is about living at that address. Sometimes this distinction is pushed further to separate the physical place from the phenomenal space in which the place is located. Thus place becomes a particular or lived space" (318). Appadurai's use of both neighborhood and scapes clearly belongs to Agnew's second category. Robert Sack's definition of place adds to how I visualize Appadurai's terms: "A place requires human agency" and it is "something that may take time to know" (qtd. in Agnew 324). What Appadurai's terminology specifically allows for is an investigation into the function of place, its value and meaning, through looking at the production of locality.

Also discussing space and place, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson note that "[r]epresentations of space in the social sciences are remarkably dependent on images of break, rupture and disjunction" (6). Appadurai's theory of locality seems to address the issues they present:

> The ability of people to confound the established spatial orders, either through physical movement or through their own conceptual and political acts of re-imagination, means that space and place can never be "given" …. An anthropology whose objects are no longer conceived as automatically and naturally anchored in space will need to pay particular attention to the way spaces and places are made, imagined, contested, and enforced. In this sense, it is no paradox to say that questions of space and place are, in this deterritorialized age, more central to anthropological representation than ever. (Gupta and Ferguson 17-18)

The strength of Appadurai's approach is that it provides a comprehensive description of place in which the different scapes interact. By approaching urban localities through the notion of the scapes, it is possible to analyze not only the given image of a city, but the process through which the city is produced as a locality.

While the concepts of "space" and "place" have undergone intense scrutiny, Setha M. Low poses the question: "Why has the city been undertheorized in anthropology?" (383) Low divides the anthropological literature on cities into four categories: social relations, economics, urban planning and architecture, and religion and culture. Appadurai's notion of the scapes can be related to the above categories: social relations as ethnoscapes, economics as financescapes, planning and architecture as technoscapes, religion and culture as ideoscapes. The benefit for me of using Appadurai's approach is

that it allows for a study of how the cities are affected by and engage with all of the scapes, however disjunctive these may be.

In a study on place in literature, David James explores concerns similar to mine:

> fictional spaces incite complex forms of readerly engagement, calling to account current mechanisms of response. By compelling us to shift between vocabularies in alternate episodes of absorption and estrangement, reading place lights up our pathway to involvement with literary texts. It is our oscillation between immersive and analytical reading postures which points to reconsideration of spatial form as an emotive as well as technical focus of analysis. (17)

I will follow James with a focus on the feelings for, and participation in, specific neighborhoods. I am interested in how locality as a structure of feeling and as a value involves the engagement of both the characters within the novels, and of the reader. My focus thus resembles Hansen and Veerkaik's, who argue that "[u]rban spaces have spirits, and cities have souls" and that these are "contagious qualities that are said to seep into the character of the people living in such cities" (5). However, while Hansen and Veerkaik proceed to discuss cities as a myth that lives inside the residents, I examine how the cities are produced.[24] This is to say that while locality in some ways can resemble an internalized myth, I focus on it as an active creation. Both Hansen and Veerkaik, as well as Appadurai, are extending the work of Michel de Certeau and his exploration of "an 'anthropological,' poetic and mythical experience of space" (de Certeau, *Practice* 93).[25] Appadurai states that his formulation of neighborhood and locality are extensions of de Certeau's work in that "the transformation of spaces into places requires a conscious moment …" (*Modernity* 183). As discussed above, Appadurai's theory focuses on the conscious aspect of the work of the imagination as well as the production of locality.

Apart from Saikat Majumdar's article "Dallying with Dailiness," which discusses locality in Chaudhuri's first two novels, I have not found any other study which deals with Appadurai's production of locality in Indian fiction, and not many that use Appadurai for literature more generally. Three recent studies which in their different ways do touch upon locality or Appadurai are Stuti Khanna, Rashmi Sadana and Suman Gupta. In a recent study on the cities in the writings of Joyce and Rushdie, though not engaging with the production of locality as such, Khanna focuses on many aspects of relevance to this

[24] A myth is "fictitious or imaginary" (*OED*).
[25] As Agnew points out, de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, reverses the meaning of space and place (Agnew 318).

thesis: cities "as 'lived spaces', spaces criss-crossed by contending and unequal networks of power that nonetheless make available contingent and sometimes provisional forms of contact, solidarity and hope" (4-5; note that Khanna is using "space" where I use "place"). Rashmi Sadana uses an "anthropology of literature" (7) in order to examine the production of literature and to analyze "its individuals and institutions ethnographically" (7). She elaborates on Appadurai's notion of the scapes and sees Indian English literature as a kind of "literature-scape" (160) which she traces through a study of "the politics of location" (160). Sadana's perspective is thus different from mine in that she explores the location in which literature is produced, whereas I explore the production of locality within literature. S. Gupta has also connected the notions of Appadurai's scapes to literary theory, arguing that "[i]t is possible to think of Appadurai's '-scapes' as being close in spirit to what literary studies scholars may think of broadly as 'texts', presenting deformative possibilities and being constitutive of social processes as texts might appear from a literary perspective" (*Globalization* 88). While the scapes can be connected to the wider notion of "texts," I will use the terminology of the scapes as these reflect specific aspects that I will examine more closely. For my purposes, the concept of a cultural "text" becomes too wide to be useful.

So while I am not the first to use Appadurai within literary studies (Appadurai himself uses literature as a "case study" in *Modernity at Large*), the question must be asked why it has not been done to a greater extent yet. Appadurai's theories mostly come up in works dedicated to world literature and global flows, but little seems to have been done with the notions of neighborhoods and locality. A potential obstacle is the fact that Appadurai devotes most of his discussion in the chapter on the production of locality to neighborhood rather than to locality, making the concept seemingly elusive at first. As far as I am aware, my study is the first extended analysis and reading of the production of locality in literature.

I believe Appadurai to be of great value to literary studies, especially his views on the production of locality. A key reason for this is the centrality of the imagination for both literary studies and Appadurai's theory. Novels are expressions of the work of the imagination, in Appadurai's sense. The imagination works on several levels within a novel, which in turn can relate to and influence the readers' imagination. The potential of fiction to portray and produce locality is explained by the role that Appadurai gives to the work of literature as "social and moral maps." Sadana takes Appadurai's assertion of social and moral maps further: "to say that the world of literary production shows not only how authors, readers, and texts but also the entire nexus of literary producers and discourse create a social and moral framework that at once reflects and interrogates cultural norms" (7). In novels, authors can engage with the production of locality. As I have pointed out

above, using Appadurai's theory furthermore allows for a two-fold perspective: both on the production of locality in works of literature, and of how works of literature can contribute to the production of locality. The former approach allows for an exploration into questions of agency, place, and belonging, all enacted within the selected novels. Literature can and should be a prime site for investigating the questions Appadurai seems most concerned with: the work of the imagination, the ideology of a community, the tension between the global scapes and their local appropriations, as well as issues of agency. His theory of locality is highly applicable beyond urban anthropology. While a literary study like mine does not use ethnographic methods, my contribution can nevertheless be a detailed study of one aspect of the production of locality, and thereby open up a new field for further explorations of locality in literature.

In addition to the theory of Appadurai, I will use other models of particular relevance to the different novels. The concept of haunting will be explored in my reading of locality in *In Times of Siege*. Similarly, I will focus on storytelling and agency in *Love and Longing in Bombay*, while memories connected to a cultural archive will be central in *Freedom Song*. Haunting, storytelling, and memory are thus specific traits of the respective novels, novels that can be thought of as different "sites" for the investigation of the production of locality.

Layout of Thesis

The rest of the thesis is divided into three chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter, "The City as Power: *In Times of Siege*," I discuss how agency, haunting, and the writing of history are intimately connected to the uses and abuses of power, arguing that both past and present become unruly hauntings when intellectual integrity and the right to dissent become limited. I examine how the protagonist becomes enabled to be an agent in the production of locality, rather than distancing himself from the capital city.

The second chapter, "The City as Stories: *Love and Longing in Bombay*," is divided into two interrelated parts. I first discuss storytelling as a means through which locality can be produced. Then I discuss the stories within the novel, focusing especially on processes of deterritorialization and how Chandra's narrative counteracts alienation with storytelling.

In the third chapter, "The City as Family: *Freedom Song*," I discuss the production of locality in relation to the contrasts between cultural stagnation and characters trying to make their lives in the city. In spite of the novel's focus on the everyday mundane, my analysis will show how the political turbulence of the early 1990s profoundly affects the characters' negotiations of belonging.

In the conclusion, I relate the three novels and their respective portrayals of locality to each other.

Chapter 1. The City as Power: *In Times of Siege*

In this chapter I will explore Githa Hariharan's novel *In Times of Siege* (first published in 2003) through the concept of locality. The novel is set in Delhi between August 31st and October 15th, 2000, and can be read as a commentary on the political situation in India built up during the previous years. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which advocates Hindutva, had gained a majority for parliament in 1998, which was renewed in the new elections in 1999. In particular, the novel is a response to the "textbook controversy" (Mitra 136) initiated by the BJP, which involved the re-writing of textbooks with a Hindu perspective, as well as censorship of established historians.

The central conflict in the novel revolves around history professor Shiv Murthy's open university lesson on Basava, a twelfth-century poet and social reformer who was later inscribed into the Hindu religious canon shorn of dissent and social critique. A group called the Itihas Suraksha Manch (the "protection of history group") argues that Shiv's lesson distorts history by presenting Basava as human rather than as a demi-god and by teaching that he was against caste divisions. Shiv is particularly preoccupied by Basava's seeming disappearance from history, in the novel mirrored by the disappearance of Shiv's own father – committed to nationalism and secular values – who one day got off a train never to be heard from again. Helping Shiv to defend his intellectual heritage in the conflict is Meena, a sociology student who comes to stay with him in order to recuperate from a broken leg.

The production of locality in *In Times of Siege* is highly contested as the disjunctive discourses of secularism and sectarianism become pitted against each other. I will illuminate this disjuncture by approaching locality from a three-fold perspective: agency, haunting, and historiography. While agency is central to Arjun Appadurai's formulation of the production of locality, I add historiography and haunting to my reading, as these are central notions which affect the production locality in the novel. I introduce these concepts in greater detail below in light of Appadurai's notion of the "work of the imagination," which is a requirement for the production of locality.

However, before I start my reading of *In Times of Siege* through agency, haunting, and historiography, I will first outline the "textbook controversy," and then highlight certain aspects of the novel's setting, Delhi. Education was one area where the stress on India as a Hindu nation was felt, the issue coming to a head with the 1998 textbook controversy, a controversy which Hariharan engages with. In that year the minister for human resource development, Murali Manohar Joshi, proposed a revision of the school

curriculum. He was drawing on the recommendations formulated by a Hindu right group, which wanted "[t]he curriculum from the primary to the highest level of education to be Indianised, nationalised and spiritualised" (qtd. in Panikkar 72). The stress on education in Sanskrit and on the "valuable heritage of the Vedas and Upanishads" make it clear that to Indianize meant to 'Hinduize.' This revision was contested by historians who argued it was intended to promote a version of history with a strong Hindu bias. K. N. Panikkar, professor of history in Delhi, for example, argued that "democratic education, which is also secular in the Indian context, is under serious strain due to the recent communal inroads into it" (70). Many scholars also noted that the revisionism echoed the Orientalist historiography which describes the medieval period as the Muslim era, viewing the Muslims as invaders and neglecting any achievements accomplished during the period. In the beginning of an overview of the history textbook controversy, Mridula Mukherjee and Aditya Mukherjee note with indignation that "the communalists have focused attention on history because it is on a particular distorted and often totally fabricated presentation of history that the communal ideology is hinged." The communal version of history inscribed a Vedic past as a golden age and removed criticism of caste. What was new about the 1998 campaign compared to earlier revisionist attempts was that it was commissioned by the state, and that it was not only perceived to be directed at schoolbooks but that "the very discipline of history [was] under attack" (Mukherjee and Mukherjee). The textbook revisionism was only one, albeit highly debated and therefore visible aspect, of Hindutva. Writing in *The Hindu*, Achin Vanaik points out how the current Hinduization prevents the writing of history: "It is when the nationalism of a country and of its dominant elite is relaxed, confident, generous, humane, and democratic (everything that today's elite Indian nationalism is not) that the chances of writing one's own history better becomes more likely."

In the novel, the national capital is used to explore issues of power, truth (however relative) and national belonging. The locality of Delhi is overtly connected to national politics, which is both something larger than the city itself, but also manifested through the city.[1] Hariharan signposts the relevance of the city with an epigraph from Zbigniew Herbert: "and if the City falls but a single man escapes / he will carry the City within himself on the roads of exile / he will be the city."[2] In the context of *In Times of Siege*, the epigraph highlights how the city, in its aspect of locality, is an imagined structure, and it foregrounds the importance of Shiv's taking a stance, and thus becoming a bearer of the city. When Shiv takes a stance, he can be seen precisely as "a single man escap[ing]." Thus, the locality of the city becomes reterritorialized in Shiv, rather than him becoming

[1] See also James Holston and Arjun Appadurai for a discussion of the relationship between cities and citizenship.
[2] The epigraph is taken from Herbert's *Report from the Besieged City and other Poems*.

deterritorialized from the city. In spite of the initial signposting of the city, however, the importance of place has been largely unnoticed in earlier articles and reviews of the novel. Hariharan herself is one of few to highlight the issue when she responds to the interview question "if she thought she could have written *In Times of Siege* had she been living down South":

> Githa begins by saying that she has lived in many cities and has in previous novels invented landscapes that could be located in almost any city, Mumbai, Bangalore... and is suddenly stopped short by what the question suggests. "What an extraordinary question," […] "When I moved there, it took me many years to reconcile to Delhi. Somehow in this novel it seemed important to locate it in this city so redolent of political power, where, even the molecules of air seem weighed down with it... in this city of opportunists. Yes, in this book, there is a great departure in strategy. Definitely, the book had to be set in Delhi."
>
> ("Close to the Bone" interview by Kala Krishnan Ramesh)

Delhi, in the novel as well, is depicted as a city "redolent of political power."

The main characters are not born in the city.[3] Shiv is from Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, while Meena is the daughter of one of his childhood friends. Basava had come from what is now Karnataka. However, to participate in the production of locality does not require one to be a native of a particular place. Instead, Appadurai sees the movements of humans as one of the most prominent flows in the era of globalization (*Modernity* 33-34). By using these characters from the 'outside', Hariharan underscores her inscription of Delhi as the national capital. She portrays Basava not as a local figure, but rather as an Indian icon, a collective cultural inheritance, and uses him as a reminder of a diverse past by emphasizing his dissent and questioning of certain Hindu principles. All of these characters thus entwine in the capital of Delhi, and the conflict in turn is not parochial, but affects and reflects the national ideoscape. Similarly, the university where Shiv works is a national institution. As an "open university" it does not have students on campus, but spread throughout the country. A university is often a place where political power and individual agency are counterpointed, but rather than being depicted as an institution that encourages free thinking and intellectual debates, this university comes across as a place "where education did not break but reinforced walls" (Gowri Ramnarayan interviewing Hariharan). As Dipesh Chakrabarty observes: "Nation states

[3] Having protagonists born elsewhere than in the city of the setting is something which *In Times of Siege* has in common with *Love and Longing in Bombay* (discussed in the next chapter).

have the capacity to enforce their truth games, and universities, their critical distance notwithstanding, are part of the battery of institutions complicit in this process" ("Postcoloniality" 19). In Hariharan's novel, the university is an aspect of power, and cannot be viewed as separate from either the state or the city.

Agency and the Production of Locality

Hariharan traces how the university becomes increasingly enmeshed in politics, and Shiv's reaction against the development. Since Shiv lives by the university, it is his neighborhood which is becoming increasingly politicized. In order to trace how Shiv, and the novel as a whole, participates in the production of locality, I will first discuss how Shiv gains agency. Learning to act and finding the courage to dissent is central to the novel, and a condition for subsequently participating in the production of locality. Yet, the extent to which Shiv is actually participating in the production of locality is a question which needs to be addressed. I will explore the question by focusing on agency as an aspect of being "empowered to act socially" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 181). The discussion of agency will highlight how Shiv moves from being isolated from society to actively walking in his neighborhood.

A frequent image in the novel that relates to agency, or the lack thereof, is that of a bubble. Stepping out of the bubble to interact with society is central to Shiv, and indicates a new sense of agency. It eventually leads to Shiv refashioning himself, finding (or being forced to find) a new way of being in relation to the existing and changing notions of locality. Stepping out of the bubble is, however, a process involving many steps.

The bubble is first introduced in one of the novel's epigraphs, Basava's vachana 162:[4]

> Look at them,
> busy, making an iron frame
> for a bubble on the water
> to make it safe!

In the context of the novel, the epigraph can be seen as a comment on the right wing's attempt to canonize history in general and Basava in particular. The rigid interpretations of the past become an iron frame, a notion that calls forth images of imprisonment also seen in the title of the novel, *In Times of Siege*. Yet Shiv also appears to live in a

[4] A vachana "is a religious lyric in Kannada free verse; [it] means literally 'saying, thing said'" (Ramanujan 11).

metaphorical bubble, a sphere in which he does not have to engage much with the outside. The first image of Shiv is when he is inside his car, and he thinks of Meena's university as "[a]n island in landlocked Delhi" (*Siege* 2). Students at her university, as he sees it, need only see other parts of Delhi on their first trip to the university or when leaving it some years later. And yet, unlike Shiv's open university, shorn of all physical contact with its students, Meena's is a university with actual students on campus. However, by the end of the novel, in contrast to the image of a landlocked island, Shiv has come to realize that "[i]t is this endless moment [he] must step out of, this great bubble holding him in its sticky embrace…" (*Siege* 200). In order to participate in the present he must step out of the bubble with its "sticky embrace" or "iron frame" and start interacting with society at large.

Yet Shiv's lack of interaction with society is further described through different metaphors of enclosure that extend the notion of the bubble, metaphors that underline how Shiv becomes a man under siege. Initially, he reflects that Meena "is too young to appreciate … the comfort of being held in and enclosed" (*Siege* 50), something he seems to take great comfort in himself. For example, the room they mostly interact in is described as "snug. It holds the two of them in a cocoon of companionable sympathy" (*Siege* 35), while the dean's office is described as "a cool, soothing cave" (*Siege* 65). However, the more controversy his lesson generates, the more oppressive these enclosures become: "a cast like the one on Meena's leg is being wrapped around Shiv, a cast that immobilizes him completely" (*Siege* 88). Similarly, "[h]is room has been pushed into no-man's land. Like other disputed structures, it has a lock on the door" (*Siege* 130), until finally "his own home feels like exile" (*Siege* 131). Shiv is gradually losing his place in the city. Not only is he exiled from the physical neighborhood of the university, but the locality as a sense of belonging is similarly removed from him, to the point where being at home is equated with being in exile. With the physical landscape shrinking, the only room left for movement appears to be within himself.

However, the image of Shiv that the novel paints is the opposite of an active person. He is first described as a "teacher, a faculty type, a familiar monument in a city of ruins" (*Siege* 1), and later on, sitting in a meeting organizing his public defense, as "a statue around which living, talking people gather to make plans" (*Siege* 137). The image of the statue or the monument establishes his lack of agency, but it is also a symbol of a rigid past. Basava's poetry is further used to emphasize the dichotomy between the dynamic moving and the still statue: "*Things standing shall fall, but the moving shall ever stay*" (*Siege* 81).[5] A. K. Ramanujan discusses how the standing and moving mentioned in the poem "is at

[5] In Ramanujan's translation the word order is slightly different "the moving ever shall stay" (*Speaking* 88).

the heart of Vīraśaivism" (20), where the standing is "a piece of property, a thing inanimate," and the moving is "anything given to going and coming" (20-21). Thus, these lines of the poem indicate that "[w]hat's *made* will crumble, what's standing will fall; but what *is*, the living moving …, is immortal" (Ramanujan 21).

These states of standing and moving are developed further in the novel. The right wing's revision of history is described as an attempt to freeze-frame culture, to reduce the past "to the size of a pinpoint" (*Siege* 110). Contrasted to the frozen culture is an idea of culture as always moving, shifting, and adapting, where truth "is the size of a pinpoint – just a glimmer in a drop of water, part of the flowing stream" (*Siege* 107). The second pinpoint seems to resemble the notion of the immortal and moving, whereas the past reduced to a pinpoint is locked and un-moving. Shiv, for his part, starts to 'move' out of his bubble by the end of the novel, i.e., becomes an agent: "He too must become a part of this gigantic movement-loving ball, rolling ahead purposefully. … [H]e too must move, must consign the puny self, its weak-hearted hesitations, to oblivion" (*Siege* 201). Here Shiv reworks the philosophy of veerashaivism. Yet, there is also recognition that in order to leave his hesitations and inaction behind and exercise agency, he cannot remain a statue. The same holds for the institutions of education and politics, both representations of power, which cannot be reduced to reflect a narrow and circumscribed past. There is thus a correlation between Shiv and the institution in which he works; neither can afford to remain rigid by populist politics, or their agency (metaphorically speaking as regarding the institution) will vanish.

Agency also has temporal aspects; Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische define human agency as "informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to conceptualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)" (963).[6] The temporal aspects of agency indicate how the past is very consciously recalled in negotiations of the present as the "ways in which people understand their own relationship to the past, future, and present *make a difference* to their actions …" (Emirbayer and Mische 973). In extension, history and historiography become means through which the present is negotiated. Although the past, present, and future are simultaneously manifested, one temporal aspect may be more relevant for different actors (Emirbayer and Mische 971-72). As Emirbayer and Mische claim, "actors

[6] Emirbayer and Mische elaborate how the three temporal categories are transformed into three dimensions of agency: *the iterational element*, which is "the selective reactivation of actors of past patterns of thought and action"; *the projective element,* defined as "the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured"; and *the practical-evaluative element*, which is "the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments … in response to emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations" (971).

[are] capable of formulating projects for the future and realizing them, even if only in small part, and with unforeseen outcomes, in the present" (964).

While Shiv relates primarily to the past, and Meena to the present, the future is at stake for both. Whereas Shiv's source of agency mainly exists in the past (albeit triggered by the present sectarianism), Meena and her friends seem more situated in the present, with little interest in the nuances of the past.[7] She asks Shiv to give her a "quick précis for now" (*Siege* 91) of his Basava lesson, rather than studying it at length. One reason behind Shiv's decision to take a stance seems to be to promote a deeper understanding of the past and of secular values in the present (*Siege* 193, 194), his objectives being to show that dissent has a long history, that the past cannot be reduced to a singular vision, and that centrally there is "the right to know a thing in all the ways possible" (*Siege* 194). He becomes a reminder of certain valuable traits of the past. In the capacity of being alive and dissenting, he cannot be reduced to a silent and still statue. What Shiv's interpretation of Basava shows, is that history can be liberating. It is his flexible, non-rigid view of the past that enables him, as well as Meena and her friends, to make their stand.

Appadurai also adds the aspects of information and voice to agency, aspects directly linked to locality: a space in which an informed citizen can be heard. An informed participant is more significant than an uninformed, but being informed has little value if the participant does not have the space to be heard ("Airoots"). Being heard indicates the importance of the collective, whether through informal gatherings or the media; and Meena and her friends provide an arena where secularism is a prevailing norm, but also a space where Shiv is heard, not only by them but by society at large through their use of media and public manifestations. Most literally, this is done when Shiv screams himself hoarse during a demonstration (*Siege* 143). Becoming an agent by using his voice requires the bravery to face the crowd. Yet he becomes silent when he sees the university, as "the words freeze on his tongue" (*Siege* 143). He is then led to the gates and the waiting television crews, in contrast to heroically walking up to them himself. He delivers his speech, although this is only referred to retrospectively when Meena and Shiv watch the news (*Siege* 145-46). The novel thus seems to silence Shiv's most important action, the moment when he enters the public space to speak out. However, this is rather a strategy to highlight that Shiv's action gains prominence by its relay in the media, an extended space in which to be heard. What is important to Shiv is that he finally speaks out, having become "empowered to act socially" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 181). Another dimension to Shiv's speech being relayed through television is that it shows how the present is becoming the past. Shiv, described earlier as a statue and a monument, is on television

[7] I explore Shiv's role as a historian below.

shown as a living being with a voice, in spite of the fact that his voice had momentarily frozen before his speech. The real question, it appears, is what legacy can be left for the future. In that manner, Shiv's conflict resembles Basava's.

Hariharan's narrative is full of inserted newspaper articles, arguing for and against revisionism. The articles, as well as hate mail delivered directly to Shiv's home, break the narrative flow of Shiv's internal musings, and are portrayed as intrusions into his private sphere. The articles and hate mail thus ruptures Shiv's bubble, as his zone of comfort becomes entangled in the larger struggle. It is hardly a coincident that an episode which reveals Shiv's ambiguous relationship to the city occurs when he is en route to a TV studio, comfortably traveling through the city in an air-conditioned car (another extension of a bubble):

> The untidy, grasping tentacles of Delhi are outside the window glass, powerless. They seem to belong to a television programme, to a viewer's guide to some distant, seething planet. Thank god, you think, watching the images on the screen-like window glass, that I don't live in a place like that.
>
> (*Siege* 113)

The irony is, of course, that he does live there. Since Shiv is en route to a TV studio to defend his view of a multiple and culturally rich past, the image of the seething city entails both a recognition that he does live in the city but is not nostalgically attached to it, as well as a recognition of his potential of contributing to the production of its locality. The episode suggests how the bubble that Shiv lives in, in this instance represented by the car, must burst before he is able to participate in the production of locality. Thus, Shiv is not seeking to provide a "viewer's guide" to a distant planet by restoring the past, but to move beyond the present limitations by bringing the diverse past into the future.

It is through this participation in the production of locality that Shiv is able to let go of his intense focus on the past, and to imagine a future in which he can make a difference. Making a difference is not a utopian doomed-to-fail project. As I will explore further below, Shiv internalizes the city, becomes a carrier of its locality, or rather of what he feels should be its locality, with a complex past used to create something new in the present. Agency, as Emirbayer and Mische point out, is "always agency *toward* something, by means of which actors enter into relationships with surrounding persons, places, meanings, and events" (973). Furthermore, Hariharan interweaves the individual and collective aspects of society. This is perhaps most precisely done in the description of when Shiv finally promises himself (and Meena, by implication) to take a stance against the Hindu right, a recognition of his own agency. Shiv then thinks of his place in society

as encompassing a "bit of land they own together" (*Siege* 179). Rather than being a physical place, this metaphorical bit of land is a private conceptualization of locality, shared with Meena, of locality as a value and a feeling. There is "no ghost that can tell them how they should cultivate it" (*Siege* 179). While the past remains important, this stance indicates that Shiv is now an agent in his own life.

Shiv's learns to act in his private life in order to do the same in his public life. There is a correlation between Shiv becoming able to take care of everyday domestic issues, such as cooking, and him gaining the courage to stand up for his values. Hariharan thus connects different levels of agency, from the most private to the collective. Although the participation with others may still be limited, by stepping out of his bubble and reaching out to Meena and through her to others, Shiv is part of creating a public arena where his values can be expressed. Yet the novel's ending is not Utopian. As Shiv notes, Basava and his questions remain largely unheard because the media have moved on to different stories (*Siege* 181). The frequent image of stepping out of a bubble returns when Shiv toward the end of the novel goes for a walk (*Siege* 193). He then figuratively steps out of the "political prison" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 32) the Hindutva discourse has been constructing, by acknowledging and reaffirming "the value of the only heirloom he needs from the past, the right to know a thing in all the ways possible" (*Siege* 194). It is by remembering this past, Hariharan is arguing, that participation in the present can become more tolerant of diversity. As Appadurai points out, "everyday peace, or tolerance, or willingness to live together" is also a production ("Minorities" 124), linked with the production of locality. A sense of everyday tolerance is pivotal to Shiv, just as sectarianism for him is alienating.

The Hindutva discourse is given a voice through Shiv's daughter, Tara. She lives in Seattle, and Shiv's wife Rekha is visiting her during the time-frame of the novel. Tara epitomizes the diasporic subject imagining a golden native past: "It's only after coming to the US that many of us have learnt to appreciate Indian traditions" (*Siege* 112) she writes after criticizing both Shiv's lesson and his public involvement. As she explains: "It's sort of weird and embarrassing to explain why you have written something against our temples and priests and all that" (*Siege* 112). Tagged on to the end of her emails is "Do you Yahoo?" (*Siege* 112). Her question in this context seems to trigger images of Jonathan Swift's yahoos, reflecting her communal sense of locality. Tara is characterized as being a complete opposite to Meena, and perhaps a reason for this is to highlight how Meena and her friends represent only one side of the urban youth's understanding of their locality. Thus, while Meena asserts her independence and agency by organizing and participating in public demonstrations, Tara is embarrassed that her father seems to be against Hinduism. She does not share Shiv's values, and Shiv thinks of Tara as having

"overc[o]me doubt very early in her life" (*Siege* 112). It does appear strange that he is not more concerned with his daughter's narrow world-view. After all, as a teacher, Shiv has wanted to introduce his students to historical diversity, something that apparently does not pertain to his own household, where he has long since stopped talking about his academic interests (*Siege* 108). Yet, this only underlines the bubble he has been living within. In portraying Shiv as a man who is not very active within his own family, Hariharan creates an even greater contrast when Shiv is forced to become an agent in society. If this will affect his domestic relations remains unanswered, since Rekha does not return before the end of the novel. However, while we can only speculate about Rekha's reaction, Shiv knows that the change he has gone through is "irreversible" and that his "old life has been misplaced" (*Siege* 194). This indicates the full transformation of Shiv, how he actively claims his inherited values as his own, as worth defending and spreading.

Meena plays a pivotal role as a character who will continue the struggle for tolerance and diversity. While she is always described as an agent in spite of her broken leg (*Siege* 5, 55, 111), she too is transformed by the end of the narrative. Remaining active with an "energetic, obsessive pursuit of independence" (*Siege* 198), Meena is also described as "[q]uieter, less excitable than usual" (*Siege* 180). The extent to which she has been changed by her involvement with Shiv remains unclear, but it is noteworthy that Shiv thinks of her as "an unlikely reincarnation of his father" (*Siege* 168), his other role model. When Meena leaves Shiv's residence, he gives her his father's walking stick. The cane is a recurring metaphor in the novel: representing his memories of his father, it had been "Meena who put this stick in his hand again, coaxed his limping legs in the direction he knew – better than she – must be taken" (*Siege* 194). Already when visiting the Hampi ruins (*Siege* 159), Shiv had realized that his foundation and identity were fragile in a hardened collective imagination which saw the past reduced to simple oppositions.[8] Even then he had known which direction must be taken, but it was his attraction to Meena that inspires him to be brave, to defend his values against the Hindu right. In passing the walking stick on, Shiv is also passing on what his father stood for to the next generation. The aspect of passing on values is emphasized by Meena's reaction at receiving the cane: "I'll take good care of it" (*Siege* 203). As Meena leaves, Shiv hears the sound of the disappearing cane (*Siege* 204), and an added implication is that he is now able to stand up for himself without the need of a crutch.

In addition to always being seen as a person of action, Meena is chiefly characterized by two additional features: her appetite and her eyes. Meena's appetite

[8] I return to this episode on pp. 53-54.

becomes a metaphor for activity, speaking of her ability to combine enjoyment and engagement, for indulging in pleasure and being able to "hold her liquor" (*Siege* 35). Furthermore, her appetite becomes a catalyst for Shiv to start to interact with the city, by doing mundane errands to get food stuffs for Meena, a means of both satisfying her appetite and providing pleasure. The other attribute frequently referred to in the narrative is her "fish eyes". The etymology of her name refers to fish, but her eyes take on deeper significance as Shiv becomes more and more involved with and attracted to her. At one point Shiv notes that "[s]een through her eyes, the familiar campus acquires vast and mysterious dimensions" (*Siege* 43), which indicates how he is becoming more influenced by Meena's way of seeing. An interesting shift occurs when Shiv's eyes are described instead. This occurs during a meeting with Meena and her friends, in which they are working on a leaflet. Meena reads the draft, "her face … almost like an avenging angel's" (*Siege* 99). Shiv then "reminds himself sharply that the meeting is about him, that it is *his* world at stake. His eyes fix on Meena" (*Siege* 99). Thus, at the pivotal instance when Shiv realizes that it is *his* struggle, he focuses on Meena. She is his model for agency and action, and it is through inter-action with her that Shiv is enabled to become an agent of his own.

By tracing the steps through which Shiv becomes empowered to act rather than being a statue or someone living in a bubble, I have laid a foundation for the following explorations into haunting and history. Shiv's production of locality is conditioned by these two aspects, and they will therefore be explored more fully below. For now, I note that the shift from being exiled at home to identifying with a metaphorical, co-owned bit of land, signifies Shiv's altered perception of place, an identification with the city in which he lives. There is a movement from the isolated and ousted to the active participation in, and the claiming of, place. However, for Shiv the city and the cultural heritage contain a haunting.

Haunting Past and Present

Both the city and the university are centers of political power, and in my exploration of locality I will now turn to haunting as a force which disrupts their power relations. My main argument here is that in *In Times of Siege* locality is constructed in relation to haunting, where haunting is both a context and an imaginative catalyst.[9] In my definition of haunting I rely primarily on Avery Gordon's study *Ghostly Matters*, and in order to connect haunting to locality I will especially focus on how Gordon's definition relates to Appadurai's idea of "the work of the imagination" (*Modernity* 146). Gordon defines

[9] *In Times of Siege* is not Hariharan's first involvement with ghosts. *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994) deals, as the title indicates, with ghosts and haunting, though it is primarily about stories and storytelling.

haunting as a "social phenomenon" (*Ghostly* 7), an unruly past refusing to be forgotten, which can become manifested through specters. As a social phenomenon, haunting may be revealed through individuals (ghosts) or experienced by individuals, but most importantly, "haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposed over and done with (slavery for instance) or when their oppressive nature is denied (as in free labor or national security)" (*Ghostly* xvi). Thus, haunting in the present definition relates to the social and the political. It is connected to (remembered) issues of the past, and, equally, to the creation of memory and history by 're-remembering' that which was forgotten or suppressed, in order for the "abusive systems of power" to become recognized for what they are.[10] Haunting accordingly functions as a sort of agency through remembrance.[11] What haunting does is to remind us that some things that we may have forgotten did indeed happen.

Haunting is an unresolved issue that blurs the lines between past, present, and future. By making itself known the past enters the present, and through engagement with it, it is possible to imagine a different future. Consequently, haunting cannot be locked in time: it is not only the past coming to haunt the present, but equally the present haunting the past. One implication is that the past is not something given or static. It is open for interpretation and re-evaluation, which, in turn, affects the future. The openness of the past also means that there are different stories and interpretations about the past circulating at the same time, each used in different creations of the present and the future. I will therefore highlight how haunting in the novel not only comes from the past, but also how the present can be said to haunt the past (through, for example, revisionism). As Gordon uses the concept, haunting is therefore more than just the presence of ghosts or specters. It arises from social injustices and becomes spectral in order for these injustices or abusive powers to become visible. She expands on Jacques Derrida's insight that we must "learn to live *with* ghosts," an ability that leads to living better, or with greater justice (Derrida, xvii-xviii). Elaborating on the aspects of justice, Gordon makes the addition that haunting "is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done" (*Ghostly* xvi).[12] The something-to-be-done is a feeling directed equally towards the past and the future: past injustices need to be recognized in order for a different future to become possible.

[10] I will further explore haunting and trauma in Chandra's story "Dharma" in the chapter on *Love and Longing in Bombay*.

[11] Memory is defined by Pierre Nora as "always a phenomenon of the present, a bond tying us to the eternal present" (qtd. in Chatterjee *History and the Present*, 10). I return to memory and the connections between the past, present and future in the chapter on Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song*.

[12] See Gordon's "Haunting and Futurity" where she elaborates on how her definition of haunting differs from Derrida's.

It is the blurring of lines between past, present and future which makes haunting a complex issue in *In Times of Siege*. That stories are "cast not only in words but also in granite" emphasizes the slippery "engagement between history and myth" (*Siege* 157). When the Hindu right claim the past as a golden age, it is an interpretation based on the present and on myths which Shiv as a historian does not see as containing the whole truth. Yet that Shiv is also influenced by the present becomes clear when he focuses on Basava's egalitarian and humanitarian side based on the memories of his father. Both sides participate in the remaking of the past, but their agendas are different. What the right wing wishes to forget becomes a haunting presence for Shiv. By focusing on the medieval eclectic veerashaiva movement and the time surrounding Independence, Hariharan inscribes the present in an unruly past that refuses to be forgotten or white-washed. The ghosts of Basava and Shiv's father function both as reminders of the past, but also as interlocutors in Shiv's negotiations of the present.

Shiv's father had been a freedom fighter, and a primary concern for Shiv is to uphold the values he feels are his inheritance: "Freedom. Values. The common good" (*Siege* 82). Insofar that these values reflect a secularist attitude characterized by diversity, Shiv ascribes the failure of independent India to live up to its founding principles as the cause of his father's disappearance.[13] Sumit Sarkar discusses aspects of the national struggle which are relevant for understanding Shiv's father and the ideals of the freedom movement:

> So many of the aspirations aroused in the course of the national struggle remained unfulfilled – the Gandhian dream of the peasant coming into his own in Ram-rajya [the rule of the legendary and the ideal god-king Ram], as much as the left ideals of social revolution. And as the history of independent India and Pakistan (and Bangladesh) was repeatedly to reveal, even the problems of a complete bourgeois transformation and successful capitalist development were not fully solved by the transfer of power of 1947. (Qtd. in Chakrabarty, "Postcoloniality" 5)

Thus, Shiv's father comes to represent the dire consequences of social violence and sectarianism, as these seem to be the reasons behind his disappearance (*Siege* 34-35, 187-88). Shiv speculates frequently about his father's destiny, having "an entire catalogue of scenarios in his head" (*Siege* 187). He wonders, for example, if it may have been "a

[13] Major concerns of India's constitution are the caste system and secularism. "The task before the Constituent Assembly, as the future prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru declared in his opening speech, was the forging of a new, more egalitarian model of democracy, … which would abolish discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, and sex" (Keating 1).

peculiar progressive sort of amnesia" which makes his father go "to meet it; become part of it; become the past" (*Siege* 187). However, the father has not become the past but is a vital part of Shiv's present. Similarly when Shiv speculates that his father may have been robbed and murdered it is described as "a particularly banal" scenario (*Siege* 188). The version of his father's disappearance which seems most important to Shiv is described as "the more poignant script" (*Siege* 187):

> It is no longer 1947, glory glimmering in the midst of the ruins of Partition …. It is 1962. The sheen of nationalistic fervour is long gone. The fabric of the new republic is fraying rapidly. Even the relatively privileged, those who have the luxury of acquaintance with concepts of freedom and independence, can see this. (*Siege* 188)

Not only is the story of his father's disillusion "more poignant" than other possible narratives, but it is also the version he tells Meena (*Siege* 34-35), which seems to indicate that it is the version Shiv wants to believe in. Yet he does not support one story at the cost of another. The different scripts are there, all possible, and while it seems as if Shiv wants to believe in the "poignant" version, he also acknowledges the possibility of the other narratives and, in fact, describes the possible murder as "the only scenario left" (*Siege* 188).

The father keeps haunting Shiv, who has to come to terms with the values his father fought for during the freedom movement and then passed along to him. Shiv thinks of his missing father as a presence, sometimes lurking in the shadows, either approving or looking (*Siege* 40, 96), and he recalls his father's "wordless sadness" and "the questions that always haunted him," questions regarding the state of the nation (*Siege* 159-60). Thus, the haunting father is already haunted himself. In Shiv's perception, what haunts the ghost of his father is, in Gordon's terminology, an "unresolved social violence" (*Ghostly* xvi). As Caroline Herbert points out, Nehru's speeches and addresses at the time of independence describe independence "as a pledge that must be endlessly repeated" and, therefore, as something which is also "to come" ("National Hauntings" 80).[14] What upset his father, and thus what remains a haunting presence for Shiv, is that the ideals the father fought for, the slogans he shouted, have not been realized. By taking a stance, Shiv actively recognizes the "something-to-be-done," an urgent need to act for change, and this may in turn bring about a possibility for the existence of Derrida's "to

[14] C. Herbert is quoting Derrida's "to come" here. See also Derrida's *Specters of Marx*.

come". When the "to come" is a reality, the haunting ceases, since the cause of the haunting has then been resolved.

That the haunting is different from a trauma becomes clear in the way Shiv relates to his father. Gordon distinguishes between the two, seeing trauma as binding one to the repression "of a memory of a terrible, horrible, shocking event or experience" ("Haunting and Futurity" 4). Haunting, on the other hand, involves experiences of, or is the result of "being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed" (*Ghostly* xvi). However, haunting is not the same as these experiences. Rather:

> What's distinctive about haunting is that it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely …. Haunting raises specters, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, the future. (*Ghostly* xvi)

A consequence of trauma is that the future is fixed, as the traumatized are trapped in the traumatic event ("Haunting and Futurity" 4). Haunting, however, instigates something-to-be-done, and opens up the future to possible transformation. Thus, while trauma indicates suppression, haunting is suppression made visible, and within this visibility exists a potential for recognition and action leading to change.[15] Furthermore, Gordon argues that the ghost "has a real presence" (*Ghostly* xvi), as a ghost makes it apparent that what has been repressed is now directly present. The ghost also "demands its due," which is our attention and recognition (*Ghostly* xvi).

Shiv's initial obsession and his seemingly constant musings over his father's end can be viewed as traumatic (*Siege* 103). While initially traumatized by his father's sudden disappearance, he in time becomes motivated to protect the ideals he has inherited, ideals now contested by an increasingly sectarian ideoscape. When the trauma is transformed into protecting his father's values, and thus his own inheritance, the missing father no longer functions as a constant repetition but as a haunting presence, a reminder of the fight against oppressive systems. As a consequence, the haunting leads to agency, when Shiv recognizes and engages with the something-to-be-done.

The most striking instance of haunting is perhaps found in Shiv's nightmare, where the father is changed from benign advisor to a ghastly apparition demanding his due:

[15] In the chapter on *Love and Longing in Bombay*, I discuss the story "Dharma" as a 'traumatic haunting' (see pp. 73-75). There, the protagonist is traumatized by an accident in his childhood, but is able to overcome the trauma when it is turned into a haunting presence. Thus, facing and acknowledging the ghost through constructing a narrative enables him to let go of the trauma.

> Shiv can see his father walking toward him. Shiv retreats. But the skeletal frame comes closer; now he can see the face, a skull's grimace within hissing distance: "Look!"
>
> Shiv turns around, looks. Through the ghostly haze of fire and smoke he sees a dozen men brandishing rods and flags on the building roof. Then the dome comes down.
>
> His head swings around, he looks indignantly into his father's prophetic face. But all he gets is a mocking, merciless taunt from the death-head: "How many more times?" (*Siege* 164)

The question "How many more times?" reverberates through the narrative, directly linking the past with the present, and with the future. It also reminds the reader of a destruction closer to home, the razing of Shiv's university office (*Siege* 130), thus linking the grand destruction of Ayodhya with the mundane intimidation of a professor, all part of a traumatic repetition. While Shiv "has passed the night unharmed for the present," there is uncertainty since "who knows when it may come back again, play itself over in other places, other times?" (*Siege* 165). In the nightmare vision of the father, he appears as an allegorical figure, representing the (ravished) founding values. Yet, in the other instances when Shiv not only remembers his father but envisions his presence, the father is not allegorical, at least not to the extent that he is in the nightmare. Instead, the nightmare seems to embody in the father what Shiv perceives as his legacy, his values. The image of the father turned into a "skeletal frame" with "death-head" also emphasizes the direness of addressing sectarianism, displaying the threatening brute violence. Taking a stance is consequently not an easy or safe decision for Shiv.

In Shiv's mind, images of his father and of Basava mingle, though this is not something he seems to be completely aware of himself. The narrative's free-indirect discourse makes it difficult for the reader to interpret how much of the narrative is relayed through Shiv, and what he is unaware of. However, his image of Basava is clearly linked with his memories of his father, and the two ghosts resemble each other (*Siege* 64, 105). Both have their individual stories, but their values are the same. Thus Shiv remembers his father telling him that "[y]ou must mine the truth" (*Siege* 82) and he thinks of Basava as "trying to mine this failure [of the veerashaiva movement] for new answers to old questions" (*Siege* 105). When Shiv imagines being questioned by "Basava's man," the man speaks "as persuasive[ly] as his own father" (*Siege* 64). Due to the narrative structure, it is impossible to tell whether there are two distinct voices or just one. Just as the free-indirect discourse obliquely switches between the narrator and Shiv, there is a

similar structure in the representation of Basava and Shiv's father. Thus, the narrative strategy employed emphasizes haunting; its shifts between Shiv and the narrator are echoed in the shifts between the ghosts of Basava and the father (*Siege* 64, 104-06). Similarly, the ends of both his father and of Basava resemble each other since both were disillusioned men who disappeared mysteriously. Also, the issues that Basava grappled with are in many ways the same ones Shiv's father was concerned with. Both Basava and Shiv's father are, to Shiv, primarily concerned with issues of truth, and equally with issues of social equality and cultural diversity. These are the very values Shiv feels are being ignored by the right-wing ideoscape, and the haunting is thus a way through which these values are constantly encountered and remembered. Consequently, the social injustices of the medieval past and the unfulfilled promises of independence both plague the present.

While Basava was concerned about caste, it is not a foregrounded topic in *In Times of Siege*, but makes itself known through haunting. Basava propagated for the equality of all, and he opposed both gender discrimination and caste, and Shiv is indignant that those who now hold Basava to be sacred are the same people who deny the atrocity of the caste division (*Siege* 160). In the novel, a different 'caste' figures frequently: Meena's cast. While merely homophone, it is almost as if the cast becomes a metaphor for caste. It "immobilizes" (*Siege* 88) and is as rigorous as the caste system of Basava's times would have been. Shiv thinks of himself as "miscast" (*Siege* 142), ponders the meaning of "castaway" (*Siege* 196), and even ends up bringing Meena's discarded cast in his car (*Siege* 196). Haunting "is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known" (Gordon, *Ghostly* xvi) and the frequency with which 'cast' occurs in the narrative, paralleled with Basava's and Shiv's egalitarian struggles, makes 'caste' into a haunting presence.

Hariharan further links Basava's protest against caste with the contemporary Hindu-Muslim division.[16] The discourse of Hindutva, which peaked with the destruction of the Babri Masjid, haunts Shiv constantly. Hindutva is contrary to what his father fought for, to the founding ideals, to Shiv's understanding of locality, and it is now threatening to seriously alter his own incorporation within the nation. There is thus a dual aspect of haunting, where not only the past haunts the present, but equally, the present haunts the past. Another of these present hauntings is the Gujarat riots in 2002.[17]

[16] Haraiharan is not the first to link Basava with contemporary times. As Aparna Dharwadker notes about Girish Karnad's play about Basava, *Tale-Danda* (1993), "[T]he terms 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' [can be substituted] for the terms 'brahmin' and untouchable', without modifying the play's thematics…" (xiii). Appadurai also notes the connection between Hindus, Muslims, and caste: "In India, the Hindu-Muslim divide is now one among several ethnic and separatist movements, crosscut by the largest caste wars ever seen in the history of the subcontinent, unleashed by the revival of the Mandal Commission Report in the early years of the 1990s" (*Modernity* 143).

[17] The riots (or "pogrom" as Appaduari terms it [*Fear* 112]) were unleashed after a train with Hindu activists was burnt, supposedly by Muslims (Ghassem-Fachandi 32). In the subsequent riots Muslims were the main targets. The state politicians and the police were accused of not only passively standing by, but also facilitating the

Rajender Kaur has argued that "Gujarat is the absent sign" in the novel and that Hariharan responds with "righteous outrage" against the social abusiveness of "the unprecedented level of state sponsored, rather than the hitherto state tolerated, violence against minority communities in India" (49). As an absent sign Gujarat functions as an uncanny absent presence. Although the Gujarat turmoil occurs after the novel's setting, the conflict in *In Times of Siege* gains relevance by the events predating its publication as the reader is likely to be aware that the answer to the haunting question of "How many more times?" is 'yet again.'

Basava's poetry, as Shiv understands it, reverberates with an insistence that something be done about the social injustices. Like Basava, he too "needed to examine and think and criticize everything that was traditional, *sanctioned*, as much as he needed to breathe" (*Siege* 60). The present in *In Times of Siege* is one where the failure of the independent nation to live up to its founding ideals, ideals articulated by both Basava and Shiv's father, haunt the present ideoscape.[18] Thus, "the something-to-be-done feels as if it has already been needed or wanted before, perhaps forever, certainly for a long time, and we cannot wait for it any longer" (Gordon, "Haunting and Futurity" 5). This means that taking some sort of action is urgently needed. Hauntings can be overcome, but not by banishing or exorcising the ghosts. Instead, it is by paying the ghost its due by instigating change that the haunting loses power (Gordon, *Ghostly* xvi). Thus, while the Hindu right turns Basava into "a singer with a saintly face," Shiv sees this as banishing him, trying to render him "safe" and "incapable of demanding shrewdly, threateningly" (*Siege* 86). Instead of banishing Basava's questions, Shiv tries to understand them and their relevance for the present time.

While Basava is a central figure in the novel, and while Shiv is adamant about the need for considering all possible clues to his life, Hariharan ends the novel with a disclaimer of sorts. Molly Westerman has studied the haunting "intratextual relationship" between some historiographical metafictions and their afterwords, and she argues that the "tension and interaction between note and narrative raise concerns about the meaning and uses of history, foregrounding questions of how we ought to imagine, write, and read the past" (370-71). This is also true for *In Times of Siege* and its 'disclaimer' in the Acknowledgments: "But *In Times of Siege* is a work of fiction. It has used a variety of sources to imagine a life of Basava in a way meaningful to our times. Any resemblance to real individuals, places and events is purely coincidental" (*Siege* 206). Thus, it seems at first

violence. For more on the Gujarat riots, see Parvis Ghassem-Fachandi. Hariharan writes extensively about the lingering consequences of the Gujarat riots in the novel *Fugitive Histories*.

[18] Another instance of Basava haunting the present comes when Shiv is suddenly reminded of the controversy sparked by Shivaprakash's play on Basava (*Siege* 109). In the acknowledgements of the novel, Hariharan states that she is "grateful to … H.S. Shivaprakash, who shared with me his impressive knowledge of vachanas and virashaivism, as well as his own encounter with censorship some years ago" (206).

that Hariharan is offering the apology which Shiv refuses to give. However, this is not the case, as Hariharan continues: "The same, alas, cannot be said for any resemblance to real-life ignorance, prejudice or bigotry" (*Siege* 206). The note instigates a haunting since Basava is explicitly imagined to be "meaningful to our times."

Haunting reminds us of what cannot, or should not, be forgotten, of issues that cannot be allowed to rest. Shiv's nightmare vision of his ghostly father discussed above is a good example of how haunting affects locality. The razing of a building (the Babri Masjid) not only changes the physical landscape, but epitomizes what happens when places are turned into "disputed structures" (Hariharan, "In Search" 127). In a landscape of disputed structures, engaging in the production of locality becomes increasingly difficult. It is no longer 'free' citizens who partake in society, but increasingly 'imprisoned' ones. This is shown in the novel by Shiv's territory being continually diminished: first he is asked to take a leave (initially to care for Meena), then his office is demolished, and then a guard is placed outside his home (*Siege* 14, 130, 167). Shiv now lives in a disputed structure, a representation of the contested nature of his profession as a university professor of history. To a degree, the nightmare is a traumatic repetition of a social memory (the Ayodhya demolition), but with the ghost of his father hissing his question "How many more times?" (*Siege* 164), the event becomes more of a haunting, an unresolved social violence that affects both the present and the future. Another aspect of the nightmare vision of the destruction of the building is that it echoes another event in the novel: the burning of Basava's city Kalyana (*Siege* 62). History repeats itself, for Shiv a chilling and haunting experience.

Haunting, however, can also be a way through which the past can be approached, as Hariharan writes: "Basava's passionate questions would remain relevant more than eight hundred years later" (*Siege* 63). The questions he posed and the critique he levied reverberate through literature. Gordon's argument that "[w]e need to know where we live in order to imagine living elsewhere" (*Ghostly* 5), can be connected both to locality and to haunting. Haunting is part of the awareness of where we live. For Shiv knowing the past and trying to come up with answers to Basava's questions is central in order for him to know where he lives so that he can "imagine living elsewhere" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 5). To imagine living elsewhere is to partake in the collective imagination and in the production of locality. It is indeed crucial since "[w]e need to imagine living elsewhere *before we can live there*" (Gordon, *Ghostly* 5; my emphasis). It seems clear that Gordon's sense of the imagination as an aspect of participation in society is in line with Appadurai's conviction that "the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 7). As Appadurai continues, "It is the imagination, in its collective

forms, that create ideas of neighborhood and nationhood…" (*Modernity* 7), as well as more intimate localities.

It is through the work of the imagination that locality as a structure of feeling is produced. The local thus requires "agency, purpose, vision, design" (Appadurai, "The Right" 33; see also Guasch 1), terms that emphasize how locality is not something already there, but needs negotiation. Appadurai has also identified the cultural "capacity to aspire": "it is in culture that ideas of the future, as much as of those about the past, are embedded and nurtured" ("Capacity" 179). He discusses the capacity to aspire in the context of poverty, and notes, in case we think the concept too facile, that the capacity "is not evenly distributed" ("Capacity" 188). I see "the capacity to aspire" as resembling the "something-to-be-done." Both concepts are about instigating change in order to promote a better future. Yet the work of the imagination and the "something-to-be-done" do not indicate an easily achieved Utopia. As Appadurai points out, "[o]ne man's imagined community is another man's political prison" (*Modernity* 32), and as Gordon warns, haunting can occur when "abusive systems of power make themselves known" (*Ghostly* xvi). However, the only way to break out of those abusive systems is to first recognize their existence, and, secondly, to instigate a change through collective imagination.

At the end of the novel, the haunting is for Shiv transformed into a feeling of agency or a "something-to-be-done." He is able to imagine "living elsewhere," even though this elsewhere is not fully realized, or is only an internal possibility. This active imagination is connected to a sense of closure regarding his father's absence. As he watches a storm together with Meena and a security guard, he thinks of it as "what it must be like to perform a funeral rite for a father" (*Siege* 191). Not only is this the first time he is able to express a resolution to his loss, but he does so through participation with others. "Just when Shiv is on the verge of living up to his father's ideals" (*Siege* 191), he finds a way to let go of the ghost of his father, and instead aspire to his ideals. The transformation of values, and the putting them to use in the present is for Shiv a part of being able to live elsewhere.

The Haunted Historian

The specific means by which Shiv becomes empowered to act is through his profession, history, which he uses to understand and change the present. The third focus of this chapter is therefore on the role of historiography, as the controversy generated by Shiv's history lesson is central to the novel. Historiography is a context for the production of

locality, and in the novel haunting as a "something-to-be-done" and historiography as a means of agency interrelate and affect the production of locality.

I use Aviezer Tucker's definitions of history and historiography: history is "past events, processes, etc." while historiography is "what historians write, about past events, about history" (xii).[19] Historiography is related to storytelling (see chapter on *Love and Longing in Bombay*) because, as Linda Hutcheon explains, history and fiction are both discourses written to make sense of the past (*Poetics* 89). Historiography is a means of systematization and reconstruction (*Poetics* 92), since "the meaning and shape are not *in the events*, but *in the systems* which make those past 'events' into present historical 'facts'" (*Poetics* 89). Homi K. Bhabha sees the representation of the past as an "aesthetic process" which is also "a moment of 'transit'." This moment is "a form of temporality that is open to disjunction and discontinuity and that sees the process of history engaged, rather like art, in a negotiation of the framing and naming of social reality…" ("World" 448). In line with Bhabha, I believe that historiography as a "process of history engaged" can be viewed as an act informed by the present, i.e., a story told about the past which is constructed and used in the present. Appadurai notes that "the politics of remembering and forgetting (and thus of history and historiography)" are now more contested than ever since they are "central to ethnicist battles tied up with nationalism" (*Modernity* 156). Furthermore, Appadurai argues that "the nation-state plays a significant role in so far that it significantly controls the apparati through which the economy of remembering and forgetting is configured" ("Globalization of Archaeology" 37). As a counter-balance to the power of the nation-state, "media … plays a powerful independent role" ("Globalization of Archaeology" 37) when the past becomes a political tool in various discourses regarding nationalism, authenticity and cultural heritage. Thus, the capacity of historiography to contribute to remembering or forgetting is controlled and negotiated through complex interactions between dominant political agendas and counter-forces.

In *In Times of Siege* the historiographical "systems" posited by Hutcheon are largely dictated by Hindutva. History is contested in the novel since the past is actively used to create different conceptions of the present. As noted above, historiography, in simple terms, denotes the writing and interpretation of history, but it is clear in *In Times of Siege* that there is nothing simple about it. Shiv identifies with his role as a historian. At the age of fifty-two, he is "finally a professor of history" (*Siege* 3). To Shiv, and most of his colleagues, "the word *historian* – something of a touchstone, an ideal – is never absent from their minds" (*Siege* 17-18), even though he does not yet feel he lives up to the sort of professor of history "his father imagined in daydreams on his behalf" (*Siege* 4). While it is

[19] See "Historiography" in the *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* for a record on how historiography has developed.

never made explicit exactly how the father imagined the ideal historian, he presumably shares Shiv's view: as a seeker of truth(s) by looking through and connecting different strands of narratives into historiographical texts exploring a diverse past (*Siege* 68).

Contrasted to the ideal historian is Shiv's colleague Arya, who is seemingly appointed for political reasons rather than merit, and increasingly involved with the advancement of Hindutva. Shiv "doesn't know where the man got a doctorate from, or even if he has one in the first place" (*Siege* 17).[20] Shiv is supposed to be writing a new lesson, one on the Vijayanagar Empire. However, he cannot think of a way to do so without causing controversy. He cannot subscribe to the "facts" catering to the Right that his superior puts forth: "One: Vijayanagar was a glorious Hindu Empire, a peak, if you like, of the Hindu past and heritage. Two: the empire was defeated in battle and the great city plundered by the Muslim kingdoms" (*Siege* 157). These facts, Shiv feels, are only reductions of a much larger picture that he had experienced during a visit to the Hampi ruins of former Vijayanagar. Awestruck by its grandeur, he was also devastated by the ready acceptance of "us" and "them," Hindus and Muslims, which his driver articulates (*Siege* 159). For Shiv this is an unnerving experience:

> Suddenly, all of Shiv's reading and scholarly training, … dissipated into the gathering darkness around them. He was naked, unprotected. He had forgotten who exactly he was; all the collective progress of the last fifty years had been torn off his body in an instant. It was as if recent Indian history, the recent history of his father's time and his own, never happened. As if Gandhi and Nehru and Ambedkar and Bose and all the other unnamed heroes of the recent past had never lived. As if they were, like some epic heroes, entirely products of an inspired collective imagination. (*Siege* 159)[21]

While the incident occurs some years before his lesson is challenged, it is clear that already then Shiv was unsettled by the driver's failure to view the past as complexly

[20] Shiv's interaction with Arya corresponds in many ways to what the non-fictional historian Sumit Sarkar, professor of history at Delhi University, had to face when interacting with a review committee. The committee, Sarkar writes, "consist[ed] of one reasonably well-known medieval historian ([the questioned work concerned] only the calendar years of 1940 and 1946), and two others, supposedly teachers of modern Indian history, about whom the only information available is that they are *pracharaks* [a promulgator, proclaimer (*pra-cārak*, *Oxford Hindi-English*)] of the RSS" (*Beyond* 245-46). The RSS is the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, or "organization of national volunteers," which "provides theoretical analyses as well as functional activities in the promotion of Hindutva" (Sen, *Argumentative* 52). In the chapter "Hindutva and History" Sarkar insightfully discusses the relationship between the Hindu right and history (*Beyond Nationalist Frames* 244-62).

[21] Gandhi, Nehru, Ambedkar, and Bose are the "founding fathers" of independent India. Gandhi (1869-1948) led the freedom movement with non-violence and civil disobedience. Nehru (1889-1964) was the first elected Prime Minister (for the Congress Party). Ambedkar (1891-1956) was chair for the committee writing the Indian constitution. He was from an "untouchable" caste and opposed the caste system. Bose (1897-1945) split with Gandhi over the issue of non-violence and sought to free India from the British through the Indian National Army (INA).

diverse. The negation of his father's values leaves him feeling "naked" as the current "collective imagination" clearly does not encompass what he as a historian knows of the past.[22] While Shiv feels as if he no longer remembers exactly who he is, it is rather the surrounding ideoscape which brings about the sense of alienation. Shiv can no longer identify with or feel a part of locality, as it is predominantly produced within a sectarian imagination.

I earlier discussed how Shiv is haunted, but another aspect of haunting in the novel is that Shiv, perhaps unintentionally, creates a haunting of his own. This haunting is created through his historiographic writing when he brings back Basava from his safe consignment in hagiographies. Thus, historiography turns into haunting when Shiv, haunted by his own father, writes Basava's history. Haunting complicates any perception of the past represented as a monolithic story. Shiv may think of himself as an academic relying on well-accepted sources, and yet the need for interpretation makes historiography an explosive field in the novel. As Ellen Dengel-Janic has noted, "the historical text, which is produced by Shiv's reinterpretations of the Basava story, … becomes a source and re-source for political agency in the present." Historiography is not only the means by which the past is approached, but it is also the arena in which power and different (political) agendas dictate *how* the past is to be formulated. As Appadurai writes, "discourse concerning the past between social groups is *an aspect of politics*, involving competition, opposition, and debate" ("The Past" 202; my emphasis), which means that the past is a ground for conflicting interpretations. The historical past which Shiv wants to remember resembles Sen's view of historical India:

> [T]he recent attempt by Hindu activists to see India as just a "Hindu country" … clashes with the great diversity of Indian history. This includes a thousand years of Buddhist predominance … a long history of Jain culture, conspicuous presence of Christians from the fourth century, and of Parsees from the eighth, Muslim settlements of Arab traders in South India from about the same time, massive interactions between Muslims and Hindus all over the country … and so on. The recollection of history can be a major ally in the cultivation of toleration and celebration of diversity….
>
> ("How Does Culture Matter?" 42)

[22] Tellingly, Hariharan does not use the Hampi ruins as a direct reflection of Shiv's father's values. In an interview, Hariharan comments: "[The Hampi ruin] stands for the monumental past but also the oppressive past. Many historians see Vijayanagara as a slightly artificial, somewhat backward looking Hindu empire; its monuments are linked with nationalism very different from, say, the nationalism we knew during the freedom movement" ("Plea for Pluralism" interview by Ramnarayan).

In conversation with Chakladar, Hariharan similarly talks about a concern with "putting the past to use," and that is what she makes Shiv do in the novel by having him write the kind of history that makes the past a site for both hegemony and dissent. Elaborating on the difficulties historians face in the present ideoscape, Hariharan also argues that "[i]t becomes more and more difficult to examine the past when all you want from the past is a view you have already decided is useful for your present political purposes" ("In Search" 128). That is the kind of history Arya and the right wing subscribe to, and what makes the head at the university question Shiv. That Shiv has used well-known and accepted sources (*Siege* 68) does not matter, since his historical narrative does not conform to the politically sanctioned hagiography.

When the Hindu right interpret history, the multiple accounts and traditions become aspects of a monolithic story, as hagiographies are a canonized kind of historiography. As Kaur notes, the agenda of the "right wing intellectuals is … intolerant of difference that belies the incredible vitality of indigenous philosophical and religious movements that have been reformist in bent" (52).[23] In the introduction to *Speaking of Śiva*, Ramanujan, whose translations of Basava's poetry are used in the novel, discusses how dissenters with time can become incorporated into the canon:

> The 'great' and the 'little' traditions flow one into the other, as in an osmosis. They together constitute the 'public religion' of Hinduism, its 'establishment' or 'structure' … Bhakti as anti-structure begins by denying and defying such an establishment; but in course of time, the heretics are canonized; temples are erected to them, Sanskrit hagiographies are composed about them. (36)[24]

As Shiv muses: "What began as a critique of the status quo would be absorbed, bit by bit, into the sponge-like body of tradition and convention" (*Siege* 62-63). The absorption entails a loss since voices of dissent and reform are muted, although they may remain haunting presences. What Hariharan thus aims to accomplish in this novel, through Shiv and her other spokespersons, is both to argue for a kind of everyday heroism, in standing up against the thugs, but also to remind the readers that the past has never been a unified monolithic age. There have been injustices, opposition, and diversity, and reconstructions of the past as a hagiographic paean to Hindu glory makes this complexity unavailable in the present.

[23] See also Sen, *Argumentative*.
[24] Hariharan has on a number of occasions talked about the influence this book has had on her (see, for example, Acknowledgements in *Siege* and discussion with Arnab). Bhakti (devotion) is a devotional tradition of which veerashaivism is one branch.

Historiography is a public story about the past, produced in the context of present-day concerns, and is as such connected to issues of individual and public memory. As views of the past, Appadurai links the work of the imagination and the production of historiography: "under different cultural or ideological regimes the past has different shapes which ordinary people produce, as historians, etc., with both the notion of different temporalities and the questions of memory and forgetting" ("Historical Memory" 25). Thus, remembering and forgetting are both cultural and political acts, which is apparent in how Shiv and the Hindu right in their different ways perceive the past. For Shiv, the core factor is to "know a thing in all the ways possible" (*Siege* 194), whereas for the right wing it is more of an issue of forgetting unwanted aspects. Forgetting is therefore not an accidental act, something which just happens, but a choice, an instance of agency. Agency also relates to "the ways in which history is mobilized" (Appadurai, "Historical Memory" 25). The past is 'conjured' up in different ways to reflect the present agenda: in the novel this is either reductionist, as in the Hindutva version, or a mirror of diversity, as in Shiv's version.

As the conflict over his lesson triggers Shiv to confront the past, he is able to participate more fully in the present.[25] Dengel-Janic comments on the urgency ascribed to maintaining a diverse account of the past:

> Hariharan puts forth that when the nation becomes the battle ground for divergent ideas, the role of the historian – and by extension, of the writer – is absolutely crucial. That is, historians as well as writers must make sure that history is never used as a political instrument and instead provide a space for diverse interpretations; and, if necessary, it is their task to create alternative narratives to dominant accounts of the past.

In his role as a historian, Shiv is not so much creating an alternative narrative of the past, as defending the already existing alternative narratives of both the past and the present. Whereas the Hindu right calls for a hegemonic revision of historiography, Shiv dreams of taking "this fragment from the medieval past and reconstruct[ing] an entire range of possibilities" (*Siege* 40). Yet, although Shiv wants to create inclusive works of

[25] Shiv thinks Meena's poster with a quote from the German pastor Niemoeller is a "part of growing-up paraphernalia" and at first does not take its message of "speak up before its too late" seriously (*Siege* 27). However, the message of it being everyone's responsibility to speak up is eventually internalized by him. The same quote from Niemoeller occurs also in Shashi Tharoor's novel *Riot* (2001), and is there directly connected to the present day communalism. In the novel, a professor of history states: "They are coming for the Muslims now , and I must speak out. But not because I am a Muslim. Only because I am an Indian, and I do not want them to come for any other Indians. No group of Indians must be allowed to attack another group of Indians because of where they are from, or who they worship, or what language they speak" (184).

historiography, he also realizes that one person is not enough for this task: it "requires the participation of more than one body" (*Siege* 87). This insight brings us to a core issue of locality: historiography needs to be more than the work of a single individual in order to be part of a greater context, as the production of locality is inherently collective. Shiv's participation in the public debate is therefore an important stance since it indicates his (however hesitant) ambition of contributing to the context-generative aspects of the neighborhood. Appadurai discusses local subjects (such as Shiv), arguing that as they "engage in the social activities of production, representation, and reproduction (as in the work of culture), they contribute, generally unwittingly, to the creation of contexts that might exceed the existing material and conceptual boundaries of the neighborhood" (*Modernity* 185). In order for these contexts to exceed the existing boundaries, they need to become part of a collective imagination, enabling a collective agency.

In the novel, Hariharan primarily focuses on the historiography of two historical upheavals – the flourishing and subsequent destruction of twelfth-century Kalyana, Basava's city, and the freedom movement and Partition of India in 1947 – and then relates them to how Shiv engages in the production of locality in the present. Basava had been forced to leave the soon-to-be destroyed Kalyana since his movement for social reform had been perceived as too radical. In the novel, Kalyana is used to mirror present day Delhi, in particular the university where Shiv works, both cities being disputed sites under ideological siege. While Delhi is called "a city of ruins" (*Siege* 1), it is Kalyana which is in actual ruins.[26] Shiv spells out the link between the two: "Going back to 1168, to an unsafe past that threatens to leak into the present, Shiv sees two images side by side, condemned to be coupled forever" (*Siege* 136). The images are of "Basava confronting his Manch," and of "Kalyana in the throes of descent into anarchy" (*Siege* 136), images linked to New Delhi: "But the self (and the present) intrudes as always. In New Delhi, in his own city caught in a distinctly ignominious season…" (*Siege* 136-37). A similar parallel is also made between the destruction of Vijayanagar, another sacked historical city, and Shiv's office: "And what difference now, in the ruins of memory, between Vijayanagar and his university room? Shiv's room, though a minor city, a city of mundane compromise, joins its grand, monumental ancestors" (*Siege* 151). Thus, Shiv not only sees his present situation as a repetition of what has happened before, but he also turns to the past for clues on how to deal with this present oppressive situation.

I earlier discussed the link between the oppressive systems of caste and sectarianism, and how Kalyana becomes a cautionary example of what can happen when

[26] The greater Delhi region contains a number of historical ruins, most notably of Mughal origin. The point made here is that Kalyana is described as a destroyed city of ruins, whereas Delhi (though rebuilt numerous times) is a 'living' city.

dissent is prohibited, or when diversity is prescribed by the center. This is further emphasized by the absence of Shiv's father, a constant reminder of the freedom movement, the Partition and Independence. As discussed above, Basava and Shiv's father resemble each other in Shiv's imagination (in the constructive sense Appadurai uses the term), which heightens the link between the past and present. Hariharan has elaborated on this link elsewhere, stating that she has "a concern with looking at the past, at the ways in which you reconstruct the past – which of course is narrative – … the way in which your world-view fuses together past and present; the way in which you actually put the past to use" ("Conversation"). The fusing of past and present is a central concern in *In Times of Siege* as a part of the production of locality. Shiv cannot reconcile himself to the vision of the Hindu right since that would entail a reconstruction of the past which would leave out the questions Shiv is most concerned with. Thus, Shiv's father and Basava function as ghostly companions in his struggle to understand present day Delhi and in his attempt to contest the dominant ideoscape with its reduction of the past. Whereas Shiv approaches Basava more through his role as a historian (relying on major sources), he is freer in his approach to his father where he greatly relies on his own memories. This is of course complicated by the fact that he seems to interpret Basava based on memories of his father. In both cases, it is through actively engaging with the past that he is able to make sense of the present conception of locality.

Conclusion

Set in New Delhi, a city built to showcase power (Khilnani 111), *In Times of Siege* shows the consequences of shifts in political power. I have extended Appadurai's theoretical framework by situating the production of locality into a literary text dealing with haunting and history, focusing on the importance of agency. Agency is what allows for participation in the collective work of the imagination. The haunting of history in the novel leads to a something-to-be-done. The specific means by which Shiv gains agency and becomes "empowered to act socially" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 181), is through his profession, history, which he uses to understand and change the present. The haunting of history encompasses both a history of dissent and critique, as well as a history of hopes and beliefs within the new nation. Reconnecting to the values threatened by right wing politics, Shiv is able to participate in the present, by upholding an inclusive idea of the city and the nation in a time of siege.

As Shiv (albeit unwillingly at first) becomes involved in the display of politics, he is forced to renegotiate not only a sense of self and personal values, but also a sense of place and home. Despite the fact that "his own home felt like exile," he becomes involved in

the production of locality. It is Meena who initially influences and inspires Shiv to become an agent. Her ready acceptance of the fact that he must have "a plan of action" spurs him to engage collectively for the secular heritage and in dissent to the current populism. Similarly, it is initially her needs that make him go to parts of the city to which he has not been for years, representing a new engagement and interaction with the city. The novel ends with Meena walking out of Shiv's house, but not before Shiv has given her his father's walking stick. No longer needing the crutch, he goes for a walk in the neighborhood. The walk indicates that he is claiming his place in the city by standing up as a dissenter, refusing to be reduced by the overwhelming power structure of the city. Whereas Shiv initially was described as a monument and later as a statue, his new mobility indicates agency. It is left to him, and historians like him, to "mine the past" of Basava and to find relevant connections to the present.

While the novel leaves Shiv's future unknown, ending with his postponed meeting at the university, the reader knows that he is not about to resign willingly. The locality of the university may have changed, having been reduced from an institution providing education to a political tool, yet Shiv will almost certainly defend the structure of feeling he associates, through his father, with the academic subject of history. Having become a part of a network of dissent spread through the city, he is now connected via different strands to Meena and her extended network, as well as to the news-media industry. Thus Shiv's production of locality, as an aspect of social life, has extended beyond the neighborhood of the university into the neighborhood that is Delhi, a display of power intimately connected to national politics.

Chapter 2. The City as Stories: *Love and Longing in Bombay*

Against the backdrop of specific historical and political contexts, in this chapter I will examine how storytelling in Vikram Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997) can be a means of participation in the production of locality. In the novel, Bombay is perceived and constructed as a multi-voiced, narrative locality, in which processes of de- and reterritorialization move characters to reject or embrace structures of feeling in different manners. All the stories within Chandra's novel revolve around being or becoming at home in Bombay, and the novel presents both a coming-of-age story involving the primary narrator, as well as his 'coming-of-place' story, that is becoming a Bombayite, not only in the sense of residing in the city, but in engaging with the city as a locality.

Love and Longing in Bombay consists of five separate stories, tied together by a frame narrative in which the primary narrator retells stories told by another man. It is within the frame narrative that we find the larger story which traces the primary narrator becoming a Bombayite. While Chandra seems to prefer calling himself a storyteller rather than a novelist (see interviews by Alexandru and Salvador), and most editions of the book have the word "stories" added, either on the cover or on the title page, I would claim that the way in which the frame narrative and the stories are interconnected makes this book a novel *about* stories and about storytelling.[1]

While the aspect of locality in the novel has not previously been studied in-depth, some reviewers have remarked on the function of Bombay, seeing the city as a character, or as something that comes alive in the stories. Dora Sales Salvador, one of the more prolific scholars on Chandra's writings, notes that "the city itself becomes one of the main characters throughout the whole collection. Bombay is depicted as the modern city it is, with its traditions, contradictions, differences, great passions and mysteries" ("Listening" 202-03).[2] Manini Chaterjee brings up another aspect of the modern city in the novel:

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[1] Whether *Love and Longing in Bombay* is a novel or a collection of stories has also been discussed in several reviews of the book. In *Outlook India*, Anil Dharker argues that "In many ways, *Love and Longing in Bombay* is more a novel than a collection of stories." In contrast, Ralph Crane in *The Evening Post* calls it "a superbly crafted collection of stories," while also remarking that they are "loosely linked." R. S. Sharma devotes some pages of an article to the 'problem' of defining Chandra's first two books as short-story collections or novels, arguing that "each narrative [in *Love and Longing in Bombay*] may be treated as an independent short story, [but] there is a narrative scaffolding that holds them together; this is the frame story" (28). As stated above, I view the stories as contained and defined by the frame, thus a novel with and about stories.

[2] Two other scholars stand out for their interest in Chandra's oeuvre: Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru, with articles especially on *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, and Christopher Rollason, with a number of articles and as co-editor, with Shukla and Shukla, of the volume dedicated to Chandra: *Entwining Narratives: Critical Explorations into Vikram Chandra's Fiction* (2010). While being sources on Chandra in general, the scholars mentioned here have written relatively little about *Love and Longing in Bombay*. Of the stories in *Love and Longing in Bombay*, "Kama" has generated the most scholarly attention (see Claire Chambers' "Postcolonial Noir" and Festino).

> It is Bombay which comes alive in these stories – Bombay where different classes collide, confront and coalesce in each other …. It is a city full of fervour, always on the move …. Vikram Chandra has been able to capture this spirit, but also the influence of the criminal underworld and the communal politics which has cast a long shadow over Bombay, transforming it to Mumbai.

Love and Longing in Bombay was published two years after Bombay was renamed Mumbai, a renaming which had serious political implications. The name Bombay is usually considered to be derived from Bom Bahen ("good harbor"), which the Portuguese called the area (Chaudhuri, "Light"). In Marathi, the largest language of Maharashtra, the state in which Bombay is located, Bombay is called Mumbai. Other large languages such as Hindi have used *Bambai* (Bharucha, "Bombay to Mumbai" 14). However, when the Maharashtrian party the *Shiv Sena* ("Army of Shivaji")[3] came to political majority in 1995 the name was changed from Bombay to Mumbai. The name-change came in the wake of intense political and cultural turmoil after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the subsequent riots of 1992-93. The name Mumbai (after the Koli goddess Mumba Devi) was then seen as an attempt to 'Hinduize' the city.[4] In anthropologist Thomas Blom Hansen's view, the city changed: "from being the preeminent symbol of India's secular, industrial modernity to become a powerful symbol of the very crisis of this vision" (*Wages* 8). Bombay was popularly perceived and celebrated as an eclectic and accepting locality, whereas Mumbai was seen as excluding and sectarian.[5] However, as Ashutosh Varshney argues:

> [P]opular perceptions about some cities are simply wrong. Until 1993, when horrible communal riots broke out, Bombay, India's premier business city, was often called an island of peace where local energies were mostly spent on cosmopolitan pursuits and monetary gains. This is simply not true. Bombay's modernity and cosmopolitanism have not precluded communal violence. Bombay was among the most communally violent cities even before 1993. (106)

There is a clear disjuncture between different ideoscapes surrounding the contested name, where Mumbai is seen as belonging (primarily) to the Maharashtrians (the Shiv Sena), and

[3] Shivaji (1630-1680), a Maratha king.
[4] The change from Bombay to Mumbai and the different associations symbolized by the different names are more fully explored in Hansen's *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*.
[5] For more on the structure of feeling of Bombay, see Appadurai, "Spectral" 628-629.

Bombay is seen as a unique cosmopolitan Indian city. Nilufer Bharucha, for example, recalls the popular perception of Bombay and argues: "The change-over to monolithic Mumbai, has elided all these other identities and reduced the city's stature as a cosmopolitan and tolerant entity" ("Bombay to Mumbai" 14). Hansen recaps the debate over the name-change, and points out that vernacular newspapers were largely in favor of the renaming, as "the vernacular pronunciation of Bombay in Marathi, … was now properly spelled in English". However, some of the English-language newspapers, as well as "some intellectuals and spokespersons from significant minorities in the city," argued that the "cosmopolitan character" of Bombay "should be reflected in its name" (*Wages* 1).[6] The renaming also highlighted a disjuncture between the local sense of neighborhood and the state, as "[n]eighborhoods are ideally stages for their own self-reproduction, a process that is fundamentally opposed to the imaginary of the nation-state, where neighborhoods are designed to be instances and exemplars of a generalizable mode of belonging to a wider territorial imaginary" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 191). This difference means that the "modes of localization most congenial to the nation-state have a disciplinary quality about them" (*Modernity* 191) as the state tries to implement regulations on the local populace. Identification with neighborhoods is opposed to a constructed image as an aspect of the state. In the case of Bombay in the 1990s, the Shiv Sena promoted an intense debate of who is a Mumbaikar, who has the right to employment, and which group(s) should have the most government protection.

The change from Bombay to Mumbai is a prime example of how naming produces locality (Appadurai, *Modernity* 180). It involves more than an act of labeling as it is embedded within other contexts, which gives the label meaning. "[T]he relationship between the production of local subjects and the neighborhoods in which such subjects can be produced, *named*, and empowered to act socially," Arjun Appadurai explains, "is a historical and dialectical relationship" (*Modernity* 181, italics added). Elaborating on naming, Hansen sees the "question of naming" as revolving "around the question of which space, and whose, should the name fix and territorialize as its object; which, and whose, history should it refer to and demarcate; and in which language should the name properly be enunciated" (*Wages* 3). Thus Bombay/Mumbai as a neighborhood in Chandra's novel becomes figured and named as a Bombay locality. The neighborhood provides contexts from which locality is produced, yet locality simultaneously generates new contexts circulating back into the contexts of neighborhood (Appadurai, *Modernity* 184). Chandra's use of Bombay rather than Mumbai is thus noteworthy, as Shashi

[6] Hansen elaborates: "In many of the city's newspapers one could find a stream of letters to the editor bemoaning the loss of the old name, and with it the older experience of Bombay, the dreams of Bombay as a metaphor of India's diversity, the imaginings of modernity, and the hopes associated with that name" (*Wages* 1).

Tharoor remarks: "In the face of the Mumbaikars' nativism, [Chandra's] writing – worldly, eclectic and humane – reaffirms the 'old' Bombay" ("New India" 32).[7] In the novel, Bombay is a multi-voiced locality constructed through stories, and the primary narrator becomes actively engaged in the production of locality through these stories. In other words, he becomes a subject "empowered to act socially" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 181). As Appadurai notes, "the contingencies of history, environment, and imagination contain the potential for contexts (material, social, and imaginative) to be produced" (*Modernity* 185). Both "imagination" and "naming" are thus central concepts, not only in the production of fiction, but also in the production of locality.

I will now turn to my analysis of locality in *Love and Longing in Bombay*, by first focusing on storytelling — and the importance of multiple stories — in order to explore how it is through narrative strategies that locality is actively produced. The narrator becomes a Bombayite through listening and participating in storytelling. I will then examine the processes of de- and reterritorialization (which I view as forms of alienation and belonging) by paying particular attention to the function and effect of violence within both neighborhood and locality. The disjunctive flows of the scapes and the recent past of Partition and Ayodhya can release violent energies when people become affected by changed circumstances. In contrast to the violence, however, the active participation in the production of locality through storytelling can evoke possibilities for coming to terms, moving on, or experiencing a sense of peace.

Storytelling: Love and Longing in Bombay

Storytelling and being-at-home or becoming-at-home in Bombay are what make *Love and Longing in Bombay* cohere, the common denominators between the frame episodes and the stories told. In this part of the chapter, I will trace the narrative structure, narrators, and genres, followed by an examination of how storytelling is a method of producing locality in the novel. The reviewer for *The Scotsman* succinctly noted the relevance of storytelling: "The sense builds up throughout *Love and Longing in Bombay* of a chaotic city laden with stories that are waiting to be found, unravelled, saved; and the sense, too, that we can only understand ourselves through the stories of others" (qtd. on vikramchandra.com). Discussing Chandra's first two novels, Salvador provides a general observation of his authorship which is relevant here: "In his works one can consider that writing is understood as a way of recovering and intercommunicating cultures, but also as an open

[7] István Adorján discusses the difference between the two city names as representing different cities, arguing that Chandra uses old buildings to reflect Bombay within a new Mumbai, with buildings "coloured the pink and green of new money" (Adorján 203, quote from Chandra, *Love*). My focus is less on the physical city and more on how Chandra maintains Bombay as a structure of feeling.

proposal that suggests another sort of creation that goes beyond fetish dichotomies between native and foreign traces, local and universal, past and present" ("Constant Journey" 95). In *Love and Longing in Bombay* the "recovering and intercommunicating cultures" emphasize that storytelling is a way of engaging with the creation of locality. The storytelling takes place in the Fisherman's Rest, a bar which Amit Chaudhuri describes as "a place of transit, and transition" ("Light"), which pertains not only to the transaction of stories, but to the transformative power of storytelling.

The genres used in *Love and Longing in Bombay* include a ghost story, a gossipy story of social comedy, a detective story, an urban crime story, and a 'metastory' – a story about stories. These genres are used "with a twist" (Festino) as Chandra works them into and out of their Bombay settings. The different stories are thus not merely representing various literary genres, but also different perspectives on how locality is produced in the stories. The initial ghost story deals with discrepancies between national and local imaginations, followed by social comedy reminiscent of tabloid gossip that functions as an intimate study of capitalism. Next follow two stories which deal with crime from the detective's and the victim's different perspectives, and the novel culminates with a 'metastory', in which different story layers are contrasted.

By linking the several different genres to specific philosophical concepts, which serve as the titles of the stories, Chandra creates a diverse urban narrative through which the city speaks. As Cielo Festino has argued,

> the articulation of these different emotions, from the Vedic tradition, through different genres is highly functional because [it] emphasizes the cosmopolitanism and social diversity of Bombay, to the detriment of any kind of sectarianism …. Chandra counteracts this communalist attitude, precisely, through his fictionalization of the way in which this cultural multiplicity co-exists in the streets of Bombay. At a metaliterary level, he shows that any genre, more than being dictated by some universal and abstract law of form, takes the shape of the cultural context the author is bent on reconstructing.

The titles for each story are philosophical/religious concepts: *dharma*, *shakti*, *kama*, *artha*, and *shanti*, which can be translated as: "morality/duty/righteousness," "female power/force," "desire/pleasure," "material wealth," and "peace."[8] These concepts are

[8] While originating from Sanskrit, these terms are also part of modern Hindi. The Hindi pronunciation becomes more clear through transliteration with diacritics: artha, *arth*; dharma, *dharm*; kama, *kām*; shakti, *śakti*; and shanti,

relevant since they function as parts of a collective imagination. The use of the particular concepts and their relevance for their respective stories also emphasize the act of naming. Attention to "*the imagination as a social practice*" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 31) helps explain the ways these philosophical/religious concepts from Hinduism work within the novel. The concepts are not treated as dogmatic principles for the novel's characters (who belong to different religions, but are not particularly religious). As Tharoor explains, the stories:

> are named for the traditional human pursuits of Vedic lore. …. But whereas three of these stories bear the names "Artha" (wealth), "Kama" (desire, pleasure, love) and "Dharma" (faith, righteousness), missing is the fourth great Hindu pursuit, "Moksha" (salvation). Mr. Chandra replaces it with "Shakti" (strength) and "Shanti" (peace), as if to suggest that strength and peace are the only salvation available to his characters. ("New India" 32)

The concepts indicate norms or principles which are common in the collective imaginary. "Dharma" traces the notion of duty, righteousness and morality through a ghost story in which the idea of duty can be seen as both enabling and haunting. In "Shakti," female strength is at the center of a social comedy in which three women strive to navigate the social hierarchy of Bombay. The concept of "Kama," desire, is explored through a focus on both the police inspector Sartaj Singh and a murder victim's son, and a sectarian discourse on purity and cleansing extends the complexity of the concept. In "Artha," material wealth and art are juxtaposed. In the wake of a disappearance which cannot be explained, art remains the only language capable of comfort. The novel ends with the story "Shanti," peace, in which Shanti is both a person and a sense of agency. When I discuss the stories below, I will return to the philosophical concepts.

However, the titles should not be interpreted as representing some kind of ideal Hindu past. As Chandra has noted in a different context,

> There's this impulse to recreate this paradise of the past, where people had roots, you can see it even in the recent history of Indian languages, like Hindustani, which Partition has broken up into Urdu and Hindi, and then on the Indian side the effort has been to connect Hindi to the Sanskrit past, which is eternal and rooted. It's so pointless and so silly.
>
> ("Virtual Reality" interview by Alexandru 10)[9]

śānti (*Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*). Thus, in modern Hindi, the "'inherent' Sanskritic vowel /ə/ … where dropped is unrepresented" (*Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*).

[9] For more on the development on the different paths of Hindi and Urdu, see King *One Language, Two Scripts*.

Instead, though dharma, artha, and kama contain what Chandra terms "the burnished glow of the Sanskrit," they are also used to highlight the concepts' "seeming distance from the gritty landscapes of the stories themselves" (Chandra, "Cult"). Elaborating elsewhere, Chandra remarks: "The different genres worked for me as different darshanas, or visions of the world; and by allowing me to amplify varying rasas, or emotions, they permitted me to move toward a various and many-layered apprehension of the city of Bombay and – as the last three words of the book put it – 'only life itself'" (interview by Mahoney).[10] So while the concepts retain some of the original meaning, they are in the novel explored in a contemporary Bombay setting.

The structure of the novel is in many ways rhizomatic, as different stories feed into each other and strands from different stories reappear. The primary narrator's situation is in some ways commented upon in the stories, and the stories interrelate with each other. Examples of the rhizomatic structure can be found when different stories are compared: in the first story there is a realist who does not believe in ghosts, mirroring the primary narrator of the frame. The protagonist of the story has lost a brother through a fall of "only three feet" (*Love* 30). In the final story, the issue of a dead brother resurfaces, and the living brother contemplates suicide by jumping in front of a train, "a drop of three feet" (*Love* 232). This way of having rhizomatic strands from different stories resurface creates a "non-totalizing whole," as Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru discusses in regards to *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* ("Performance" 28). The "non-totalizing whole" of various diverse stories also pertain to the locality of Bombay, but not necessarily to Mumbai, which can be perceived as imagined more as a singular story.

In the following, I will focus on the dialectical relationship between the frame and the stories, through examining the roles of the storyteller and the narrator. The frame narrative has a traditional storyteller, Subramaniam, delivering his narratives to an eager listener who only in the last story is given a name: Ranjit Sharma (*Love* 266). I will return to this instance of naming later. However, the narrative situation turns out to be more complex, since it is Ranjit who, as the primary narrator, is retelling the stories to the reader. While the use of frame narratives is common in the English novel as well as in oral storytelling, Lee Haring discusses an additional cultural relevance in "stratified societies" (such as India with its caste-system) that "favor frame-stories". Haring goes on to argue that "[s]uch societies foster the habit of subordinating one plot to another, creating [an] affinity … 'between the formal configuration of the artwork and the structure of the social system'" (Haring 229, citing Hohendahl). The great epics of India,

[10] Chandra also converses about these concepts in a Bookworm radio discussion with Michael Silverblatt.

the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* use elaborate frame narratives, as does the *Panchatantra* (Sanskrit *Five Stories*) which are parts of the Indian literary traditions into which Chandra is inscribing his narrative.[11] The interface between the multiple stories in Chandra's novel and the act of storytelling is what enables the imagination and the production of locality. His use of different genres for the stories and of two different narrators is closely related, and is both means of conveying a multivoiced Bombay locality. In many ways, Subramaniam figures as a character of wisdom, a guru delivering stories of a didactic nature through which Ranjit gains a deeper understanding.[12] "Listen" marks all of Subramaniam's narrations except "Shakti." The imperative signals more than a shift in speakers, and functions as a request to pay attention to what will follow.[13]

In some ways, Subramaniam can be compared to the iconic storyteller Scheherazade of *The Thousand and One Nights*. Although he is not telling stories to save his own life, because of old-age and illness he is facing death as much as Scheherazade (Payne 23; Sethi). Like her, Subramaniam is a didactic teller and, as in *The Thousand and One Nights*, the intradiegetic listener is transformed by the stories told. A pertinent comparison can also be made between Subramaniam and the narrators of the great epics the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.[14] As Sadhana Naithani has pointed out, the traditional storytellers of these and similar collections are "extremely learned" (276), a trait Subramaniam shares through his perceptiveness of the narrative frame situation. The stories he tells are not didactic in themselves, but acquire that function in relation to Ranjit and the frame, and consequently in relation to the reader as well. While Ranjit remarks on not having paid enough attention at first (*Love* 3), the novel reveals how there is in fact a connection between his own situation and those of Subramaniam's stories. This connection is

[11] Chandra's interest in frame narratives is even more obvious in his debut novel, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), in which there is a frame within the frame, the construction of which is elaborated on when Hanuman (protector of poets) tells Sanjay, the typing monkey and one of the narrators, that he must have a frame story. For a detailed account of Chandra's use of, and deviance from, the novel form in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, see Alexandru, "Alternatives" in which she also discusses "features of the South Asian epic tradition" and "its interaction to the novel form in Indian literature" (46). Alexandru argues that Chandra shares Margret Anne Doody's perspective which "widen[s] the boundaries of the genre and claim that the novel is not just a product of the development of a bourgeois society in eighteenth-century Europe (or rather England), but 'has a continuous history of about two thousand years'" (47). A number of articles on *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* discuss Chandra's use of the Indian epic heritage (for example, Alexandru, "Performance," and Rollason, "Storyteller").

[12] Cf. Vikram Chandra's views on the role of stories and storytelling: "[S]tories are life. We are narrative beings, compelled to tell stories, and listen to them, and live through them and inside them. We are human because of stories, and we are trapped in stories. … To tell a story to someone is to change their insides, and it also means that you need them" ("Listening," interview by Salvador 204-5). See also Silverblatt's interview with Chandra.

[13] Alexandru connects the oral tradition of "listen" with Chandra's rhizomatic structure, arguing that "the web of stories, repeatedly recalled by the magic word, 'Listen,' takes precedence over the main plot and generates a metafictional plot of its own. Like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome, this hybrid narrative is an open, non-totalizing whole, whose every node can be connected to any other" ("Performance" 27-28). While Alexandru is here discussing *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*, these observations are relevant to the narrative structure of *Love and Longing in Bombay* as well. See also Rollason, "Storyteller" (1).

[14] The *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana* are frame stories. In Vālmīki's *Rāmāyana*, Vālmīki is also a character, and one of the listeners to his epic of King Rāma is Rāma himself. In the *Mahābhārata* "Ugraśravas the Sūta, teller of ancient tales" tells the story to "Brahmin seers assembled in the Naimisa forest" (1).

apparent for instance in how Ranjit starts to become a Bombay subject, a Bombayite, after having heard the story of Antia's return, of how the topics of marriage and colonialism are raised before he is heartbroken, or how the complicated story of desire inscribes the city as an object of love, before culminating with Subramaniam's own life story which invokes a new determination to participate in the production of locality.

The novel, I would argue, is fundamentally about the production of Bombay as locality, and about becoming a Bombayite, a subject not only of the neighborhood, but a participant in its production of locality. The frame narrative combined with the narrated stories make *Love and Longing in Bombay* into Ranjit's coming-of-age story, as he becomes a Bombayite storyteller. The stories always pertain to issues discussed in the frame or come as a response to the mood Ranjit is in, but simultaneously, they are always only loosely connected to him. For example, in the first frame Ranjit complains about people who believe in "banshees and ghouls" (*Love* 4), and Subramaniam's story is then about a man who meets a ghost. Likewise, there is a connection between the frame and the story in "Kama" as Ranjit is heartbroken and Subramaniam's story is (partially) about Sartaj Singh's divorce. As Christopher Rollason has pointed out, "In Chandra's fictional world, narrative is not merely an ordering device: it directly forms the characters' experiences, as they make and remake their stories of others' lives and their own" ("Storyteller" 1). By the end of the novel, Ranjit has learned to be an observant listener, to the point that he feels the dreams of the city (*Love* 267). With him being properly introduced, we also recognize that he has in fact been narrating throughout the novel. This explains the variety of voices used in the stories, and it explains the unlikelihood of Subramaniam actually revealing the intimate details of "Kama" in the public setting of the bar, or the level of familiarity with the characters of "Shakti," which seems incongruous.[15]

It is clear that time has passed between the different story sessions, but not how much. In the introduction to the first story, the primary narrator describes himself as lonely, and by implication, new to the city (*Love* 3-4). The next reference to time comes in the introduction to "Kama": "That summer …. I went slouching sullenly about the city and waited for the monsoon to break, without faith, without belief in its powers, waiting only for something to change" (*Love* 75).[16] Ranjit is disillusioned because he has recently experienced a break up. The disillusioned loneliness has changed by the fourth story, "Artha," in the frame of which Ranjit brings his friend Ayesha to the bar. The time is given as "one evening in April" (*Love* 163), and thus approximately nine months have passed since the previous story was told. Ranjit also remarks that he "had been watching

[15] For example by the use of "we": "and next we heard" (34), "[w]e used to see Sheila" (34), "[w]hat we remembered…" (73). Subramaniam does not seem like the 'logical' narrator of this story.
[16] The monsoon season in Mumbai usually occurs between June through September.

[Subramaniam] for weeks" (*Love* 164). The last story introduction is equally vague (and yet more specific) in its reference to "[n]ot so long ago, one Sunday evening … I was suddenly aware of my age, and it seemed cruel that time should pass so gently and leave behind long swathes of unremembered years" (*Love* 229). Ranjit has thus passed from young and lonely in the city (*Love* 3-4), to being "suddenly aware of [his] age" (*Love* 229). It is fair to presume from the brief indications that at least a year or two have elapsed between the first and the last story. Thus, a substantial number of evenings at the bar have most likely been left out of the narrative.[17] What the narrator gives us is instead a concise story of his growth, which is most obvious in his transformation from listener to narrator. The stories he has chosen to re-present are, presumably, the ones which relate to his growth and to his transformation into a Bombay storyteller.

The frame episodes occur before each of Subramaniam's stories, and the novel also concludes with a return to the frame as Ranjit leaves Subramaniam (who is ill) and walks through the city:

> I am walking in my city. The island sleeps, and I can feel the jostling of its dreams. I know they are out there, Mahalaxmi, Mazagaon, Umerkhadi, Pydhuni, and the grand melodrama of Marine Drive. I have music in my head, the jingle of those old names, Wadala, Matunga, Koliwada, Sakinaka, and as I cross the causeway I can hear the steady, eternal beat of the sea, and I am filled with a terrible longing. (*Love* 267)

This is where Ranjit identifies with the city. The tempus is changed into the present mode, and he feels "the jostling of [the city's] dreams" and hears the names of the different city parts as music, almost a chant, and his movement indicates his new sense of agency. The walk also has a purpose:

> I know I am walking to Bandra, and I know I am looking for Ayesha. I will stand before her building, and when it is morning I will call up to her. I might ask her to go for a walk, I might ask her to marry me. If we search together, I think, we may find in Andheri, in Colaba, in Bhuleshwar, perhaps not heaven, or its opposite, but only life itself. (*Love* 267-68)

[17] Donna Seaman, in the *Booklist* review, claims that Subramaniam tells a story "[e]ach night," which is correct only with the addition of it being on each of the evenings *accounted for*. The reviewer in *Publishers Weekly* wrongly claims that the stories are told on "four successive nights".

Ranjit seeks out Ayesha for company in his search for "only life itself" (*Love* 268). The production of locality is an inherently collective task, and what Chandra does in his exploration of Bombay is thus to place the structure of feeling with an "individual actor" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 33), Ranjit. Yet, as is indicated by his walk to Ayesha (and by the multitude of stories about other individuals), he is a subject among many, who together participate in the production of Bombay as a structure of feeling, which is mirrored in Ranjit's "terrible longing." Locality is thus closely linked with identity. "Only life itself" is something of a paradox, as life here is anything but "only." It is what motivates his walk. In the embracing nature of the novel, life, and the Bombay locality in which it participates, is not renounced but sought out through the concept of shanti – peace.

"Shanti" is the last and most personal of Subramaniam's stories, and perhaps also the most life-changing for Ranjit. In this story, the narrator and the protagonist turn out to be the same.[18] The story is about stories, through which Shiv Subramaniam and Shanti can overcome their respective losses. Stories can thus have a healing effect. It is through them that Shiv and Shanti get to know each other, even though they talk very little about themselves. All of the stories (as unrealistic as some of them may seem) are proclaimed to be "true" (*Love* 253, 255, 262). Doug Payne argues that in "Shanti" "the narratives the lovers exchange are frankly supernatural, but their power resides not in the magic recounted but in the ordinary magic of storytelling: A bereaved person finds another who is willing to talk, to listen, and to hope" (24). This is not to say that being able to tell stories is a solution to all problems, but rather that it is through becoming engaged in the creation of stories and the production of locality that the subjects become agents of their lives. Agency, in turn, generates both feelings of coming to terms with one's conditions, as well as constructive ways of dealing with the realities of the city.

It is noteworthy that Shanti (whose stories are all "true") tells Ranjit that "You mustn't believe a word [Subramaniam] says" (*Love* 267). But it is precisely through believing in stories that Shiv and Shanti made their Bombay life, and it is clear that it is through a belief in the power of narratives that Ranjit seeks out his own Bombay life. "Shanti" is about creating a sense of tranquility or peace in "life itself." The sense of peace is not static or utopian, but stems from a sense of agency, of participating in the production of locality through storytelling.

[18] Fourteen pages into the story the protagonist introduces himself: "My name is Shiv Subramaniam" (*Love* 242), at which point it is revealed that the narrator and the character are the same person.

Locality and Violence

The second part of the examination of the production of locality in *Love and Longing in Bombay* will focus on how discourses of violence are related to processes of de- and reterritorialization. All the stories, as mentioned, are about being- or becoming-at-home in Bombay, something which is complicated by both violence and deterritorialization. While storytelling in the novel is the overarching way of both relating locality, and of relating *to* locality, this section will trace how alienation and belonging are played out within the narratives.

My use of the concept of agency is connected the production of locality as work of the imagination, primarily through the means of storytelling.[19] Active participation makes possible feelings of tranquility, love, and identification with locality. However, agency should not be taken as an indication that violence no longer exists. One should rather consider it as a consequence of participation in the work of the imagination. As mentioned in my Introduction, the imagination is for Appadurai "a collective tool for the transformation of the real, for the creation of multiple horizons of possibility" ("The Right" 34). The sense of agency which emanates in the stories emerges, as I discussed above in the "Storytelling" section, when the characters are able to become participants in a narrative act, and it may result, as the final story "Shanti" indicates, in feelings of tranquility. It is, however, impossible to discuss the sense of calm without first turning to its opposite, violence.

Violence is an integral, but not uncontested, aspect of the novel and a cause and consequence of de- and reterritorialization. Furthermore, the novel employs a dual structure throughout, with a public and a personal level. As Payne observes: "*Love and Longing* undertakes a veritable survey of contemporary difference …. Chandra prefers to approach these differences indirectly. All five stories, for example, involve the history of communalist conflict in South Asia, but none takes such conflicts as its overt subject" (23). As I discuss the stories in the following, I will return to these instances of differences and tensions, and to the constantly present reminder of communal conflicts. Some of the violence is "large-scale, culturally motivated" (Appadurai, *Fear* 1), but in addition to sectarianism in the concept of violence I also incorporate aspects such as crime and police brutality.

Violence and tranquility provide contexts for each other and both relate closely to de- and reterritorialization. Violence can be seen as an energy released by deterritorialization, but can simultaneously also be a cause of it. *Re*territorialization on the other hand is connected to agency in the more positive manner of establishing something

[19] For an explanation of my use of the concepts of the imagination see Introduction, and for agency see Introduction as well as Chapter 1).

rather than being flung from it.[20] However, both de- and reterritorialization are affected by, and affect, the disjunctive scapes as these provide contexts which are constantly changing. Appadurai argues that deterritorialization "affects the loyalties of groups (especially in the context of complex diasporas), their transnational manipulation of currencies and other forms of wealth and investment, and the strategies of states. The loosening of the holds between people, wealth, and territories fundamentally alters the basis of cultural reproduction" (*Modernity* 49). Since deterritorialization makes reterritorialization possible, and since the flow of goods and money can be positively valued by people, deterritorialization is not entirely negative in Appadurai's use. It does, however, tend to complicate notions of cultural reproduction, as what is to be reproduced is changing, through processes of deterritorialization and the flows of the disjunctive scapes.

I have discussed how the structure of the novel can be seen as rhizomatic, for example through its recurring story strands. In addition, rhizomatic "lines of flight" caused by new or different connections are evident in several stories: Antia continuously envisions falling through empty space, Sartaj experiences "a loneliness so huge and so feral that he wanted to give up and collapse into the thick green swamp he could see far below" (*Love* 100), and Sheila remembers when her time as an airhostess literally made her travel along lines of flight (*Love* 65).[21] These instances indicate moments when the characters become ungrounded from place, deterritorialized, if only in the mind. Reterritorialization is instead a process of relocating, both literally and imaginatively, as the rhizome "will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 9). The rhizome also provides an image of life in an age of mass-mediation and migration (Appadurai, *Modernity* 29). Through these processes of de- and reterritorialization, the subjects in the novel are constantly active in the processes of negotiating their sense of, and place in, Bombay, making the city a dynamic locality with constantly moving inhabitants, but also a city transformed through the work of the imagination.

My next step is to trace the development of violence and the processes of de- and reterritorialization through each story. As mentioned earlier, the stories are all about being-at-home or becoming-at-home in Bombay, which is complicated by violence and deterritorialization. Violence as a theme develops throughout the novel, and the processes of reterritorialization and the production of locality are continuously expanded. These processes are also always related to the philosophical concepts governing each story.

[20] Reterritorialization can of course also be a violent process (as in forceful colonization or capitalism).
[21] Notably, it is the capital earned along these lines of flight which enable Sheila's subsequent, metaphorically speaking, flight into upper-class Bombay, a colonization and reterritorialization of Malabar Hill (discussed further below).

Whereas I discussed storytelling above as a means of producing locality, and of Ranjit becoming an active participant in this production, the following section will highlight impediments that make the desired "structure of feeling" difficult to achieve.

"Dharma" and Traumatic Haunting

The novel starts with the young primary narrator being introduced to a group of men in a Bombay bar, "the Fisherman's Rest" (*Love* 3). He is described as being lonely in Bombay, a subject new to the city who has yet to become a Bombayite. "Dharma" (i.e., "morality/duty/righteousness"), the story which follows, is about de- and reterritorialization, as protagonist Jehangir Antia ("Jago" to his colleagues) returns to his childhood home in Bombay after a long military career.[22] "Dharma" effectively situates not just this, but all the following stories in Bombay. Antia's life in the military has been both nomadic and violent, placed as he has been wherever conflicts have erupted. His return to Bombay therefore signifies more than another move, as it reconstructs notions of home.

We learn in retrospect that Antia as a child was present when his brother had fallen off a ledge, a fall which he was the partial cause of and which had led to his brother's death (*Love* 30). His involvement in the fall explains both his alienation from his parents and the parental house, and an obsession with falling. By his profession as a paratrooper Antia makes falling his *dharma*, his moral duty, in order to confront his feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Falling asleep, he thinks nightly "of falling endlessly through the night, slipping through the cold air, and then somewhere it became a dream, and he was asleep, still falling" (*Love* 6). While his nightly vision of falling is not directly tied to his career but is something he had done "for as long as he could remember, long before para school and long before the drop at Sylhet" (*Love* 6), the original trauma has been suppressed. The deadly fall of his brother has to his conscious mind been replaced by references to his moral duty as a paratrooper. However, his nightly vision represents something more and other: it has become an internalized traumatic repetition which does not allow the original, suppressed, fall of his brother to be consciously acknowledged. To fall is also an act which seems to constantly and continuously disconnect him from himself. The visions of falling through empty space suspend him in an emotional free fall, rather than being grounded.

The underlying trauma explains Antia's alienation, both from a private self in disjunction with his outward appearance as an appreciated officer, and from a childhood

[22] Jehangir is a common Parsi name, as are the names of his uncle and brother Burjor and Sohrab respectively. Further establishing the Parsi heritage is the reference to Burjor Mama's *sadra* (a Parsi undershirt).

home that to him represents guilt and failure. When he returns to the house in Bombay, he not only finds it haunted by a ghost-child, but is himself already haunted by phantom pain. The pain is caused by something not there, an amputated leg that takes on a highly charged symbolic significance. Being told to face the ghost alone and naked, he strips off his clothes and un-straps his prosthetic leg. In a heroic act, Antia had himself cut off his leg, having been injured when stepping on a mine during a military campaign in Sylhet (*Love* 20-21).[23] However, before stepping on the mine, Antia had been disturbed by a memory: "a shiver came from low on his back into his heart, … a feeling of confusion" (*Love* 18-19). The momentary lapse in concentration, presumably caused by Antia recalling his brother's death in the parental house, causes the misstep that forces him to amputate the leg. Twenty years later, the sudden appearance of phantom pain in the lost leg makes him retire from the army (*Love* 9). Thus, when Antia unstraps the prosthetic leg to face the ghost-child, his phantom self, he is doing more than simply removing an object. The second uncoupling of the leg is an act of shedding his rigid military identity, emphasized further by him using the name "Jehangir" for the ghost-child, his given name, rather than "Jago" his military nickname (*Love* 31). As an officer, it was Antia's dharma to lead his division, and in order to do so, the injured leg had to be removed. The instance of stripping the prosthetic leg to meet the ghost is a shedding of that which is known in order for him to encounter that which is feared, thus making it another act of bravery. If one here reads Antia's mission as one of clearing the house of the ghost – either to make it sellable or to face his own fears, indeed, to become grounded – the stripping of the clothes and leg become an act of dharma as well. That is, it has become his duty to deal with the problem in the house – a duty which simultaneously allows him to confront his own trauma. It is noteworthy that Antia is able to both recognize the ghost and answer its question of "Where shall I go" with "Jehangir, you're already at home" (*Love* 30-31). The first story thus enacts a return, or a homecoming to the city, and establishes the possibility of finding peace at home.

One of the major differences between Jago Antia and Shiv in Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* (discussed in chapter 1) is that while both are traumatized, Shiv has not repressed the loss of his father in the same manner as Antia has done with his loss. Both can be said to experience traumatic repetitions: Antia through his obsession with falling, and Shiv through his narrative obsession with his father's end, but while Antia does not acknowledge the origin of his trauma, until he faces the ghost, Shiv keeps company with

[23] Here violence (ethnic and national) is of course prominent and it forefronts aspects of identification and claims of allegiances. The conflicts mentioned in the novel are the 1970 war in Bangladesh (Sylhet where Jago amputates his leg) and the continuous conflict over Kashmir which involves India and Pakistan.

his father's ghost. When Antia faces his ghost, it is an act of the something-to-be-done, of recognizing a past trauma in order to bring about a change in the present and future.

In the end, Antia sits down with Thapa, his military batman, and Amir Khan, the housekeeper of his parental home, as equals. Telling them "Thank you" (*Love* 32) he connects to these other people, not as servants, but as friends. Antia has been able, partially at least, to identify with his suppressed self, Jehangir. This identification is achieved through his crawling through the house, which enables him to construct a story of his childhood and its traumatic event. While recognizing his role, he can internalize the story and see himself as the child he had been. Realizing that while his brother Soli did fall after Antia jumped on him, he had had no intention of hurting his brother. The fall was a mere three feet, the death accidental, and, as Antia realizes, "I was a child too" (*Love* 24).

Antia has stripped away his national military identity, but is, of course, still conditioned by it. The missing leg is a visual symbol of this past self. David Punter sees the reconciliation with the ghost as allowing "the hitherto repressed laughter of the years to be set loose" (66). However, the narrator remarks that Antia "knew that nothing had changed. He knew he was still and forever Jago Antia, that for him it was too late for anything but a kind of solitude …. And yet he felt free" (*Love* 31-32). Antia feels free and laughs, but also recognizes that "nothing had changed." Throughout his youth and adulthood, he has been traumatized, and the past will not disappear.[24] The "repressed laughter" is both indicative of a sense of overcoming a trauma, while also recognizing that the past has been (and will remain) an integral aspect of his identity. There is thus a tension between "still and forever Jago Antia" and "yet he felt free." The amicable "Thank you" situation occurs locally, in the Bombay house, and the sense of tranquility and freedom is found within himself, through the narrative he has been able to construct and internalize. Thus, whether or not Antia sells the house, he has figuratively become reterritorialized through it.

Since there is no return to the frame we do not know the primary narrator's reaction to this story. It is, however, clear that he, like Antia, is a realist, without belief in "banshees and ghouls" (*Love* 4). Yet through the retold story he has met the ghost, and as the primary narrator *his* process of becoming reterritorialized has been initiated. The first story not only situates the novel in Bombay, but enacts the theme of storytelling and its importance for the production of locality within the novel. As a narrative locality, Bombay is made up of a diversity of stories in which a ghost tale may convey as much truth as any other story.

[24] Punter's description of the phantom limb as "the ghost of feeling; the reminder of loss, the ineradicable certainty" (66) succinctly describes the function of Antia's missing, yet phantasmagorically existing leg.

"Shakti" as a Colonizing Force

With "Shakti" (i.e., "female power/force") we are introduced to a completely different kind of story as the genre changes to social comedy. The topic of the frame is the origin of Bombay as a part of Catherine of Braganza's dowry to King Charles II (*Love* 33).[25] Subramaniam tells the group in the bar that "the beginning and end of everything is a marriage" (*Love* 33), thereby linking marriage and colonization, a topic further explored in the story. Appadurai notes that: "All locality building has a moment of colonization … when there is a formal recognition that the production of a neighborhood requires deliberate, risky, even violent action in respect to the soil, forests, animals, and other human beings" (*Modernity* 183). Within "Shakti," the marriage of Sheila and T.T., a symbol of the rise of a new moneyed middle-class, indicates a change in the neighborhood. Their marriage coincides with, and contributes to, the changing economy, and as prominent agents in the financial market they influence the contexts of the neighborhood.

Socially mobile Sheila soon decides that she must acquire the Boatwalla mansion in up-market Malabar Hill. Unlike Sheila, the Boatwallas are upper-class, 'old' money, and still influential in the financial sector. Dolly Boatwalla's resistance to Sheila, in her eyes an usurper, can be read as an indication of the fear of being deterritorialized both imaginatively (by losing status) and physically (by losing the mansion). The Boatwalla mansion "wasn't really on top of the hill, and it was dingy and damp, but Sheila knew it was where she had to go to get to the real top, the only one that mattered" (*Love* 36). The mansion illustrates the difference between the neighborhood ("dingy and damp") and locality as a value ("the real top"). The new moneyed middle-class, one could argue, colonizes the territory formerly occupied by the upper-class with its inherited wealth and property.[26] Colonization is a process of reterritorialization, which leads to deterritorialization. Thus, Sheila's social and topographical climb is a process of reterritorialization, while the possible consequences for the old moneyed upper class is deterritorialization, a loss not only of physical property, but of status and value. Sheila here functions as a builder of a capitalist empire as she eventually strives to drive the Boatwallas both out of business and out of the mansion. While no overt violence is used, this process changes the contexts of neighborhood and affects locality.

The story only records a few instances of Sheila thinking back on her past, but in a telling episode she remembers how her father "had left half his family murdered in Lahore. … They had a shop, which was burned. Partition threw him onto the streets of

[25] This is how England acquired the territory of Bombay from the Portuguese in 1662 (*Britannica)*.

[26] See Rachel Dwyer for more on the new-moneyed middle-class; she argues that "a new middle class, emerging from the lower-middle classes in … Bombay, is actively producing and consuming a new public culture" (*All You Want* 1).

Bombay…" (*Love* 72; see also Punter 34-35). The memory surfaces shortly after she has driven past "a family sitting by the side of the road, father and mother and two children around a small fire" (*Love* 71). Both of these instances highlight how Sheila is in transit. Her place in society is not secure since her family had been deterritorialized by the "schisms and horrors" (*Love* 72) of the Partition, but whereas her father was "thrown" into Bombay, Sheila actively creates a place for herself.[27]

Other than that we are given little information about Sheila's background. What is obvious, however, is her financial astuteness. This becomes clear when she is able to understand the importance of an English phrase overheard by her domestic servant Ganga. English is in many ways a marker of class and education, but Ganga has partially acquired the language through many years of service in English-speaking homes. She has heard Dolly mentioning her banking connections: "It was Fugai Bank. Foo Ga. Foo Quay" (*Love* 70), information needed for Sheila to complete the Boatwalla take-over. While Ganga has understood that the name of the bank is useful information, Sheila can interpret what appears almost a code word. Her most important skill is an acute understanding of the financial market, which she can both interpret and contribute to.

It is through the intricate circulation of money and information that also Ganga gets the opportunity to establish a business. As with Sheila, Ganga learns the intricacies of consumption and production. Her social ascent is perhaps greater than Sheila's, as she goes from being the servant to establishing her own business, a "cloth-reclamation factory" in Dharavi (*Love* 74). Both Sheila and Ganga are producers of material goods. Sheila's first product, electric mixers, had been geared to a middle-class looking for luxury items. Ganga's cloth reclamation will, presumably, transform old material into new.

As indicated by the title, "Shakti" is a story about female strength in which middle-class women are gaining both influence and power. While both Sheila and Ganga are producers of goods (and locality), they are also skilled consumers. Appadurai comments that "[c]onsumption has now become a serious form of work," and central to this work is "learning how to navigate the open-ended temporal flows of consumer credit and purchase, in a landscape where nostalgia has become divorced from memory…" (*Modernity* 82). While Appadurai sees consumption as (partially) separated from the production of commodities, in "Shakti" the two are in fact interrelated: by learning what to consume, they also learn what to produce, and vice versa. Sheila is introduced as a shopkeeper's daughter who could study "the glittering women who went in and out of the

[27] Adding to the obscurity of Sheila's background is the fact that her maiden name is never given. She is referred to as Sheila Bijlani before her husband Bijlani is introduced. This obscurity is mirrored in the name of her husband, who is simply called by his last name throughout most of the story, before acquiring the first name T.T.: "Bijlani had acquired, over the years, with his increasing financial weight, with his famous and many-faceted magnitude, a name and a dense, magisterial composure" (*Love* 52-53).

shop, sometimes for aspirin, sometimes for lipstick". From her vantage point "just below Kemp's Corner" she "watched and learnt a thing or two" (*Love* 33), i.e. both to be a consumer and how to read the market. To colonize the social space, however, this achieved knowledge is not enough, as she recognizes:

> Sheila was perfect, and she knew that however hard she tried she could never achieve the level of careless imperfection that Dolly flaunted. It had nothing to do with perseverance or intelligence and it took generations. It couldn't be learnt, only grown with the bone. … Dolly had it and she didn't …. She knew it and she was absolutely determined that if it took her the rest of her life she would defeat Dolly. (*Love* 41-42)

For her part, Dolly would have done well to acknowledge Sheila's strength: "[I]f Dolly had been a little less Boatwalla and a little more sagacious, she could have adopted Sheila and taught her and patronized her in a thousand little ways, but Dolly saw only a little upstart, which Sheila was. Dolly didn't see the ferocious political will, that hidden glint. This is how wars start" (*Love* 36-37). By failing to recognize Sheila's potential, Dolly has failed to imagine the changing society of which Sheila is a part, the new-moneyed middle class. Rather than becoming an active agent in producing or reinforcing her own status, Dolly only attempts to reinforce a status quo whereas Sheila is a much more active agent in creating her life. Unlike Dolly's relationship to those socially beneath her, Ganga's and Sheila's cooperation is built on mutual respect. By extension, the 'new' locality of Bombay in "Shakti" relies on cooperation to a greater extent than the old, upper class structure of feeling which was more limiting in terms of mobility. Sheila does not become engaged in a storytelling act, however, and there are no references to her constructing a plausible narrative. Instead, her agency stems from being able to read and interpret the capitalist market. This is a different kind of agency by which she participates in the production of locality. Sheila's acute perception of how locality is produced is embodied in her by-invitation-only women's club, the Shanghai club.

> It was the certainty of it, the feeling that for a few hours there was nowhere else in the world to be and nothing else to do, it was that cusping of time and place and history and power and effort that lifted the Shanghai Club that night into romance and made it unutterably golden. (57)

The club in itself is described as rather ordinary, but its sense of locality is anything but.

In spite of Sheila's mastery of promoting her kind of locality, she initially seems defeated when her son falls in love with Dolly's daughter Roxanne. However, with the concluding marriage another change in the economy is noted since the merging of the two powerful families affects not only business but politics (*Love* 74). The merger indicates how the flows of the scapes influence each other: as the ethnoscape, i.e., the new moneyed middle-class, has changed by interacting with the financescape, the financescape in turn affects the ideoscape, politics. Thus, the storyteller Subramaniam concludes with more than a hint of irony, the joining of the two families lead to a business merger, a loan scandal, and a fall of government (*Love* 74). In this story colonization is shown to be an ongoing process, but not one which necessarily involves different nations or overt use of violence. It is a Bombay neighborhood that in this social comedy is subject to constant colonization as the financescape changes and as the flow of one scape disjunctively affects the flows of the others.

"Kama" and Cleansing

In the frame episode for the third story, it is revealed that the primary narrator is himself far from having one of these powerful marital unions. Instead, he describes himself as heartbroken and disillusioned, and is eager to hear Subramaniam's story of a domestic murder (*Love* 75-76). In this detective story the protagonist, Sikh police inspector Sartaj Singh, tries to solve a murder case, has to sign his divorce papers, and contemplates issues of belonging and identity.[28] As indicated by its title, "Kama" is a story about desire and pleasure being played out on many levels, a story that problematizes the ambiguous position of desire in contemporary India. Chetanbhai and Asha Patel live a *Kamasutra*-inspired life, while their son Kshitij belongs to a right wing group called the *Rakshaks* (*Love* 144). The *Kamasutra* here functions as an important subtext which describes and prescribes how a "man-about-town" should live (*Love* 126). Lovemaking is one aspect, but not the only one (Killingley 265; Dwyer 28). Sartaj Singh has one last sexual encounter with his estranged wife Megha, but must then find something else on which to focus his desire. To make sense of his situation Sartaj (like Antia) is forced to formulate a

[28] Previously, scholars have primarily discussed the relationship of "Kama" to the detective genre. Cielo Festino compares it to Todorov's genre descriptions of the detective story. Her main claim is that in "Kama" there is no "second murder" as the culprit is not found. Claire Chambers has an interesting chapter on "Kama" as "Postcolonial *Noir*" in which she discusses how Chandra recognizes "that the hard-boiled subgenre's supposed claims to transgressiveness provide fertile ground for interrogation" (34). Furthermore, she argues that Chandra "adapts and subverts some of the genre's conventions in order to challenge its assumption of a good/evil dichotomy, and its unspoken complicity with (neo-) colonial law enforcement institutions" (33-34). Chambers sees "Kama" as a metaphysical detective story.

narrative, both of what happened and of how he can go on, a story which resituates him in the city.

The Rakshaks function in the novel as an example of how belonging is a complicated and controversial issue. There are no references to the Shiv Sena, the Maharashtrian Hindu right-wing party, in the novel. Instead Chandra invents the fictional organization of the Rakshaks ("protectors, guardians, defenders")[29] to illustrate how, in Appadurai's words, "the road from national genius to a totalized cosmology of the sacred nation, and further to ethnic purity and cleansing, is relatively direct" (*Fear* 4). The Rakshaks, who see their job as being to purify the motherland, represent an ideoscape at odds with the idea of Bombay which Chandra celebrates. Theirs is a violent discourse of purity which goes against the grain of the multi-voiced megacity. What they want to cleanse or control is not only perceived moral impurities but also religious diversity, making both the nation in a 'mother India' sense and neighborhood contested spaces. This tension is played out graphically when Kshitij throws out the voluptuous *Apsara* (nymph) statue which his parents have in their living room. Instead, as Dwyer observes, his goddess is "Mother India, a de-eroticized figure, the daughter of western and Indian nationalism" (48). In *Geek Sublime*, Chandra explains how the British colonizers had inspired the invention of a "new nationalistic Hinduism" (187) in which "classical, chaste Vedic" tradition was a high point, and "Tantra [the tradition to which the *Kamasutra* belongs] was prime evidence of … degeneration…" (186). So when Kshitij effectively cleans the parental home of all traces of perceived impurities, that includes parts of their Hindu heritage.

Sartaj prides himself on his Sikh identity and appearance, and is always concerned about his looks. E. Dawson Varughese notes that the "name 'Sartaj' is a recognized Punjabi name, but it is also a Hindi name in the sense that it uses the language of Hindi (not Punjabi)" (103). The name consists of the words "'Sar' (head) and 'taj' (crown)". The name thus translates as "crown of the head" (Varughese 103). As a reference to his turban Sartaj's name becomes a sign of his cultural identity. Yet Sartaj is a "doubly anxious" presence, as Caroline Herbert points out in relation to his role in *Sacred Games*. He is "unsettling from within the Hinduised state by appearing as a reminder of the nation's diversity, all the while reminding us of the deepening crisis of secularism at the century's end" (C. Herbert, "Spectrality" 958). As a Sikh, Sartaj is a minority within the state apparatus of the police at a time when the state is becoming increasingly de-secularized. He is brusquely reminded of the tension between inclusion and exclusion when he

[29] rakṣak, 1. adj. protecting. 2. m. protector; guardian. 3. Defender (*Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary)*. As Rachel Dwyer observes, the word Rakshaks means 'Protectors' but is "homophonous with 'demons' [rākṣas (*Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary)*]" (Dwyer 48).

investigates the offices of the Rakshaks. Finding a rack of *lathis* (sticks or canes) he remembers "a man killed with a *lathi* in a fight, his head had been split open" (*Love* 145). The Rakshaks for their part see him as an outsider, a foreigner, in the city. Even though Sartaj has already recognized that "[t]o say, I was born in Bombay, was very much besides the point" (*Love* 110), he is nonetheless initially unable to recognize the view of himself as an outsider. Eventually he realizes: "All of Kshitij's resentment made sense now, his dense anger just under the innocuous surface, all of it barely concealed. Except, of course, to a man vain enough not to believe that he could be despised for what he was, for his beard, for his turban" (*Love* 144). In his so-called vanity, Sartaj perceives the locality of Bombay as inclusive and cosmopolitan.

While Sartaj identifies with his Sikh appearance, he questions other aspects of his identity, such as his career as a police, a family tradition. Realizing that his grandfather had been an iconic and emulated figure, he also has to admit that his father was more dignified than himself (*Love* 149). And while Sartaj does not take bribes, he occasionally enjoys small perks of being an inspector, such as seats at a restaurant or discounts on shoes (*Love* 149-150). When still married, Megha questions him about police brutality, and he admits that he does torture prisoners (*Love* 151), and as a police officer Sartaj knows well how to be intimidating (*Love* 88). A forceful instance of self-questioning comes when Megha tells him that he has "a face like a terrorist" (*Love* 95). The accusation, coming from her, seems incomprehensible to Sartaj, offering as it does a view of himself he cannot accept. Megha's view is far more hurtful than that of Kshitij and the Rakshaks, but both highlight the discrepancy between being seen as an outsider by others and seeing oneself as a citizen of the city, a Bombayite.

Another forceful instance of 'dislocation' that recurs throughout much of the story involves feelings of death, and comes through Sartaj trying to deal with his impending divorce. Dwyer discusses Sartaj's last erotic meeting, the *petit mort* with Megha, as "an encounter described in terms of love and death" (47). Sartaj, for example, afterwards sees Megha's "shimmering body moving away from his life … he could hear the world ending … he could feel the melancholy of its inevitable death" (*Love* 123). However, this feeling of dying is not new. Megha's family consider him dead (*Love* 81), and Sartaj postpones signing the divorce papers because he is "afraid of dying" (*Love* 115). When Megha arrives, he feels "inside the unhitching of pieces of himself, things drawing apart and falling away" and his heart "kick[s] to the side like a living thing hurt" (*Love* 117). Confronted with the end of his marriage, Sartaj is even described in language reminiscent of Jago Antia's loss of identity and his frequent thoughts about falling through empty space, "his mind like a hole, a black yawning in space" (*Love* 125).

However, it is his thoughts about Bombay and "all its unsolved dead" that also bring him back to life (*Love* 161). Claire Chambers argues that to Sartaj "work functions more as a distraction from existential despair than for the benefit of his community" ("Postcolonial Noir" 38). This assessment might be true, but it is thanks to him constructing an identity as a third-generation police-inspector connected to the city that he is able to continue. With Megha gone, his desire is now focused on the city: "In the blaring evening rush he could feel the size of the city, its millions upon millions, its huge life and all its unsolved dead" (*Love* 161). While acknowledging that the Rakshaks remain and crime will continue, Sartaj concludes "Kama" by plunging smilingly into the street, passed by a bus with a poster proclaiming "Love, Love, Love" (*Love* 161). The poster fulfills a function outlined by Stuti Khanna in a discussion of Rushdie's novels: "advertisement tags, slogans and jingles are not merely used to *represent* the city in a realistic mode but actually help to *evoke* and conjure up the city for the narrator" (84). Sartaj now sees his place among the city's "millions upon millions" as an officer searching for truth and trying to solve crimes, thus transforming and reterritorializing the "man-about-town" into being a somewhat vain contemporary police inspector. He goes on living with a different sense of allegiance to the neighborhood and, importantly, to Bombay as a locality.[30] His production of locality stems from internalizing aspects of storytelling. He sees the city's "unsolved dead" as a cause for continuing to create narratives needed to solve crimes (even if all crimes will not be solved in courts of law). In this manner, Sartaj becomes a storyteller in his function as a Bombay police-inspector.

Wealth and Absence in "Artha"

In the frame preceding the fourth story, "Artha" ("material wealth"), the primary narrator brings a friend, Ayesha, to the Fisherman's Rest. Ayesha quickly fits in and in turn brings her friends to the bar. The clientele thus changes considerably, indicating a shift in the 'micro-neighborhood' of the bar:

> The balcony filled up with journos full of horrific election-time tales from the interior, and the younger Maruti 1000 kind of stockbrokers …, and I muttered about how they were going to sell the place … and drive us all out

[30] A similar example of moving on also occurs earlier when Sartaj tries to fill the existential void left by his wife and is returned to life by thoughts of the murder case he is investigating (125).

> with beer prices only foreign-bank imperialist-choosoing scum could afford. But really, we all enjoyed it quite a bit …. It was all quite dazzling.[31]
>
> (*Love* 164)

It is Ayesha's complaints about the difficulty of finding somewhere to live (should she marry), that makes Subramaniam embark on the story of "Artha," but he is also clearly responding to the new ethnoscape: "'People live,' Subramaniam said. 'Somehow'" (*Love* 164). Subramaniam's story this time includes an additional frame narrative, which reintroduces the theme of violence. The story had first been related to him by a man called Iqbal when travelling on a train through the "nocturnal madness"[32] of what appears to be the riot-prone 1993 (*Love* 165). With the train speeding by cities and towns, the two men are watching for "fires and crowds" (*Love* 165). The story foregrounds violence in connection to sectarianism and the criminal underworld.

The riots which Subramaniam and Iqbal are watching out for illustrate the clash between different ideas of ethnicity, i.e., the question whether 'Indian' should encompass Hindus *and* Muslims (as well as other ethnic/religious groups), or whether a sectarian view that stresses difference should prevail. What soon becomes clear in the story is that the differences between groups often collapse. As Appadurai reminds us, "groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous" (*Modernity* 48). In Muslim Iqbal's case this collapse is centered on his relationship with Rajesh, a Hindu. As lovers and as young male residents of Bombay they identify with a broader ethnoscape, rather than one limited by religion. Yet the Hindu-Muslim resentments in the story (seen in expressions such as "dirty Hindu buggers" and "musalta, kalua, kattu"[33] [*Love* 171]) are indicators of macroevents worked "into highly localized structures of feeling," where they are "part of the incessant murmur of urban political discourse and its constant, undramatic cadences" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 153). As Appadurai warns, "persons and groups at this most local level generate those structures of feeling that over time provide the discursive field within which the explosive rumors, dramas, and speeches of the riot can take hold" (*Modernity* 153). The sectarian sentiments expressed are initially brushed aside by Iqbal and Rajesh (*Love* 171), but as Iqbal finds himself in a riot, they take on acute meaning. Traversing streets that are emptied by the oncoming riot, Iqbal imagines seeing Rajesh approaching:

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[31] "Maruti 1000" is a luxury car manufactured between 1990 and 1994 (Wikipedia). "Choosoing" seems to be a Hindi-English conglomeration which means sucking.

[32] The notion of "nocturnal madness" also recalls the Partition/Independence of India, which occurred at midnight between August 14-15, 1947. The image of midnight is further explored in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

[33] Derogatory terms for Muslim men.

> I thought I would turn a corner, and I would see Rajesh swaggering down the road towards me, an iron rod in his hand. I wanted to ask: will you kill me, Rajesh? Will you kill my Muslim mother and my Muslim father? Will you take our land then, our needle-point of land in this wilderness? Will you live happily in it then? Could you? Tell me, tell me, I said. Tell me. (*Love* 219)

Whereas derogatory sentiments earlier were lightheartedly seen as evidence of people's follies, they now represent a deeply divided society. The riot seems to drive home the point that Iqbal and Rajesh, as representatives of different religions, are not allowed to be members of the same ethnoscape. Yet Iqbal's insistence on "tell me" highlights both how he desires to communicate with Rajesh again, and, notably, how he requires a narrative which could explain Rajesh's secret life. Iqbal's desire for a story, a narrative, resembles that of both Sartaj Singh, who is able to move on, and Jago Antia, who is able to overcome a trauma.

The ethnoscapes in "Artha" are clearly unpredictable and shifting, with the wider inclusiveness of an ethnoscape represented by Iqbal and Rajesh (as gay, Muslim, and Hindu) not being acceptable to others. Both Iqbal and Rajesh are residents of Bombay, but belonging is a different matter. Furthermore, homosexuality on its own prevents them from being socially accepted, since it is both illegal and stigmatized. This is another boundary which they are faced with, in addition to their different religions. Thus, Rajesh's wish for an apartment can be understood as more acute, as he literally lacks a space of his own:

> "I'm thirty-two years old. I want to fuck in my flat."
>
> His flat wasn't his flat, but a flat that he wanted, in a building off Yari Road. ….
>
> "So how much is it today?" I said.
>
> "Twenty-two lakhs," he said, and added hopelessly, "and sixty-five thousand".[34] (*Love* 168-69)

The apartment, or rather the dream of it, is a representation of locality, an imaginary place in which there is privacy and protection for Iqbal and Rajesh. In this case, the production of locality is embodied in a physical place, an apartment which would allow Rajesh to be an agent in his own life. The city is desired, and the apartment is a physical manifestation of this desire. Further extending the image of desire, Iqbal, when traveling in a taxi,

[34] One lakh is a numerical unit which equals one hundred thousand (*Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary*).

describes the passing scenery in terms of beauty. Having just discovered that Rajesh is missing, he asks the taxi driver "Where do you think Rajesh went?" (*Love* 183). Neither the driver nor the city has the answer:

> the driver turned his head to look at me, but he had no answer, and neither did the city, my city which went by swiftly and gleaming in the dark. We swept over the long arc of Marine Drive, through Kemp's Corner, down Pedder Road, Mahalaxmi, Worli, Mahim, and the concrete loomed above, white in the moonlight, higher than I ever remembered, and I lay helpless under its weight, crushed by its certain beauty. (*Love* 183-84)

Although Iqbal is intoxicated in this passage, his perception of the city seems to indicate something more than drunken helplessness. The list of place-names, detailing the physicality of the neighborhood, is complemented by the aspect of locality. The looming concrete is perceived as crushing, but significantly so because of its beauty. As with the apartment, the city is simultaneously desired while also being a site of exclusion.

The criminal underworld into which (or through which) Rajesh disappears is also represented in "Artha." There is the criminal leader Ratnani, a buyer of art, whom Rajesh claims to work for (*Love* 179). After Rajesh disappears, Iqbal finds out that he has indeed been involved with criminals, some "*bhai log*"[35] (*Love* 197). The underworld may represent a path to fortune for those excluded in the mainstream, but its rules are as strict, or stricter, than society at large, which Iqbal discovers when Rajesh transgresses a boundary and disappears.[36]

While Ratnani and the bhai log represent the underworld, it is also represented in a different manner, through references to the prominent image of the criminal protagonist in popular Hindi cinema. Appadurai talks of Mumbai as "a cinematic city" ("Mumbai as Dreamscape") and argues that this is also the self-understanding of the city, which sees itself as constructed through the interconnections between its courts, crime and cinema. Chandra too has commented on the connection between Bombay and films: "The city imagines itself and proclaims itself through the many movies that are produced in Bombay, all the way back through Indian silent films to the talkies. Think of all the songs which discuss this city and how difficult it is, yet position it as a fascinating, lovely place

[35] *Bhai* (brother) *log* (people) is a term which displays "the mean wit with which the city's gangsters described themselves: the fraternity, the band of brothers" (*Love* 197).
[36] As Appadurai, highlighting the conjunction between crime and order in cosmopolitan places such as Mumbai, succinctly puts it: "these are cities where crime is an integral part of municipal order" ("Spectral Housing" 628).

to live in" ("Interview" by Chambers 47).[37] In the novel, Chandra incorporates the mediascape's image of the criminal. By frequently linking Rajesh to movies, Iqbal tries to construct a narrative that will explain his actions. What Iqbal does not know about Rajesh, he constructs as if he were a character in a script of mediated violence and crime based on "types and typification" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 63). One way this is done is through associating Rajesh with the "myth of the law-breaking hero" a type that appeared, Appadurai states, in the "radical disjunctures"

> between ideoscapes and mediascapes (as in many countries in the Middle East and Asia) where the lifestyles represented on both national and international TV and cinema completely overwhelm and undermine the rhetoric of national politics. In the Indian case, the myth of the law-breaking hero has emerged to mediate this naked struggle between the pieties and realities of Indian politics, which has grown increasingly brutalized and corrupt. (Appadurai, *Modernity* 40).

The films alluded to in "Artha" justify, to some degree, the stereotypical "angry young man" figure, which appeared in films in the politically troubled 1970s. When Iqbal thinks back to the first time he met Rajesh, for example, he remembers the two of them dancing to a song from the movie *Khalnayak* from 1993 (*Love* 198). Later, Rajesh is painted standing in front of a poster of the movie *Deewaar* from 1975 (*Love* 227), a painting which has an enormous emotional value for Iqbal. Together with another move, *Zanjeer* from 1973, it links Rajesh to the "angry young man," as well as provides a model for the couple's inter-religious relationship.[38] Furthermore, when Iqbal first loses track of Rajesh, he is standing by a poster for *Droh Kaal* from 1994. All of these films feature a protagonist at odds with the law, driven to, or opting for, crime because of injustices in society. This kind of cinematic male protagonist is not necessarily heroic in the traditional sense, but his turn to crime, though rarely successful, is most often justified. Priya Jha argues that "[t]hese films work to create national affiliations that are generated by a re-membering of a long-standing Indian myth of male-to-male friendship, *yaar*, *dostana*, or *dosti,* taken from the 'Indian' image-repertoire" (44). M. K. Raghavendra adds that cities in 1970s movies became "an emblem of opportunity … both within and outside the law" (181). So not only is Rajesh linked to a media image of the criminal, but he is simultaneously inscribed into a masculine narrative, where what matters are men's relationships with other men.

[37] In *Sacred Games*, Chandra to a even greater extent explores the "self-fashioning" of representatives of the underworld based on films (and vice versa). See also interview by Chambers.
[38] *Zanjeer* traces the friendship between a Muslim and a Hindu man (see Priya Jha for elaboration).

The movies associated with Rajesh are not only about the underworld and the "rise of an individual from deprivation" (Raghavendra 181), but also celebrate male-to-male bonding and the city itself.

While Iqbal thus seems to try to make Rajesh more legible by associating him with film tropes, he finds Rajesh's real-life connection to the underworld frightening and not heroic. Iqbal's initial reaction is joking disbelief when Rajesh offered to come to Sandhya's aid during her divorce by having her spouse murdered: "[H]e had offered to put out a supari [murder contract] on Vasant …. , making a pistol barrel with his fingers, *tap-tap* …. I'd laughed at him, and had told him he was cute when he was dangerous" (*Love* 177).[39] However, his feeling soon changes to fear (*Love* 179, 187). Even though Iqbal has tried to make narrative sense of Rajesh by envisioning him as an "angry young man," he cannot find closure since he does not know what has happened to him. The police inspector simply tells him that "some people just vanish," leaving Iqbal with a void, an "absence in [his] heart" (*Love* 227-28) that reminds us of Jago Antia and his absent leg. Ultimately, the questions where Rajesh is and whether he is alive remain impossible to answer. The genre-films seem at first to provide an explanatory model but cannot give a satisfactory answer, leaving Iqbal with a narrative lack. However, despite the narrative limitations, "Artha" foregrounds storytelling through Iqbal telling his story to Subramaniam. As Iqbal's desperate "tell me" indicates (*Love* 219), narratives do carry explanatory meaning. It appears that for Iqbal to be able to participate in the imagination and in the production of locality he needs a narrative language – and this continuously eludes him within the story he is telling.

The narrative lack is problematized through the story's attention to two different modes of expression, alternatives to the limitations of verbal narratives: computer coding and art. But where the first proves too limited, art proves a needed complement to language. At first sight, computer programming codes may seem a desirable language:

> [Sandhya] had a bad habit, when she was debugging, of also polishing up, snipping here and there to make everything tighter …. My code was patchy and twitchy and knotted together, like MTNL phone wiring, and if it worked I didn't really care if it was creaky, but that was the difference between us, and one reason why I loved her so. (*Love* 174)

[39] A supari (Bombay slang) is a "murder contract. The word actually refers to betel nuts, which are eaten to freshen the mouth. In the underworld, supari now refers to the proposal and acceptance of a hit" ("Glossary for *Sacred Games*").

The end result of Sandhya's programming is described as "beautiful," as she "had gone close to the metal and come out with a kind of perfection" (*Love* 222).[40] Yet in spite of being near perfection, Sandhya's code is a form of language which Iqbal himself does not quite master, and it cannot be used as an alternative to the verbal narrative which he seeks.

Art provides a more productive alternative to verbal language than computer code, and the story provides different images of visual art as conveying meaning. One is an art-installation, described as "a succinct comment on the restricted imaginative life and the repressed, bubbling anger of the lumpen. [The artist] artfully uses elements of Bombay street kitsch to achieve a nearly absolute expression of spatial nullification and emotional withdrawal. … His project is the crystallization of emptiness" (*Love* 170). However, also the language of the visual has its limitations. While "the crystallization of emptiness" is played out when Iqbal traverses streets emptied by the oncoming riot, making the city completely unfamiliar, the entire story contradicts the visualized "spatial nullification and emotional withdrawal" since Chandra's characters are deeply involved with the city. A more truthful image is conveyed to Iqbal through a painting of Rajesh made by Anubhav, a painter who is described as "a whore, a leech and a liar" (*Love* 227). In spite of Anubhav's character flaws, Iqbal finds some form of comfort and meaning in his painting, which is thus more "true" than the artist.

The concept of *artha* in this story is linked to art. In Hindi, the final 'a' of artha is dropped, and the pronunciation thus resembles the word 'art'.[41] Artha is the aim for material wealth, yet in the novel it is rather immaterial values that are given final importance. Material wealth, ideally, should be pursued without greed, but in the novel the quest for artha is set within a highly limiting financescape through which a different interpretation emerges. In the face of an existential void, artha is shown to refer to immaterial rather than material value. This immaterial value is expressed through "sharir ek rang ka," a body of one colour (*Love* 203), and is first introduced at an *akhara*, a gym. The akhara provides a localized space where the idea of immaterial value is manifested, and the notion of "sharir ek rang ka" provides an ideology where the body and mind are united, in contrast to the modern gym, linked with Ratnani and the selfish power of the underworld, where the body is seen as "slabs of meat" (*Love* 203). The akhara symbolizes issues of belonging and hard work, and is a physical manifestation of locality. Located on a desirable and thus threatened spot of land and crowded by high-rise buildings (*Love* 203), the akhara, unlike the guarded and for-members-only bodybuilding gym, is open to

[40] Chandra elsewhere explains that "the purpose of each layer [of code] is to … allow instructions to be phrased in a syntax that is just a bit closer to everyday, spoken language" (*Geek Sublime* 40-41).
[41] See Note on transliteration.

all. Having lost most of its users to the gym (*Love* 202), however, the immaterial value taught at the akhara is increasingly replaced by the material ideology of the gym. In terms of the production of locality, this means that a neighborhood characterized by belonging, hard work and sacrifice is threatened by one characterized by "slabs of meat," masculine aggression and a rigid and univalent sense of locality.

Yet, a sense of relative calm emerges at the end of the story, with Iqbal lying in bed, looking at Anubhav's painting of Rajesh. Iqbal's sense of calm is different from both Jago Antia's and Sartaj Singh's sense of calm, and in many ways more ambiguous. Antia has his friends and yet knows that for him "nothing had changed" (*Love* 31). Sartaj Singh knows "that nothing was finished," that the Rakshaks and crime will continue to be present in Bombay, yet he identifies with this city's "huge life, and all its unsolved dead" (*Love* 161). Iqbal, on the other hand, does not find a substitute for Rajesh, nor a story which satisfactorily explains the events. Instead, "the theories that I made up to explain it all to myself, those plots that gave me comfort and a comfortable kind of terror, they've been bleached white by the ferocity of my attention. They rattle around in my head with a dry clicking noise. But the painting is life itself" (*Love* 228). His only way of coming to terms is by acknowledging the "absence in [his] heart" and of holding on to the idea of "rang ek sharir ka" as a "colour that moves through the body" (*Love* 228). Whereas stories and the construction of narratives have provided ways of moving on in the previous stories, Iqbal's attempt at creating a narrative (with closure) ultimately fails. His plots "rattle around" in his head, but fail to provide comfort. Instead of a narrative language, Iqbal's painting becomes an alternative that is emotional rather than explicatory, representing "life itself" (*Love* 228).[42] Iqbal's painting represents someone (i.e., his lover) which is no longer present in Bombay. Similarly, Antia's ghost is a painful reminder of someone (i.e., his brother) no longer present in the city. The implication for locality of the insistence of loss is not merely nostalgic, but articulates a struggle to envision one's place in spite of loss, or possibly, in Iqbal's case, even of the hope of reconnecting to the lost lover.

Subramaniam's proclamation that the story is about how people live, highlights the ambiguous ending. The story started out with Ayesha complaining about the difficulties of finding housing in Bombay, and in relaying Iqbal's story Subramaniam shows the discrepancy between an excluding neighborhood (physical lack of housing) and a changing locality (a limiting right-wing ideoscape). We know that Iqbal continues to live with his family, and that he is alive in spite of riots, ethnic violence, and threats from the underworld – but we do not know if the same is true of Rajesh; it seems more likely that

[42] See also my discussion below of "Shanti," where the idea of "life itself" re-occurs.

he is dead. The uncertainty is also commented upon as the story returns to its own frame, that of Iqbal and Subramaniam on the train through a "troubled time" of "nocturnal madness" (*Love* 165). Iqbal asks: "Who can tell what will happen? But *perhaps* tomorrow you and I will pull into Bombay Central" (*Love* 225; emphasis mine). There is no certainty here, and the storytelling also shifts tenses, as Iqbal describes what he will do. The temporal shift emphasizes not only uncertainty, but also conveys a feeling that the uncertainty will be ongoing. Thus, I would argue, Iqbal is engaged in an ongoing process of coming to Bombay, rather than being in Bombay and identifying with its locality. He remains, to some extent, "crushed by its certain beauty" and without a narrative closure, however open-ended they tend to be in the other stories (*Love* 184).

The Eyes of Shanti

The introduction to the last story, "Shanti," differs from the others. The primary narrator is out walking, alone and restless, when he unexpectedly meets Subramaniam at an intersection. Subramaniam invites him home for a drink, and the setting for the storytelling frame is thus different, moving from the public bar to the private home. The only audience is the young man, soon to be named Ranjit. Ayesha is their topic of discussion. "She's my friend," Ranjit confesses, "but I don't understand her, not really" (*Love* 230). Subramaniam then declares that he *wants* to tell a story, adding both a personal touch and urgency to what is to come.[43] "Shanti" in fact relates how Subramaniam came to be a storyteller, and his example will in turn be an inspiration to Ranjit.

"Shanti" means peace, and it is also the name of a woman Shiv meets right before he almost jumps in front of a train. The only story in the novel which explicitly incorporates its title in the story itself, "Shanti" is permeated by the search for peace, a concept thus allowed to conclude the novel. However, peace cannot be separated from agency and participation in storytelling. As with stories and locality, peace is something which is produced. Storytelling becomes a means of working through traumatic loss, of achieving a sense of calm. Unlike the earlier stories which dealt with other people, this story traces Shiv Subramaniam's own youth, after the loss of his twin brother Hari who had been killed. Hari's death leads to a sense of deterritorialization, a loss of connection, both through physically moving from Delhi, but more importantly, through a sense of alienation and despair. Shiv has seen a body, identical to his own, in the morgue (*Love* 231, 238), but more than showing his own mortality, the death of Hari indicates a loss of belonging.

[43] See p. 67, above, for a discussion on the function of the word "listen" in Chandra's novel.

There are several parallels between Jago Antia and Shiv. Both are plagued by the loss of a brother, and like Antia, Shiv had been deterritorialized by his loss. As a consequence of the brutality which had affected his twin brother, Shiv had left his parental home and moved in with his sister and her husband in the small town of Leharia to escape from all things which remind him of his brother (*Love* 231). There he experiences an existential void, which changes slowly only after meeting Shanti, mostly through the different stories she tells him. Whereas overcoming a trauma is also what Antia does in the first story, there is an important difference: Antia retells and reconstructs the event of his childhood for himself only, while Shiv and Shanti as a community of two are able to help each other with their stories. The stories reconnect Shiv to life and society, as he embarks in a new direction.

The stories told are all "true, true, and true" (*Love* 255).[44] The insistence on truth brings to mind the narrative of detective Sartaj Singh in "Kama," and his search for truth: "Things happened, Sartaj thought, one after the other, and what we want from it is a kind of shape, a case report" (*Love* 157). Although a case report is a narrative of what has most likely happened rather than the unvarnished truth, it resembles Shiv and Shanti's tales, as they are both stories meant to convey a truth content, in the sense of being believable and explainable rather than absolute.[45] Like several of the earlier stories in the novel the stories in "Shanti" deal with brutal violence. "The most evil man in the world" (*Love* 244) recounts the inhumanities an Indian man experienced when fighting for the Allies in Africa during WWII, while the story about "a woman who ran backwards into the future" (*Love* 250) places brutality on Indian soil by dealing with violence in a caste-ridden locality. Both of these stories Shanti tells Shiv, who then retells them to his friend Frankie (to whom we shall return below). As a next step Shiv tells the stories to Ranjit, who then retells them to the reader. Shanti is not the only storyteller within the story; Shiv contributes as well with a story of a young man, the man's mother, and the atomic bomb (*Love* 256). The story pits naivety against reason, but is simultaneously about belief in the improbable. Shiv's story also has a moment of healing a trauma through storytelling, as he is able to integrate the death of his brother into a story about healing. He remembers his brother's wounds: "A cut on the palm of a right hand. Small, not too large, but ferocious in the straightness of its edges …. Another on the left forearm, from the same straight edge. … In the morgue he had found the cuts unbearable to look at, this damage, these rents in the surface and the lewd exposure of what lay underneath" (*Love* 237-38). When

[44] Most of the stories are not retold, but merely given as titles, such as: "The Ten year Old Boy Who Joined the Theatre Company of Death," "The Farmer Who Went To America and Fell Through a Hole to the Other Side of the World," "Ghurabat and Her Lover the Assassin Who Wept," and "The Downfall of the Mughal Empire" (255). The titles thus seem distant from the proclaimed truth of the stories.

[45] See also Alexandru's interview with Vikram Chandra in which he discusses truth and storytelling (9).

Shiv eventually tells his story about Amma and the village, the children's inexplicable injuries are reminiscent of Hari's wounds: "There was no bleeding, no pain, only … the white of bone" (*Love* 259). The wounds are cured, eventually, through Amma's starting to talk – again focusing on the healing effects of stories – and reminiscent of how Shiv is able to move on after the arrival of Shanti and her stories.

"Shanti" is largely set outside of Bombay, and is the story which most overtly deals with global and national issues, yet the importance of the city is made apparent when, in a return to the frame narrative, Shanti tells Ranjit that she and Shiv have had their "Bombay life" (*Love* 267). As the story ends with Shiv and Shanti's move to the city, Bombay is placed within a larger context. The novel is explicitly local, but Bombay is also inscribed as an Indian city. The setting of "Shanti" is in the 1940s, the foundation of India as a nation state, and the story is infused with references to the brutality which was prominent during this time. Not only is Hari killed "when a Hindu procession had gone the wrong way" (*Love* 231), but Shanti is searching for her MIA husband (*Love* 243). Of national importance is the trial of the leaders of the Indian National Army (INA) in which "lawyers and advocates and judges jousted with each other to establish once and for all who was traitor, who was hero" (*Love* 254-55). While the court does come up with a verdict, it displays the ambiguity: "GUILTY, BUT FREE" (*Love* 255). Issues of national allegiance (to India, Britain or Japan) and the complexities of patriotism are at the center of not only the trials but of the story itself, connecting India to global issues: the INA is aided by the Japanese and fights in Burma; the Royal Indian Artillery (RIA) participates in the African theater of WWII; Shanti's Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF) husband is shot down somewhere over Burma; the story of the atomic bomb affects life in an Indian village, and so on. National issues are also touched upon in the frame of the story, when Ranjit talks about Ayesha, whom he claims "is in despair about the state of the country" after having watched a patriotic movie (*Love* 230). What Subramaniam's story shows is how "the state of the country" is always dependent on many larger issues, while simultaneously, it is always acted on and acted out in specific neighborhoods with specific structures of feeling attached to locality. With this historical setting – a time of almost incomprehensible violence preceding the 'birth of the nation' – India as a social imaginary is placed center stage. While the world may seem deterritorialized with the different armies and wars, the telling of stories functions to reterritorialize Shiv and Shanti.

Violence in "Shanti," however, is not only related to larger historical issues, whether WWII or the violent Partition, but is also found in caste practices and in gender inequalities. The same holds true for the reasons why people become deterritorialized. The most evil man in the world is deterritorialized as an Indian fighting in Africa for the Commonwealth military, but through an act of cruelty committed during the war he is

also alienated from himself. The young man who tells the village about the atomic bomb is accused of having cursed the village, a curse which does not disappear until his mother starts praising all the people who make life in a community possible (*Love* 260-61). The bomb and the villager's rash judgment are both forces which alienate and deterritorialize, and Amma's talking seems to resituate the community in their recognition of diversity. A similarly fraught society emerges in the story about the woman who ran backwards into the future. The caste-less Zingu has heard promising speeches by Congress politicians, and clings to the belief that he and his son are the equals of those belonging to the caste system (*Love* 251). This assumption is a transgression of boundaries which the local neighborhood will not accept, but it also triggers the woman's escape from seclusion and her facing the world outside of her sheltered home.

All of these stories may draw attention to the world "at large," but they mainly illustrate how a neighborhood is rhizomatically interconnected to other neighborhoods and within itself. Shanti's search for her missing husband takes her on journeys which reflect this notion of a rhizomatic society:

> Now Shanti … came to Leharia often. …. [S]he followed anecdotes and hints and the visions of delirious men up and down the country. Now she pursued the merest whisper, a shadow seen on a jungled hillside years before, a fevered groan floating across fetid bunks laden with dying men.
>
> (*Love* 254-55)

Similarly, Shiv thinks of all of the people from the returning armies: "All of them were going, going home. Shiv thought of them, the thousands and thousands of them, jostling and jolting across the country in trains, in buses and bullock carts" (*Love* 256). Different places are connected by the railways and different modes of transportation, and in Shanti's travels these are connected to stories which are a part of the production of locality.

How Shiv (as a character in the story) overcomes his own apprehensions and is able to tell his own story is a central concern. Needing to encourage a despondent Shanti while still struggling with his own loss, he finds it difficult to speak. What releases his tongue are Shanti's eyes: "He cleared his throat, and for a moment he felt fear, blank and overpowering, and he was afraid of speaking, he felt profusion pressing up against the clean prison he had built for himself, but then he looked into Shanti's eyes and he spoke" (*Love* 256). "Shanti's eyes" can be seen as a representation of the peace that her name signals, the peace that enables Shiv's storytelling. When Ranjit is alone with Shanti, he remarks on her eyes: "She took off her glasses. Her eyes were a lovely flecked brown in

the lamplight. [Subramaniam] had said nothing about her eyes" (267).[46] While Subramaniam gives no description of them, Shanti's eyes are what allow the storytelling to continue. Similarly, the same is indicated when Ranjit sees her "lovely flecked brown" eyes. This is simultaneously one of the rhizomatic references in the story, but also indicates that Shanti (as a personification of peace) enables participation in the storytelling act. Telling a story is once again a way of moving on. In Shiv's case, it is about escaping "the clean prison" and being able to live fully once again. It is after Shiv has told the story to Shanti that he also proposes to her.

Frankie, Shiv's friend, had earlier enabled both Shiv and Shanti to imagine a different future. Frankie is the first person in Shiv's narrative to actively produce locality (both Bombay and Leharia). Bombay, as an imagined locality, is in Frankie's perception closely linked to its film industry: "Frankie was really a movie star trapped by his railway father and railway grandfathers and various railway uncles in Leharia, which he always called Zinderneuf" (*Love* 233).[47] In many ways the opposite of Shiv, Frankie is always described in a language reminiscent of movies:

> Frankie raised an eyebrow. He put a hand on his hip and his shoulder rose and fell in a long exaggerated shrug. Shiv saw that it was a gesture too large for life, impossible in its elegance, but in the silver light it was entirely conceivable and exactly right, as if the world had suddenly changed, moved and become just a little larger, just enough to contain Frankie Furtado.
>
> (*Love* 237)

However, Frankie's ability to enlarge the world so that it contains him threatens Shiv: "To believe Frankie, to believe in him, that he could exist in Leharia, Shiv knew, was to risk an unfolding in his own chest, an expansion of emotion that would let in, once again, a certain hell of hope and remorse" (*Love* 238). It takes Shanti to make Shiv believe, both in Frankie and in life: "Who was she? Where was she going? Why did she return? As the questions came he understood that everything had changed" (*Love* 239-40). Antia's "nothing had changed" has here been rewritten into "everything had changed," revealing how Shiv is beginning to participate in the narrative act: the questions, though still lacking answers, are a way of creating meaning and legibility. While Frankie may serve as an example, it is eventually through Shanti that Shiv gains the power to become a storyteller,

[46] See Chapter 1, p. 42, on *In Times of Siege* for a similar discussion of Meena's eyes and their influence on Hariharan's protagonist.

[47] Leharia is a fictional town in Madhya Pradesh (Rollason, citing Vikram Chandra, "Translating" 2). Zinderneuf is an isolated fort locale in Herbert Brenon's silent movie *Beau Geste* (1926), starring Ronald Colman of whom Frankie is a fan (*Love* 236).

a participant in the production of locality, just as Ranjit becomes a storyteller through Subramaniam. However, it is Frankie who helps them plan their move to Bombay. The last Shiv sees of Frankie is him disappearing in a typical film fade-out: "Frankie raised a hand, and that was the last Shiv saw of him, in a silvery swirl of dust and a fading light" (*Love* 264). Frankie, who embodies dreams of Bombay and stardom, does not, however, reach Bombay himself. He, Shiv tells Ranjit, has been killed: "Those were bad times" (*Love* 267). By extension, Frankie's tragic end reflects the change in locality from Bombay to Mumbai. When Subramaniam tells Ranjit that "there was somebody else who came to Mumbai and became a movie star" (*Love* 267), it becomes clear that the city of Frankie's dreams has also changed.

While Ranjit inherits the role of the storyteller through Shiv Subramaniam, who functions as his guru/teacher, he has also inherited Frankie's imaginative capabilities. Ranjit, whose name etymologically means "delighted," is named for the first time after Shiv has told him the story of his youth, of Shanti and of Frankie. It is clear that as Ranjit is walking towards Ayesha he is not only searching for "life itself" but also delighting in this search through storytelling. The stories enable him to participate in the imagination with an empowering sense of agency. Yet the references to Shanti's eyes seem to indicate that this agency is also one with a peaceful perspective. Significantly, the person Ranjit seeks out as his companion – for a walk or for marriage – is called Ayesha, which means "alive."[48] It appears then, that in addition to becoming a subject, Ranjit has also acquired a name. Based on the stories of Subramaniam and Shanti, Ranjit is imparted with a sense of agency and pleasure in storytelling.

Conclusion

With this chapter on *Love and Longing in Bombay* I have demonstrated how Chandra constructs Bombay as a narrative locality, and how the novel is both a coming-of-age story of Ranjit, as well as a story of him becoming a Bombayite. While critics before me have mentioned the role of the city, no one has thoroughly investigated the complex city of stories which emerges in Chandra's narrative. By using Appadurai's theories of locality and the imagination, I have highlighted how the production of locality is a complex process in the novel, where different sorts of violence always mean that subjects have to negotiate de- and reterritorialization processes. Sartaj Singh's proclamation "To say I was born in Bombay was very much besides the point" (*Love* 110) highlights how belonging is

[48] Ranjit, "'coloured, painted', also meaning 'charmed' or 'delighted'." Ayesha (from 'Ā´isha) "alive, thriving" (*A Dictionary of First Names*). Adorján argues that Subramaniam's name "evokes [Shiva,] the Hindu god of destruction" but that he "is a 'destroyer' only insofar as he dispels the ennui of his listeners and brings a touch of colour into the quotidian dullness of their lives" (202).

an ongoing process, and sometimes a struggle. The novel as a whole strongly reinforces that being born in Bombay is "besides the point." The point is rather that Chandra's two narrators are *not* from the city, yet become highly involved in the production of its locality.

While the novel is about Bombay and about becoming a subject in this city, it also reaches beyond the city limits. This is done in a myriad of ways, most obviously through Chandra's two main narrators, Subramaniam and Ranjit, who are both immigrants to the city. The two narrators construct Bombay through the stories they tell and retell within the narrative. The stories feature residents of Bombay with different heritages. Chandra's Bombay is imagined as a pluralistic city in which movement and migration are prominent, and all the stories are about becoming-at-home or being-at-home in the city. Extending the image of flow, the novel actualizes a line of flight through which Bombay (as a locality consisting of multiple stories) disturbs or reminds Mumbai (as a single story locality) of its past, thus enabling a (re-)construction of the city, a production of locality, which lets the diverse stories flow into the present and future.

With the frame narrative and its references to the classic Indian epics, Chandra inscribes his stories into a tradition of stories generating stories. In *Love and Longing in Bombay* the multiplicity of stories both describe and create the city they are set in. Bombay as a structure of feeling thus emerges as a multi-voiced and many-faceted locality that reflects its diverse neighborhoods. "Listen" functions as a magical word which draws together the different participants in the storytelling act, both a signal that an act of storytelling is commencing, and also that the listeners need to be active agents.

The production of locality is thus intimately connected with storytelling and narration. It is through stories that the subjects are enabled to participate in the work of the imagination. To be able to imagine the (desired) city and one's place in it is the concluding feeling of each story. This feeling is tied to the notion of agency, leading to a sense of peace, as emphasized by the title of the concluding story, "Shanti." The sense of peace or tranquility is thus connected to being enabled to participate in the production of locality by means of storytelling/narration, a coming to terms. It is through a sense of agency that the characters are able to move on, or to re-interpret their lives. However, being able to participate in the imagination and in the production of locality is not about constructing a Utopia. It is, rather, about being able to construct meaning in everyday reality. Thus, Sartaj Singh is drawn to the city's "unsolved dead" (*Love* 161), Iqbal feels "crushed by its certain beauty" (*Love* 184), and Ranjit goes searching for "not heaven, or its opposite, but only life itself" (*Love* 268). In two of the stories, "Shakti" and "Artha," the focus within the stories is less on storytelling. Sheila's means of producing locality is through her being a skilled reader and manipulator of capitalism. In "Artha," which is told

through Iqbal's first-person perspective, narrative logic and closure remain out of reach as Iqbal lacks facts to construct the story of Rajesh. While storytelling thus is something that enables peace, through its narratives and sense of truth (which is not absolute or given) it is also a means of participating in the production of locality. Different subjects create and recreate their narratives and thus their sense of place.

Chapter 3. The City as Family: *Freedom Song*

In the previous chapters I discussed Githa Hariharan's Delhi and Vikram Chandra's Bombay, arguing that the production of locality in these two novels is played out in response to changing ideoscapes. In the present chapter, I turn to Amit Chaudhuri's novel *Freedom Song* (1998),[1] set in Calcutta in 1992-1993, right after the destruction in Ayodhya. While *Freedom Song* is closest in narrative time to the most prominent outbreak of sectarian violence within the period covered in this thesis, the events of the destruction, the riots and the Bombay explosions in March, are placed in the background of the narrative. The novel instead describes the intimate connection between an extended family and their city, Calcutta, which seems to live in and through the family members. In *Freedom Song* the production of locality occurs in the most private spaces, within homes, but is also intimately connected to, and largely conditioned by, larger issues such as changing finance- and ideoscapes. The focus of the novel is on family, the domestic sphere and its interconnections with the city.

In an introductory section, I will first provide a brief survey of the city in which the novel is set, and its historical context. Locality in the novel is produced and experienced primarily within the domestic sphere, but also on the streets and in the liminal spaces in between the private and the public, such as verandas and balconies. The different places in the novel are connected to different strategies for the production of locality. I will discuss the homes with their memories as a historical archive used to understand the present. The streets offer a more public sphere, and I will elucidate how street theater and public performances can be acts of reappropriation. In the last part, I focus on the city (and, to a certain extent, the nation) as a political entity which provides larger contexts that generate both participation and resistance. Throughout the three parts, I will demonstrate how Chaudhuri interweaves the family and the city, making them interact in a rhizomatic manner. The family is in many ways the living, if decaying, manifestation of the city. It is primarily in this regard that *Freedom Song* differs from the other two novels discussed: the protagonists of *In Times of Siege* and *Love and Longing in Bombay* are enabled, in different ways, to become citizens of the respective cities. In *Freedom Song*, in contrast, it is the city which lives in and through the characters. Also,

[1] *Freedom Song* was originally published as an independent novel in 1998. When Chaudhuri was first published in the U.S. in 1999, his first three novels (*A Strange and Sublime Address*, *Afternoon Raag* and *Freedom Song*) were published as an omnibus edition named after its third novel, *Freedom Song*. In this study, *Freedom Song* indicates the novel, not the omnibus.

while all three novels contest the ideology of the Hindu right, Chaudhuri's novel, with its focus on the connection between the families and the city, does so in a subtler manner.

Calcutta and the Historical Context

Chaudhuri has had a long-standing interest in the city of Calcutta, and has used the city in most of his works of fiction. In several interviews and articles he has also commented upon the fact that the Calcutta of his imagination does not correspond directly to the Calcutta he has visited, and subsequently moved to.[2] He perceives the early 1990s, the time of the setting for *Freedom Song*, as marking a shift in the life of the city:

> Calcutta, and India itself, were on the brink of change because of communalism, the difference in the political atmosphere from the politics of Nehruvian India, the India of tolerance, liberalism, and also the imminent economic liberalisation of India, which would change ways of life, but was still being resisted by people. So this is India trembling on the brink of change, and Calcutta is sort of arrested, depleted. ("On Belonging" 44)

Chaudhuri therefore thinks of *Freedom Song* "as an extended poem about the end of a certain phase in Calcutta, in Bengali culture, and in Indian culture; and the end of a certain phase in the life of a family" ("On Belonging" 50). He elsewhere elaborates on the changing Calcutta: "I could still tap the magic of its neighbourhoods when I wrote … *Freedom Song*, in the mid-nineties; but after that, I felt I couldn't do so any longer…" (*Calcutta* 81).[3] While this sense of magic lies outside of the scope of the thesis, the changes hinted at in the novel did eventually profoundly alter the city in Chaudhuri's perception, and as a different Calcutta emerges, the old acquires a sheen of nostalgia.

Calcutta is the capital of West Bengal, which was ruled by The Left Front from 1977 to 2011. The name of the capital was changed to Kolkata in 2001 by the government of West Bengal in order to resemble Bengali pronunciation (Chaudhuri, "Diary 19 May" 37). Geetha Ganapathy-Doré explains that "novelists hailing from or writing on Calcutta do not appreciate the transformation of Calcutta into Kolkata" (*The Postcolonial* 120). Chaudhuri calls the city Calcutta in the novel, and continues to do so in later writings as well. He argues that

[2] Chaudhuri's family is from Calcutta, but he was raised in Bombay.

[3] Chaudhuri does, however, return to the city in his subsequent novel *A New World* (2000), in which a recently divorced man living in the US visits his parents in Calcutta with his son. The way Calcutta is used and imagined is, however, different compared to his earlier novels. His latest novel, *The Immortals* (2009), is set in Bombay. In 2013, Chaudhuri published the non-fictional *Calcutta: Two Years in the City*.

> I myself can't stand calling it any other name but 'Calcutta' when speaking in English; just as I'll always call it 'Kolkata' in Bengali conversation. … To take away one or the other name is to deprive the city of a dimension that's coterminous with it, that grew and rose and fell with it, whose meaning, deep in your heart, you know exactly. (*Calcutta* 96)

In the chapter on *Love and Longing in Bombay* I described how the change of names from Bombay to Mumbai was perceived as a political decision ardently propagated by the Shiv Sena party. The name change from Calcutta to Kolkata did not contain quite the same political implications. Kolkata has always been Kolkata in Bengali, just as Bombay has been Mumbai in Marathi. However, Bombay was felt to indicate a more cosmopolitan city than Mumbai, which was perceived as chauvinistic (see chapter two for a lengthier discussion). Where the renaming of Bombay reflects a Hindutva agenda, the implications of naming the city Kolkata seem rather to be about changing financescapes: "Paradoxically, the name Kolkata, though it has an unmistakably Bengali resonance, does not seem to represent a return to a glorious and pre-colonial past but a forward and thoughtless leap in liberal economy" (Ganapathy-Doré, *The Postcolonial* 120).[4] Calcutta, in English, recognizes the colonial background and maintains the past in the present. Chaudhuri has like Chandra opted to use the older name, and again I am following the example of the author.

The novel, and Chaudhuri's interest in Calcutta, has generated some scholarly responses. Ganapathy-Doré argues that "Amit Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* … can lay claims to the title of being the great Calcutta novel in so far as it succeeds in transcribing the strange combination of Marxist ideology, overpopulation, morning ragas and evening's orange light in the weave of its text" (*The Postcolonial* 76).[5] Sheobhushan Shukla and Anu Shukla, for their part, note "Chaudhuri's great creative interest in locality" (11), though by locality they simply mean 'place'. However, that Calcutta is an arena for the production of locality in Appadurai's use of the term has been pointed out by Saikat Majumdar in an article about Chaudhuri's "flâneur fictions": "The importance of banality, … is … inextricably bound up with the production of locality and local subjectivities…" ("Dallying" 458).[6] S. Majumdar primarily focuses on Chaudhuri's first two novels, and is

[4] An interesting take on the name change can be found in in Raj Kamal Jha's novel *If You are Afraid of Heights* (2003), where the streets referred to in the novel are Calcutta streets, but the city is only referred to as "the city," a nameless entity.
[5] The raag (or raga) is a form of Hindustani music classified by "mood, season, and time" (*Britannica*), since each raag is connected to a different time of day, or a season (see Ruckert, *Music in North India* 52-61).
[6] Saikat Majumdar's article "Dallying with Dailiness" is incorporated into his *Prose of the World*. However, the texts differ slightly, and I will therefore reference both editions in my citations.

right to note that *Freedom Song* differs from these, by "the shifting public sphere [which seems] more urgent in some of his later work" (*Prose* 165). I will elaborate on S. Majumdar's study, however, by examining how Calcutta is intricately connected to the family members in *Freedom Song*.

In the following brief outline of the history of Bengal I will focus on two events that provide contexts for the novel: the "Bengal Renaissance" and the division of Bengal at the time of Partition. What has become known as the Bengal Renaissance occurred during the time of British colonial rule, from the founding of the Brahmo Samaj in 1828 to the 1870s (Sarkar, *Modern* 70), even if the term itself is "a mid- or late-twentieth century retrospect" (Sarkar, *Writing* 161).[7] The movement is primarily credited with religious reformation, intellectual discussions, and a flourishing literature. The period saw social reforms and attempts to increase literacy and education. The Bengal Renaissance is an intellectual heritage to which Chaudhuri frequently returns, and it informs *Freedom Song*. Central to the movement was a "nineteenth-century intelligentsia [who] diligently cultivated the self-image of a 'middle class…'" (Sarkar, *Modern* 67). They were called the *bhadralok* (the "polite men"), which Chaudhuri describes as "the Bengali word for the indigenous … bourgeoisie that emerged (mainly in Calcutta; but also in the small towns of Bengal) in the nineteenth century" (Introduction to *One Way Street*, ix). But, as Sumit Sarkar observes, the new class did not necessarily fit in: "Nineteenth-century Calcutta had become a real metropolis for the bhadralok, providing education, opportunities for jobs, printed books, a taste for new cultural values. It was also, by and large, a city where the bhadralok did not yet feel at home…" (*Writing* 176). As we shall explore below, a similar sense of both belonging and not belonging is manifested in Chaudhuri's novel.

A first attempt by the British rulers to partition Bengal had already been made in 1905; this partition was greatly contested, and Bengal was reunited in 1911 (see Sarkar, *Modern* 106-25 and *Writing* 178-185).[8] The reason for the initial partition was to "weaken emergent middle-class Indian nationalism," although the "public justification given was

[7] I owe my understanding of the Bengal Renaissance to the works of various historians, in particular Sumit Sarkar's *Writing Social History* (esp. "The City Imagined") and *Modern India*, Sumanta Bannerjee's *The Parlour*, and Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation*. British colonial rule lasted from 1858 (when the crown took over from the East India Company following the 1857 rebellion) until Independence in 1947. The Brahmo Samaj movement was founded by Raja Rammohun Roy, and "constituted, after Roy's contact with the culture and religion of the British colonizer (and owning not a little to the Islamic culture of the past), a rejection, or disowning, of the polytheistic, idolatrous aspects of Hinduism" (Chaudhuri, "Poles of Recovery" 40). See also Sarkar, *Modern India*, for a brief discussion of how a secular movement such as the Brahmo, was "entirely Hindu in composition," that is, it identified a "'medieval' dark age" with "'Muslim tyranny' …, not a theory which could ever hope to appeal to Muslim intellectuals…" (*Modern* 76).

[8] An example of the resistance to the first partition is from a patriotic song by Rabindranath Tagore from 1905: "Are you strong enough to sunder what fate has bound together / Do you think our lives are yours to make or break?" (Qtd in Sarkar, *Writing* 160).

administrative convenience" (Sarkar, *Writing* 178-79).[9] The 1947 Partition of India, discussed in the introduction to the thesis, affected Bengal (as well as Punjab) more directly than other states since both were internally divided. Thus, the state of Bengal was once again split, primarily along religious lines, into West Bengal belonging to India, and East Bengal belonging to Pakistan. East Bengal then became East Pakistan in 1954 and through the Bangladesh Liberation War, aided by the Indian Army, the country became Bangladesh in 1971. The 1947 Partition lead to large numbers of East Bengalis migrating to West Bengal, and to Calcutta in particular (the reverse was also true). Thus, the primary characters in *Freedom Song* have moved to the city from East Bengal, reflecting the fate of Chaudhuri's own family.

In the Archives of Memory: The Domestic Locality

In this part, I explore how locality is produced within the domestic spheres of the homes, which are sites within the larger city-locality. As Arjun Appadurai explains, "[e]ven in the most intimate, spatially confined … situations, locality must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds" (*Modernity* 179). In the novel, the homes represent family and belonging, whereas the "odds" that they are up against include increasing sectarianism. A primary means of engaging with the production of locality within the home is through memories, and as Appadurai points out, "especially in the lives of ordinary people, the personal archive of memories, both material and cognitive, is not only or primarily about the past, but is about providing a map for negotiating and shaping new futures" (*The Future* 288). In the following, I will first focus on the homes in relation to issues of deterritorialization and security and then discuss the homes as containing (primarily) material memories.

However, I first need to account for the novel's characters, the people who produce locality both within the domestic spheres and in the city. *Freedom Song* is about the lives of the members of a large, extended family in Calcutta, and as I discussed earlier, Chaudhuri links "the end of a certain phase in Calcutta" with "the end of a certain phase in the life of a family ("On Belonging" 50). It is possible to speak of the family as rhizomatic, both in the manner in which it is spread throughout Calcutta and the diaspora, and in how the family members interact with each other, through coming and going, recalling and forgetting. It is at first difficult to keep track of the characters and

[9] Sarkar notes that the administration was more frank in the confidential minutes: "… one of our main objects is to split up and thereby weaken a solid body of opponents to our rule" (*Writing* 179, quoting H.H. Risley's Note of 6 December 1904).

their relations, perhaps especially for a reader not familiar with Bengali culture.[10] They are frequently described by their relationships rather than by name, which accentuates the rhizomatic nature of the family. Thus we meet Bhaskar's mother early on, but her name, Abha, is mentioned only once, halfway through the novel. Bhaskar's father, Bhola, is also Khuku's brother. The novel is primarily concerned with the respective families of siblings Bhola and Khuku. Khuku and Bhola, together with their brother Pulu, were brought up after their mother's death by their four elder siblings, "three tyrants – and Borda" (*Freedom* 130). Out of these elder siblings, only Borda is mentioned by name, while another sibling is referred to simply as "Didi" ("sister").

Khuku's household consists of herself, her husband Shib (frequently referred to as "Khuku's husband"), their son Bablu, living in California, and three servants: Nando, Uma and Jochna. At the time of the novel, Khuku's childhood friend Mini is staying with them. Mini is "by some curious distant relation a niece" (*Freedom* 43), and thus also a part of the extended family. Bhola's family consists of himself, his wife Abha, and their three children: the sons Bhaskar and Manik, the latter studying in Germany, and their sister Piyu. Eventually Bhaskar is married and his wife Sandhya and her extended family enter the narrative.

Deterritorialization and Feeling at Home

'Home' is a fragile construction within the novel, where some forms of residency seem more permanent than others. On the most fundamental level, the entire larger family has been displaced following Partition, and the relative security of home in Calcutta therefore only goes back fifty years. Issues of security and de- and reterritorialization therefore influence how each member participate in the production of locality and their homes become all-important as products of locality, intimate spaces that provide a sense of security, while triggering memories that provide a feeling of permanence in a changing world. It is within their homes that characters negotiate their place within the city and project the continuance of the family.

Since Chaudhuri's narrative is about the end of an era there is a special emphasis on the act of remembering. Indeed, the novel in itself becomes a site of memory. Its characters "live in and through" memories that link the present to the past (Appadurai, *The Future* 288). Memories, in a basic definition, constitute that which a person recalls about the past.[11] Astrid Erll points out that "there is a general agreement that

[10] See family tree in the appendix.
[11] Memory, n. "**I.** Senses relating to the action or process of commemorating, recollecting, or remembering" (*OED Online*).

'remembering' is a process, of which 'memories' are the result, and that 'memory' should be conceived of as an ability" (*Memory* 8). Memory can only be observed in "concrete acts of remembering situated in specific sociocultural contexts" (8). Thus, memories are dependent on the present in which the act of remembering occurs (8).[12] I will focus on cultural memories in particular.[13] By the term cultural memories, I wish to indicate the collective nature of how certain memories are part of a common discourse about the past. There are two levels to cultural memory which interrelate: an individual level (cognitive) and a collective level (social) (Erll, *Memory* 96-101). Both levels are of significance in my reading: I will discuss individual memories as personal experiences, and collective memories as shared memories. Though established in the 1920s through the works of Halbwachs and Warburg, cultural memory studies gained in popularity in the 1980s, primarily through the work of Pierre Nora and Aleida and Jan Assman (Erll, *Memory* 19-27). Nora's influential study *Les lieux de mémoire* (*Sites of Memory*) provides a relevant theoretical context for the present study. Sites of memory can include "geographical locations, buildings, monuments and works of art, as well as historical persons, memorial days, philosophical and scientific texts, or symbolic actions" (Erll, *Memory* 23). While Nora applied these sites of memory to France only, they have been used more generally by, for example, Andreas Huyssen in "Memory Sites." For my part I will investigate how different places and historical persons are intertwined into sites of memory in *Freedom Song*. Since Chaudhuri's narrative is about the end of an era there is a special emphasis on the act of remembering. Indeed, the novel in itself becomes a site of memory.

A few caveats: Aleida and Jan Assman distinguish between cultural memory and communicative memory. In their definition, cultural memory relates to events in the distant past, whereas communicative memory deals with the near past, events experienced by people still living and communicated "through everyday interaction" (Erll, *Memory* 28). While I most often examine memories which relate to the characters' near past, I do not maintain the distinction between cultural and communicative memories, but view them as interrelated aspects of the same, and will use the term cultural memory for both. Cultural memories are collective, both in being shared by several persons, and in directly relating to the experiences of a group of people, such as memories of experiences by different groups during the Partition. A complicating fact is that there may be conflicting memories, where different collectives have different memories of the same events.[14]

[12] See also Erll, *Memory*, where she explains how Halbwachs views collective memory as "oriented towards the needs and interests of the group in the present" (17). Erll also discusses Aleida Assman's theory of memory, which "accentuates the temporal dimension and time's transformative effect on the contents of memory, thus highlighting memory's processual nature and its reconstructive activity" (35).

[13] Other common terms denoting more or less the same are "collective memories," "public memories," and "social memories" (see Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz, *Memory* 6, and Astrid Erll, *Cultural* 1).

[14] See also the discussion of different perceptions of the past in chapter 1 above.

While memories of the Partition or other violent situations can be viewed as traumatic, my focus here is not on the trauma as such, but on how memories are used to understand and negotiate the present. Likewise, memory is intimately connected to forgetting to the extent that forgetting may be its main function (Erll, *Memory* 60). However, while I acknowledge that "[m]emory, remembering and forgetting are closely intertwined on both an individual and a collective level" (Erll, *Memory* 8), amnesia and forgetting are not my primary concerns in this chapter. I will instead focus on what and when the characters remember something, and what the implications of the past in the present are.

Cultural memories inform present situations. Something in the here-and-now is interpreted based on the "personal archive of memories" (Appadurai, *The Future* 288). Often, this interpretation is not consciously done. According to Catherine A. Reinhardt, memories function similarly to a rhizome, since a memory "spreads outward and encounters other roots during its growth" (14). The rhizomatic structure of memories entails both different memories being encountered and the mixing of different time frames. Reinhardt has developed a concept of "rhizome-memories" in *Claims to Memory*. She uses the rhizome-memories in the context of Caribbean slavery, arguing that they "expose the connections, making it possible to analyze how the multiple voices of the past mold the historical process" (14). Like Reinhardt, I see the rhizome-memories as making up a contextual framework, and in Chaudhuri's novel the different memories of uprooting and deterritorialization connect with the present and with each other, forming a complex rhizomatic structure. I follow Reinhardt in viewing "[e]ach realm of memory [as] made up of ideologies, texts, and actions that are transformed through their mutual encounters" (14), and will likewise emphasize the actual process of remembering.

The homes are both filled with memories, and are to some extent sites of memory in themselves. Bhaskar's house, which his father received as part of the dowry, is described as old and hospitable (*Freedom* 36), which indicates both an emotional attachment and a feeling of stability and permanence. Bhaskar's mother recalls the hectic days when her children were in school, and compares it with the present comparative calmness: "now the house was silent, lives took shape, things changed, and widened, unused spaces wandered about the house…" (*Freedom* 39). Poignantly, she wants the old bustle to resume and it is the memories of this near past that motivate her search for a wife for Bhaskar. The house is for her perceived as a safe container of the family. However, in contrast to Bhaskar's house, Shib and Khuku have more recently returned to Calcutta. The purpose of resettling in Calcutta after retirement is to reconnect with old friends and family (*Freedom* 98), yet the narrator also points out that without their son at home, Shib and Khuku "were less like a couple than a pair of lodgers" (*Freedom* 114). The comment indicates both the temporariness of the home as well as an implied emotional

distance between the couple. While Khuku at times reflects on what the city means to her, she does not ponder on her home. It is instead her childhood friend Mini, on an extended visit to recover from arthritis, who muses: "this flat, full of pretty things and tinkling curios, was both a second home and a cave of wonder to her, so unlike any other place in Calcutta…" (*Freedom* 96). Khuku gains a sense of calm from Mini's presence, and it is primarily within this comforting setting that Mini and Khuku cultivate their sectarianism, an issue which I will discuss under the heading of the city.

In contrast to Mini's sense of being in a "cave of wonder" when visiting Khuku, Mini's own apartment, which she shares with her sister Shantidi, frequently seems to be characterized by a sense of deterritorialization. The following observation by Appadurai would seem to fit their situation well: "Everyone, at least in places like India, lives also by anecdote, in smaller privatized spaces of recollection and loss, heroism and suffering, which speak, even if sometimes in a whisper, to the grand narrative of India after 1947" ("In My Father's Nation" 111). For each individual within such a community, the "grand narrative" is a macro level that becomes internalized on the micro level of the home, the location where stability is negotiated. Yet, Shantidi thinks they will lose their tenancy rights through conspiracy (*Freedom* 169-71), while Mini sees the apartment as a transitory home: "This, these buildings, was home and not home; the country she'd left behind in her youth was home and not home; where you went later was not home either" (*Freedom* 126). The feeling of being deterritorialized, a consequence of being conditioned by "the grand narrative of India after 1947" (Appadurai, "In My Father's Nation" 111), is thus constantly present for Mini. Home, in her experience, is temporary and arbitrary, and she is faced with a realization that they may not be able to afford to keep their apartment (*Freedom* 169-70). Mini's apartment embodies her more exposed situation. Her life, it seems, has to a great extent been conditioned by others as the deaths of her parents and brothers made marriage impossible and put her in a situation of dependence upon the remaining relations (*Freedom* 120-22; 124-25). In the novel's present time, it is implied that the two sisters have been more or less abandoned after their brother moved out with his family.

Although the distance between Khuku's and Mini's homes is not very great, Mini reflects that "it was like something of a holiday for her, to be in the cool, neat, constricted South …. [T]o be in this part of the city was to explore a world and witness those who had been changed completely" (*Freedom* 82). When Mini, accompanied by Khuku, returns to her own apartment, the passing city is described only in terms of street names. After forty-five minutes of negotiating traffic they arrive. "By then, they felt like they'd come to what was probably another city" (*Freedom* 103):

> Narrowly the lane opened; only just enough space, like arms reluctantly parted, leaving no room for an embrace to the bosom. Yet the car moved forward into this narrow space, obstructed by handcarts and men, going more and more into the interior, towards the heart, towards a home in the heart. (*Freedom* 104)

Thus, the "cool, neat, constricted" South is contrasted to the "home in the heart" North. Yet, this "home in the heart" is, as discussed, seen as temporary, and the possible nostalgia attached to it is contrasted to its present run-down state.

Material Memories: Photographs and Things

Chaudhuri fills the domestic sites of his novel with mementos, "ordinary objects [such as] paper-thin cards, called photographs, with human faces upon them" (*Freedom* 63) that trigger responses to the past. I will in the following focus on the role of material memories, terming the objects which fulfill a memory function "mementos," a "reminder of a past event or condition, of an absent person, or of something that once existed; (now chiefly) an object kept in memory of some person or event, a souvenir" (*OED*). However, I extend the concept of memento to include not only objects intentionally kept to remember past events or persons, but any object that activates memories of the past; this is in line with Chaudhuri's focus on the everyday mundane.

Mementos are thus not always photographs, or even tangible objects. The first instance of a memento in the novel is when Khuku, an elderly woman, walks through her house in the early morning and pulls back the curtains in her son's room, a son now living in the U.S.: "all his books were standing on the shelves, and in the cupboards lay piled his old comic books and Tintins, and a pair of sandals" (*Freedom* 5). The room thus contains memories of her son represented by objects belonging to him. That memories of their children's childhoods are prominent for the parents is also apparent when Bhaskar's mother hears her grown up son call out in the morning. She has to pause and wonder if it is Bhaskar she hears; she still primarily associates him with his childhood voice (*Freedom* 8). In both these instances, memories of their sons are triggered by mementos belonging to them, and yet separate from them. Bhaskar's voice becomes a sound, an intangible object, which needs to be connected to him through the memory of a different time, while Khuku's son is physically removed from his room, which now acts as a memento, or as a site of memory in an extended use of the term, to the mother – it is unlikely that the grown up son has much use for the comic books and Tintins of his past.

The theme of a child absent through emigration (most often a son in the novel) highlights the role of memory in the narrative. Also Bhaskar's brother Manik is abroad, pursuing an education in engineering in Germany, and thus he too belongs to the diaspora common to many of his generation. Not only does it remind those left behind of all who have left Calcutta, but it also indicates how the collective and cultural memories of the earlier generations become more difficult to pass on. A generation characterized by international careers leaves a gap in the families left behind. Bhaskar is portrayed as an exception in his staying on in Calcutta. His choice is seen as a partial lack of ambition (*Freedom* 148), but it is as much a result of his identification with the region in which he lives, an identification triggered by a memento in his childhood: a book about the history of Bengal, *We Are Bengalis*, which contains "biographical tales about Vivekananda and Vidyasagar and Tagore" (*Freedom Song* 61). All three were prominent figures in the Bengal Renaissance, and they clearly inspired Bhaskar: "Once he understood what a wonderful thing it was to be a Bengali, and that he was Bengali himself, he went around the house chanting, 'We are Bengalis! We are Bengalis!" (61). This memento not only conveys knowledge of the past, but presumably transmits the values of the Bengal Renaissance. Yet, it is difficult to see Bhaskar as seriously partaking of these values, but they rather form a background to his flânerie. His association with the historical figures in the book allows him to construct a sense of belonging. Because of his association with the idea of being Bengali, the book shapes his production of locality in that it makes him share a common cultural and intellectual heritage.

But if Bhaskar has remained in the house, his sister Piyu will leave the house upon marriage if she follows tradition. Yet she is described as "fair and fresh-faced, a plant that had been nurtured in this garden, in the shadow of pillows, cupboards, shelves, clothes-horses …. Let it always be so, the house around her seemed to say, the four walls and the beam on the ceiling, let us always keep her as she is. Let her not leave us" (*Freedom* 30). Thus, Piyu is herself turned into a memento, embedded and memorialized in the material objects of the house. What her own feelings may be is not recounted in the narrative, but it seems clear that she is regarded in some ways as an object of the house, associated with other objects belonging to the house. The fact that Piyu likely will leave the house in the future emphasizes the feeling of an end since the house will not be able to preserve her other than through associations with material objects. Similarly, the house, given to Bhaskar's father Bhola by his father in-law as a part of the dowry (*Freedom* 37), used to be the home of Bhaskar's grandmother "Goonga". The narrator relates how her children would come to visit her in the house. The furniture in the bedroom has all belonged to her, and like Piyu she is seemingly embedded in the objects as material memories.

Mementos of the family at large enter Bhaskar's house through the mail, in the form of invitations to a funeral and a wedding, a postcard from relatives in Bangladesh, and a letter from a nephew in Pennsylvania.[15] The postcard from Bangladesh establishes a continued connection to East Bengal and is described as a miniature of the relatives' actual home: "Like a house which shelters sons, daughters, grandparents, servants, frustrations, expectations" (*Freedom* 34). Like Bhaskar's house, the postcard house is intimately connected to the family. The letter from Pennsylvania similarly establishes a connection to the widespread family, and it includes a photograph of the nephew's daughter. The photograph presents an image of a relative they may not have seen in real life, which highlights the elusive question of how to remember people who remain largely unknown and unknowable. Not only is it difficult for the characters to remember things about the previous generations, but as is clear from the description of Abha, Bhaskar's mother, it is difficult to know people in the present as well (*Freedom* 78-80).

Private photographs are the prototypical mementos. "[E]xpressively taken for the single purpose of future aide-memories" (372), Jens Ruchatz explains, such photographs have specific users: only "the proper addressees of any given set of private photos, know the context of what is visible on a photo either from personal experience or from conversations with relatives or friends" (372). The meaning extracted from the memento has to be shared, and private photos thus function as an "intergenerational memory" which is "constituted through social interaction and communication" (Erll, *Memory* 17). Since the mementos meaning is not contained within the photograph itself, it is more or less meaningless for an outsider. For example, the picture on the wall of Bhaskar's grandfather, a man no-one actually remembers, acts as an explanation only for the present family. The grandfather had been an engineer, a profession followed by Bhola, Bhaskar's father, and his brother Manik. Through this particular memento the family is therefore constructed as a community that is "imagined into existence" (S. Majumdar, *Prose* 165). By providing a genealogy to their career choices, the continuance of a family imaginary is ensured.

Another way the outside world is brought home is when photographs are taken with the purpose of creating mementos, i.e., to document trips and outings as a way to preserve the present as a future memory. What is preserved is often the exceptional rather than the everyday. When Bhaskar's family goes on trips, the exotic nature of the places visited is enhanced in their photographic representations, or rather; the focus is on how the characters are transformed outside of their usual home:

[15] I refer to the house as Bhaskar's because of the centrality he has in the narrative, rather than to indicate actual ownership of this house inhabited by a multi-generational family.

> It gave them great pleasure … [to] return a week later with photographs in colour with themselves – recognizably themselves, but subtly changed as if by a magic spell …, Bhaskar slouching, Piyu sullen and self-conscious, Puti glorious and histrionic, and a little frown always, always residing between Bhaskar's father's eyebrows. (*Freedom* 53-54)

The pictures of their trips thus contain images in which they appear to be changed from the everyday. The narrator adds that Bhaskar's father could be imagined as "unhappy and quiet" if taken out of Calcutta (*Freedom* 54) since "he loved it as one who had come here and made his life here" (*Freedom* 55). To use a term from James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, Calcutta to Bhola has become "the important space of citizenship" (189), and his emotional attachment to the city may explain his frown when away from it.

Yet at the center of the family is the house itself, a memento in its own right but also alive in the present moment: it is where Bhaskar is making his life and as such a site for the present production of locality. Thus Bhaskar brings his fellow party members to his home for rehearsals, and later he is accompanied by his new wife. From the perspective of the home as a site in the production of locality, it is hardly arbitrary that his wife, Sandhya, is an interior decorator (*Freedom* 149). She changes the locality physically, both through her presence and through the introduction of flowers or a lamp-shade, which emphasizes how she, as a part of the family, is active in the production of locality on a micro level. Sandhya's presence in the house introduces a new context to relate to. She enables the family to live on in a concrete way. Her presence also introduces visits from her father, thus bringing, in a small way, the city into the home.

Through the introduction of Sandhya into the house, the mementos, including photographs of past relatives, are re-visited. Sandhya needs to be familiarized with the in-law's mementos, so that she, by extension, can contribute to the continuation of the family by becoming a competent "user" of the family memories. The rhizome-memories thus acquire yet another dimension here, in that they need to be shared by a new recipient, a future carrier of the family's past. However, as the narrator, before describing how Bhaskar's parents start to look for a bride, comments: "Memories died and new ways of life came into being" (*Freedom* 108). While the statement is made in connection to the changes affecting the country, it has bearing on the family as well since the family is intrinsic to the city. Some memories will die or be altered, in this case as a result of a marriage intended to bring new life, and this transformation exemplifies a more general lesson that the novel shows is true for the city as well. As is clear in the episode where Bhaskar's mother and Sandhya discuss how jewelry can be "broken" and turned into new pieces (*Freedom* 181), memories are not necessarily stagnant or constant, but can be used

in the creation of the present and the future. Thus, as Huyssen puts it, the past is not seen as a "golden age of stability and permanence" ("Present Pasts" 72). Instead, the issue is "to secure some continuity within time, to provide some extension of lived space within which we can breathe and move" ("Present Pasts" 72). The jewelry acquires a new look, but does so through retaining and physically integrating the material of its past into the present.

As I have shown, the homes are inseparable from the characters, past and present, living inside them: the memories represented by photographs and other mementos pertain to people. S. Majumdar observes the importance of family in Chaudhuri's first two novels, and argues that unlike much Anglophone Indian fiction, in which the families are "allegorical reflections of national state structures and political events …" (*Prose* 152), no such correlation is to be found in these two novels. However, as he goes on to intimate, in Chaudhuri's later writings this has partially changed, due to the "shifts in the … worlds they depict" (*Prose* 165). Nowhere is this more true, I would argue, than in *Freedom Song* where the city lives in and through the family. The focus on the family thus remains, but becomes intimately linked with the city. There is also a correlation between the condition of the city and that of the characters. Thus Khuku "realized that the bonds of relations surrounding [the family], radiating across and scattered through this city and elsewhere, was finally coming to an end, and she unexpectedly grew absorbed in its memories" (*Freedom* 117). The production of locality is impossible without actors participating in it, and as Chaudhuri's narrative reflects, the domestic spaces are indeed sites for the production of locality. They provide the most intimate space in which locality can be negotiated.

Through the three different homes of Mini, Bhaskar, and Khuku, Chaudhuri provides a cross-section of Calcutta in which the three dwelling places enact the notion of home differently. Mini's apartment has few attributes to recommend it, but is simultaneously highly valued and sought after: the alternative, Mini fears, is the old age home (*Freedom* 169-70). Bhaskar's home, to a certain degree, fulfills the function of ancestral home (though it is also contrasted to his mother's childhood mansion). The house has gone through changes, for worse and for better (*Freedom* 38), but nevertheless represents a sense of stability. It is hoped that within these walls the family will live on. Khuku's apartment, in contrast, feels transitory. The reason for Khuku and Shib's move back to Calcutta after his (intended) retirement was also to reconnect with their pasts through old friends and acquaintances, but the description of the apartment as "a cave of wonder" filled with "tinkling curios" (*Freedom* 96) is ambivalent. It contains the past in the room her son uses, but the description of it as "a cave of wonder" makes it more into a destination than a home. And while there are references to Mini reading, and to Khuku's

musical oeuvre, the "tinkling curios" jars with the bhadralok sensibilities: "Almost the only assured possession of the *bhadralok* was, in lieu of property … what Pierre Bourdieu misleadingly called 'cultural capital', made material, commonly, in a collection of books" (Chaudhuri, Introduction to *One-way Street* ix). However, Khuku remembers a childhood that might have been without riches but where the cultural capital of songs was valued: "Songs were meant to be stored and collected; people had a large or small 'stock' of songs" (*Freedom* 132). Thus, to sum up the differences and similarities between the three homes, while Mini's apartment seems involuntarily transitory, Khuku's creates meaning out of its transitory properties. In contrast, Bhaskar's home resembles the continuance of old Calcutta, though it is the family within the house that gives it meaning, not the house in itself. For both Khuku's and Bhaskar's families, their homes seem secure in spite of certain financial concerns.

To a certain degree, the houses seem symptomatic of the characters' sense of self and place. The homes are sites in which Chaudhuri focuses "on the ambivalent nature of individual lives: on the fractured aggregations of private whims, desires, and ideals that are always held in unpredictable relationships with larger public ideologies and behavior patterns" (S. Majumdar, *Prose* 165). Khuku and Mini's homes are transitory, and they are not able to participate productively in the creation of locality as they are outright sectarian (further explored below). In contrast, Bhaskar, though his house has passed through different stages as well, like his father is able to associate with the city. While being born in a city is not a prerequisite for the production of locality, Mini and Khuku seem to be limited by their sectarianism, and unwilling to imagine a different locality. Bhaskar instead engages actively. The homes, as micro neighborhoods and localities, provide places in which the characters can be agents.

The Streetscape: Acting Locally/Locality

In this part of the chapter I move outside the home to the streets, which are important in *Freedom Song* as stages for an explicit production of locality. Chaudhuri presents streets in the novel as spaces of interaction and visibility. As Holston and Appadurai argue, "streets conflate identities of territory and contract with those of race, religion, class, culture, and gender to produce the reactive ingredients of both progressive and reactionary political movements" (188). Therefore, it is useful to think "of the street as a social space rather than just a channel for movement" (V. Mehta 12). As a social place the street also connects the private home with the public city. I will in particular focus on the streets in *Freedom Song* as theater stages where reappropriation and visibility are foregrounded as strategies in the production of locality. The streets are primarily experienced through

Bhaskar who embodies many traits of the flâneur (see S. Majumdar), but who is also a performer. Much to the dismay of his family, Bhaskar has joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist), CPI(M), and this, it seems, constitutes his main reason for interacting with the streets, through distribution of the *Ganashakti*, the party's newspaper, and through street theater. The streets literally connect the homes and the city, and therefore provide views of both the domestic and the public. Chaudhuri has commented on his specific interest in streets: "What I was interested in is the sort of drift and flow of street life. Maybe it's something like [sic] anthropologists would be interested in" ("On Belonging" 45). While the comment is made in regard to Chaudhuri's poetry, it is also highly relevant for *Freedom Song* where the "drift and flow of street life" is experienced on the streets and viewed from the verandas and balconies.

The most foregrounded street in the novel is Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Road, where Bhaskar lives. Referred to more than twenty times in the narrative, the street is named after Vidyasagar (1820-1891) a prominent person during the Bengal Renaissance, a promoter of education, and a modernizer of written Bengali (Hatcher). Together with other historical persons turned into place-names, Vidyasagar functions as an unstated reminder of the intellectual heritage of the Bengal Renaissance: humanism and secularism. That names from the past remain important in the present is also noted by Sarkar, who observes that "[f]or the average educated Bengali today, nineteenth-century Calcutta lives on mainly as a galaxy of great names" (*Writing* 160). The streets thus become sites of memory. In the novel, Vidyasagar Road is a political arena in other ways too: here "was one of the last Socialist governments in the world, and here, in a lane ten minutes away from Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar Road, was one of its local outposts" (*Freedom* 48-49). Vidyasagar Road thus functions as a point of reference, and it highlights the role of Bhaskar in the narrative. It is primarily he who experiences it by participating in the street theater or by delivering newspapers. The street is framed by buildings, the "colours of the houses … looked like the colour of old cotton saris that had been worn for many years and still not thrown away" (*Freedom* 12-13). The houses, although worn, are familiar, forming a bond with Bhaskar when he distributes the newspaper (*Freedom* 14), a message explicitly spelled out by the house where he picks up the paper, a local outpost for the CPI(M) that has a message on the wall proclaiming "FOR UNITY AND HARMONY AMONG ALL COMMUNITIES" (*Freedom* 13). Thus, the street as a "social space" (V. Mehta 12) comes into being through Bhaskar's involvement. He is not merely passing through, but actively engaged with it.

The role of the city is further emphasized in the narrative when the names of different neighborhoods become important in relation to Bhaskar's prospective brides, who are first identified in relation to where they live (Jodhpur Park, Dum Dum,

Lansdowne Road). The city nurtures and shelters these women (*Freedom* 65-66), and when the family first meets Sandhya she is described as "admittedly, not particularly beautiful, but youth – she was twenty-four – has its own beauty wherever it resides, like a rare flower in a wilderness even in a city as large as Calcutta, an apparition before its bloom fades" (*Freedom* 150). Youth thus seems to be contrasted to Calcutta, a temporary ghostly visitor in the city. The image of the woman in the room is countered and complemented by the notion of the ghost in the wilderness. Rather than being haunted by youth herself, she haunts the city in the capacity of providing a different, youthful image to the one of decay and stagnation of the city which is elsewhere portrayed in the narrative (*Freedom* 89, 94). While much of this seems centered on surface visibility, it is made more complex by the word "apparition". Not only a requiem to the end of an era, as Chaudhuri intimated in an interview, the novel also points forward to new beginnings, for example through Bhaskar's and Sandhya's marriage.

While the episode concerning the first meeting with Sandhya provides a link between the city and the domestic sphere, it also forefronts aspects of visibility, an important notion in relation to the streets within *Freedom Song*. The streets are public spaces: not only sites of participation, but, importantly, of seeing or being seen (through, for example, theater and graffiti). This play between seeing and being seen is enacted in the meeting between Bhaskar and Sandhya: "Everyone was made speechless by her and Bhaskar glanced at her quickly," yet no one could tell "that she had already seen in the same capacity a cost accountant, a marine engineer, and a lecturer, and had been seen; today she had been informed she was to see a businessman's son" (*Freedom* 149-50). The description of Sandhya as seeing and being seen also relates her to the other "seers" and establishes a link between her and the city.

The street offers a view of the homes, while it is also observed from the homes. Thus, the streets are not only sites of public visibility in that they are seen, but also because they enable the act of viewing. The novel stages a play of simultaneous visibility/invisibility, figured most literally through the focus given to the liminal spaces of the verandas, balconies, windows and doors. Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out the historical significance of the liminal spaces in Calcutta, and argues that "We need to find out more about rooftops and parks and the roles they played in the cultural life in the city in the twentieth century" (*Provincializing* 201). As mentioned, Chaudhuri works with the notion of the flâneur, a person more interested in observing the minute details of the everyday in the city than with active participation. Chaudhuri, drawing on Benjamin, describes the flâneur as "a typical figure in the urban landscape, … who plunges into the crowd for no particular reason, except to window-shop, observe, and survey the various ephemeral items of urban paraphernalia displayed on pavements and in windows"

("Kalighat"). Thus, the character Bhaskar combines two disparate roles: the flâneur, in the capacity of a more distanced observer, and the active performer.

My investigation of the streetscape in *Freedom Song* also accounts for another aspect related to the spectatorship: street theater. To be seen is also at the center of the political struggle played out in the street. The party workers involved with the play see the streets as a theater stage:

> They loved … performing on the streets, of being uncircumscribed by the proscenium, the proximity and palpability of the houses that bordered their performance, their gestures spilling over onto the pulse of the ragged audience, the nearness of the street-sky; and they loved the exaggerated sketchiness of their own rehearsals, the lines never wholly or faithfully committed to memory. (*Freedom* 76)

While the streets are vital to the plays in their capacity as a stage, the settings of the plays are vaguer, with plays described as "set in medieval India, or in an unnamed land that was sufficiently fantastic, sufficiently unreal" (*Freedom* 63-64). Consequently, there is a stark contrast between the fictional settings and the streets in which the plays are enacted. But whereas the plays are parables and allegories set in a time or place far removed, they are nevertheless used to explore contemporary contexts and local issues (*Freedom* 64), and thus stage the production of locality. The neighborhood (in Appadurai's use of the term) is visible in the streets, whereas the locality emerges in the setting of the plays. Useful in this context is Spiro Kostof's observation that "[t]he street … structures community. It puts on display the workings of the city, and supplies a backdrop for its common rituals. Because this is so, the private buildings that enclose the street channel are perforce endowed with a public presence" (qtd. in V. Mehta 12). The streets "display" a "backdrop" that is transformed and reappropriated by the actors.

The opposition between the vague setting and the specific street-stage creates the possibility for the reappropriation of the streets: by creating a shared vision of community these performances reinforce the staging always already occurring through the interaction of the people passing by with the inhabitants of surrounding houses. Reappropriation is described by Jaqueline Groth and Eric Corijn as

> an often temporarily limited activity which eventually may even stand the chance of altering existing planning prerogatives. Thus, these sites reappropriated for cultural and other uses also typify the new importance and meaning of socially constructed space in the contemporary city as the

> locus where 'values, identities and systems of reference are confronted with each other'. (506, quoting Lefebvre)

My particular focus is on how the streets through their use as theater stages are invested with a new meaning in which the personal meets the political. In street theater, the street is more than stage and neighborhood; it is transformed into a historical (albeit vague) setting where the past encounters present concerns and contexts. Safdar Hashmi observed that street theater was "born of the specific needs of the working people living under capitalist or feudal exploitation" (31) to which Christine Garlough adds that its modern form in India emerged primarily with "a Bengali group affiliated with the Communist Party of India. This organization spent decades designing street theater pieces, … to be used as a tool to engage the masses in social activism against imperial forces" (372). The plays thus address social issues of importance to the neighborhood, and the street stage is used to transform the neighborhood, by imagining locality.[16] The reappropriation is "temporarily limited," and the streets therefore need to be appropriated again and again. But while the vision or new meaning which is enacted may not last long, it is still a potentially important aspect of "the production of ordinary life," which Appadurai describes as "the labor or social effort required to produce peace as an everyday fact in human societies" ("The Morality" 80-81). As I will discuss below, the inscription of graffiti on buildings can similarly be viewed as acts of (re-)appropriation.

The aim of the rehearsals in *Freedom Song* is about producing plays which advocate "unity and harmony". However, the play which all the rehearsals have been leading up to, is not recounted in the narrative, and Beena, the relative who goes to see it, has previously been described as almost invisible, a shadow (*Freedom* 118). In an interview Chaudhuri has explained the reasoning behind the choice to not include the performance:

> [Chaudhuri]: [The play] started out as being one of the reasons for writing the novel and it ended by becoming a sort of absence because I found out that I could not actually sit down and write about the play. The actual enactment of the play, when I had seen it in real life, moved me so much not in the political sense, that such kind of a street culture existed in Calcutta and

[16] Chaudhuri's short story "A Portrait of an Artist" from the collection *Real Time: Stories and a Reminiscence* includes a character who resembles Bhaskar in his attachment to street performances: "Not having done exceptionally well at school, [Binoy] works in his father's business and has also joined, I hear, a political theatre troupe, and performs, occasionally, in street plays. …. Calcutta is his universe; like a dew-drop, it holds within it the light and colours of the entire world" (Chaudhuri, *Real Time* 14). For Ian Almond, "Binoy's city is both his microcosm and his fate, his realm but also his cage" (168). Calcutta is Bhaskar's realm too, but the term "cage" does not do it justice. It boils down to the difference between the cage and the stage: both have clear limits, but the former restricts and contains, whereas the latter has the potential to transgress and expand its boundaries.

> the forlornness of this hope because the people looking from the balcony, this illusionary kind of overlapping between home and outside, audience and enactment. You are not sure which one is the audience and which one the play. Again, the ephemerality which I'm always interested in; this is not going to be staged again. …. When it came to actually writing about it, something in me rebelled against it and I found I couldn't do it. I said to myself that I won't show the play being staged in the novel.
>
> [Interviewer]: Why? It's a striking absence.
>
> [Chaudhuri]: It is a striking absence. But I'd rather have a striking absence than write something which I'm supposed to. Bringing the central thing to fruition – I'd rather not do that. ("Alaap" 184)

Central to the novel, the absent play may change its meaning by having two main functions: it establishes that Bhaskar is participating mostly for the fun of it (cf. his hesitation to do other political work), and that a street play (or any vision of locality) may go unnoticed, and be without impact. Nothing seems to change because of it, certainly not Bhaskar. The overt aim of Bhaskar's group is to raise public awareness, but this becomes secondary to the act of performing in itself. With the absence of the play, it is the street itself that becomes a theater with the audience as its actors. Thus, while Bhaskar's play may not succeed in its attempted appropriation, the audience may relate to it as another context. The absence also allows the narrator to explore the banality of the everyday.

Another thing which goes unnoticed is the class (and caste) difference between Bhaskar's middle-class family and their servants. In spite of his involvement with the Communist party, Bhaskar seems blind to the servants in his house.[17] Before setting out to distribute the newspapers in the morning, he scolds Haridasi for not having made tea fast enough: "Poor eleven-year-old Haridasi, she took everything literally; her mouth curved downward" (*Freedom* 11). As Mohit K. Ray points out, "one is surprised to note that [Bhaskar] simply does not notice them [the servants] at all. They remain 'invisible' to the so-called Marxist, who remains rather comically busy selling *Ganashakti* and staging street theatres on Russian themes" ("They Also Serve" 143). Perhaps Bhaskar's neglect is meant to represent the invisibility of the powerless and impoverished to the middle-class, but the effect can also be the opposite for the reader, to whom the discrepancy becomes visible. The servants, though far from being central characters in the narrative, have their

[17] The invisibility of the poor is also commented upon by Chaudhuri in his non-fiction book *Calcutta*, where he states: "For a long time, I didn't see *this* city [of the homeless] – so formative, probably, were the impressions of the Calcutta I had visited as a child to me" (2).

own stories, and the observation of Bhaskar's behavior shows how he is a complex character, both blind and active in the class struggle. Chaudhuri has remarked on this tendency elsewhere: "I wanted to explore the fact that people talk about important things but they also ignore important things. They remember dramatic events but they also forget dramatic events. People have the capacity to do both, so often these things glance past one's life and one is not completely sure whether one is affected by them" ("On Belonging" 50). Bhaskar is not alone in not noticing the discrepancy between ideology and life; after a meeting at the local unit, the party members seem to not reflect upon the fact that the boy who brings them tea is a Bihari expatriate, a child (*Freedom* 49-51).

The thematics of lack of sight/insight is elaborated on in the novel. The characters are at times described as having selective vision. For example, when Khuku and Mini are driving past a heap of garbage "of an unimaginable colour," they "wouldn't notice it" (*Freedom* 68). At other times the vision is an illusion: When Khuku and Mini arrive at the nursing home, it "rose before them like a mirage" (*Freedom* 69). The mirage image stems both from the building's newness, but also from the way its glass doors reflect the outside. As they walk into the city's reflection on the façade, the lines between the city and the characters dissolve. While the nursing home stands out as a mirage, other neighborhoods are opaque as the houses are nearly indistinguishable from one another. It seems Chaudhuri is using these buildings to reflect on the difficulty of asserting one's own identity, particularly seen in the descriptions of Mini's neighborhood and of Khuku's brother Borda's residential area. Borda suffers from "lapses in … memory" (*Freedom* 82) and his speech is "hardly audible" (*Freedom* 83). Golf Green, Borda's residential area, is described as a "maze of houses" that "surrounded him with its identical verandas" (*Freedom* 84, 83). A connection is thus established between Borda's loss of identity and the indistinguishable features of the neighborhood. The same is true for Mini, as she passes through her compound and talks to a neighbor, "her voice half-concealed by sounds around her, as if all you could do was become a voice among other voices" (*Freedom* 126). Her apartment building in North Calcutta seems to dampen her assertion of individuality.

The lack of sight/insight is related to the silence of seemingly failed attempts at reappropriation of the city streets. With the season changing from winter to spring, it also seems that the streets are returning to a political standstill: where "winter had made it seem possible that loud choruses and a few clenched fists raised together in the air would delay, perhaps even permanently remove, the prospect of liberalization; would punish the fundamentalists" (*Freedom* 153). Now with spring arriving the party members are only asked to prepare for the upcoming elections by "assessing the needs of the locality; assessing its problems" (*Freedom* 153), thereby making the streets "temporarily quieter and bereft of their message" (*Freedom* 153). That the streets are "bereft of their message"

indicates how the production of locality constructs a structure of feeling that makes the street more than a street. The actors exhibit agency by reappropriating the streets from their mundane sense of status quo into a stage, where they can act out a certain kind of locality with a certain structure of feeling, and with the aim of propagating communal harmony. Yet, the attempt seemingly fails.

However, as the streets become quieter in the absence of theater, another attempt at reappropriation is begun: graffiti. The most detailed description of graffiti in the novel contains a silent roar, as the finance minister is figured as "three-quarters tiger" (*Freedom* 168) ready to pounce: "Now a picture was forming that would multiply, like an ornate decoration, in different parts of the city, a decoration mirrored, yet seen by almost no one, glanced at perhaps as other thoughts occupied one's head, background to people waiting for buses; yet it told a story" (*Freedom* 167). However, the story is paradoxically neither seen nor heard: "All else … waited; the music had stopped. … as the spectacle, frozen, unfolded …. Silence echoed all around; even the crow neglected to caw; what would the next action be?" (*Freedom* 168). As with the theater, the impact of the graffiti seems limited. Like the performance of the primary street play, which is not recounted and which is viewed by an "invisible" relative, the graffiti becomes invisible, perhaps seen in passing but not really noticed, a state of affairs highlighted by the silence surrounding the graffiti. Both of these instances, street theater and graffiti, highlight how reappropriation of streets and buildings are tenuous at best, and how locality constantly needs to be enacted.

Another striking occurrence of invisibility coupled with silence occurs towards the end of the novel, when the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) is described as having "appeared when the roads were silent" (*Freedom* 193), a silence due to the fear of on-coming riots. The police force then leaves in silence, "a truckload that not everyone noticed" (*Freedom* 193).[18] This silence is a reminder of the previous communal tension, a tension not restricted to Calcutta since the CRPF is "a peacekeeping force on their way elsewhere" (*Freedom* 193). This is a much more ominous silence than the solitude that opens the novel, the silence experienced at dawn before the daily bustle of the day (*Freedom* 3); it echoes rather the description of an oncoming riot in Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* (see chapter 2 above).

The movement between visibility/sound and invisibility/silence is also enacted in the liminal spaces between the homes and the streets: verandas, balconies, doors and windows. These are pivotal sites in Chaudhuri's novel, as these spaces connect the inside with the outside. Yet this is not a direct connection. The inside of a house remains largely

[18] The Central Reserve Police Force is an armed force, deployed, among other things, for riot-control and insurgency operations (crpf.gov.in).

hidden from view of the passerby, while the most prominent aspect of the outside to penetrate the inside is sounds: the noise of traffic, of construction, of trains, as well as voices and bird song. The "itinerant" servants Jochna and Uma are first described on the veranda of Khuku's apartment. From there they have a view of the surrounding city, and it seems this is intended to establish their liminal position within the household. Their view is of "the temple … being 'completed'," decaying mansions, trees, a "solitary, invisible[!] factory chimney," and "multi-storeyed buildings" (*Freedom* 17). The visual cityscape is complemented by the sounds of construction coming from the building of high-rises where ancestral mansions once stood (*Freedom* 17-18). Thus, the city is changing around them, but the sounds which enter the house also establish a connection between the city and the house.

Jochna and Uma are both 'city dwellers' and members of sorts of the household. They embody the liminal as their workday is conditioned by aspects of visibility/invisibility, of being both in the public and in the private. Thus, the narrator moves between different angles to describe their rest: "[B]urrowing into the hall, they lay down on the carpet between two chairs, a sofa, and a centre table, … visible depending from where one saw them, leaving empty the place where they had been …. Now only the sound remained, giving a sense of the city outside, caught in the light …" (*Freedom* 18). The two servants are thus not protected from the public eye, and their connection to the city is emphasized by the reference to the remaining urban sounds. The servants, more overtly than any of the other characters, embody the tension between belonging and not belonging. In the middle-class household, they represent the city's poor, and while they are essential to the household, they do not belong but are constantly under the threat of not being wanted.

Sectarianism and Liberalization: Negotiating the City

In *Freedom Song*, large and unsettling issues are kept in the background, while the focus remains on the day-to-day lives of a number of characters. Yet these lives are affected by changes in both ideo- and financescapes, such as the increased prominence of the Hindu right, and the liberalization of the Indian economy. The city in *Freedom Song* generally provides contexts which seem dominant and rigid, as do contexts of the nation-state. Yet, as Holston and Appadurai argue, "cities are challenging, diverging from, and even replacing nations as the important space of citizenship…" (189). The sense of citizenship related to the city is of relevance in *Freedom Song*, where the characters' original homes in Sylhet have been lost due to Partition.

The changes in the finance- and ideoscapes affect the characters' lives in different ways. As I show in the previous parts of this chapter, the characters are involved in the production of locality, and if the issue of de- and reterritorialization clearly has a bearing on the concept of home, it also affects the larger picture of city and nation. In this third section, I will discuss how locality is influenced by the larger scapes in the city. Politics and economy are both dominant discourses that are resisted and questioned by the characters in the novel in their different ways. I follow Maurice Bloch who claims that "culture and history are not just something created by people but … are, to a certain extent, that which creates persons" (69). Thus, while my investigation focuses on the production of locality by the novel's characters, the city is also a context-providing neighborhood that "creates persons". Further complicating the neighborhood as a context-provider is the fact that the city is figured both as a congregate of its diverse neighborhoods, and as a totalizing entity linked to the state. As Sarkar points out, Calcutta "in many important respects was, and remains, not one but many: distinct in residential areas, languages and cultures, self-images, but interacting in everyday life in relationships of inequality – and occasional conflict" (*Writing* 165). Calcutta can therefore be viewed as a single neighborhood distinct from other cities (such as Delhi or Bombay), while it also can be viewed as an aggregate of different neighborhoods that are distinct from one another (such as North and South Calcutta).

The streets constitute small neighborhoods within the larger neighborhood of the city. Correspondingly, the houses and apartment buildings are smaller neighborhoods within the street, and the rooms in a house comprise another micro level: "neighborhoods are inherently what they are because they are opposed to something else and derive from other, already produced neighborhoods" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 183). The neighborhood is not only context-providing but also context-generating: "Neighborhoods are contexts in the sense that they provide the frame or setting …. From another point of view, a neighborhood is a context, or a set of contexts, within which meaningful social action can be both generated and interpreted" (*Modernity* 184). In the novel, the neighborhood on the city-level is represented as more context-providing, whereas the street-level is more context-generating. However, the streets and the city interact, because, as Appadurai explains, "neighborhood as context produces the contexts of neighborhoods" (*Modernity* 185). Through the interaction of the different levels, localities are always being produced. Yet, as Alev Adil notes: "The world beyond the homes of the main characters – Calcutta and its poverty, political upheavals and religious enmities – emerges obliquely out of the … often soporific chats which Khuku shares with … Mini" (20). The streets and city make out the larger neighborhood of Calcutta, which is in constant negotiation, but Chaudhuri retains a focus on the homes and the families throughout. Thus, in spite of

"the traffic jams, the noise and the rubbish heaps, the city is benign and protective" (Adil 20). The work of the imagination is pivotal in the negotiation of the city neighborhood: "It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 7). Furthermore, works of fiction "show the contemporary imagination at work" (*Modernity* 58). Thus, there is a neighborhood within the text, in which locality is produced.

At the time of the novel's setting, the financescape is going through a substantial change as the Indian economy is opened up to liberalization. Financial liberalization both creates new opportunities, but is also perceived as a risk. A large change similarly occurs in the ideoscape, when the city becomes more and more dominated by the Hindutva discourse. As S. Majumdar puts it, "The new world" depicted in Chaudhuri's novel "is defined by globalized capitalism and advanced technology, with the disturbing rise of religious fundamentalism as the backdrop" (*Prose* 165). While the ideoscape and the financescape are quite different, they both represent changes the characters have to relate to. I will examine the sectarianism expressed by Khuku and Mini, but also why some characters choose not to get involved, or opt to look after their own, and link this to a discussion of the banal and the ordinary (drawing on S. Majumdar's *Prose of the World*).

As I discussed above, Chaudhuri describes a city inhabited mostly by the old and the young, with the generation in-between absent. While the older generation is dying, the younger is emigrating, leaving Bhaskar who has "stayed on … because he is not good for anything else" (Chaudhuri, "On Belonging" 46). As we have seen, however, Bhaskar is the one person overtly involved with the production of locality, and it is through him and his new wife that the family is expected to live on in Calcutta. As for the others, Mohit is destined for the U.S., where his uncle, Khuku's son, already lives. Bhaskar's brother lives in Germany, while Shib and Khuku have returned to Calcutta only after retirement. All these instances of de- and reterritorialization are complicated from the perspective of locality, which is "an inherently fragile social achievement" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 179) that affect the various neighborhoods in different ways. In the novel, locality is not only fragile because of "the corrosion of context" and "the context-producing drives of … the modern nation-state" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 198), but also from a potential loss of local knowledge. Local knowledge, Appadurai argues, "is substantially about producing reliably local subjects as well as about producing reliably local neighborhoods within which such subjects can be recognized and organized" (*Modernity* 181). This is especially important since the home, as the smallest kind of neighborhood, has to negotiate the other, larger neighborhoods, such as the city and the state. The loss of local knowledge means that the families in *Freedom Song* for the most part consist of subjects who embody the city in a state of illness. While Shib is working in a "sick" (i.e., not profit-making) state-owned

company, Mini is recuperating from arthritis and then getting worse again. It is through the characters that the general state of decline is both shown and enacted. However, although the city lives through the characters, the larger scapes of politics and finances at the same time affect them. As inhabitants in Calcutta, they are not only acting but are also acted upon by the city. That give and take takes different forms, from Bhola who is described as having come to the city and fallen in love with it, to Bhaskar's cousin Puti, who sometimes thinks of the city as "a bad dream" (*Freedom* 94).

The narrative frequently returns to the discourses of the Hindu Right and the liberalization of the financial market. Both of these discourses affect the characters and influence their neighborhoods, yet they can also be fruitfully approached as parts of the ideo- and financescapes which condition Calcutta as a neighborhood. In the following I will examine the effects of the changes to the ideo- and financescape, starting with the Hindutva discourse. Khuku and Mini are the characters who most overtly express sectarian sentiments, even if they primarily do so within the comfort and seclusion of Khuku's home. These sentiments are echoes of the increased popularity of the Hindutva ideology in the early 1990s, but they also hark back to the Partition with its division of both the nation and the state along predominantly religious lines. Chaudhuri has elsewhere described Calcutta as "not only a derelict city but India's only tolerant, multicultural, multi-religious metropolis" ("Diary 19 May" 36). However, as is clear in the narrative, sectarianism thrives within Khuku's home. Yet "Chaudhuri does not linger on overt politics. He glances in passing, referring to it obliquely" (Tripathi). The novel starts with Khuku's annoyance over being awoken by the "incomprehensible syllables" of an azaan, i.e., a Muslim call to prayer (*Freedom* 3). The description shows how Khuku, despite having heard it for fifty years and herself being a singer, refuses to relate to it. As the narrator reveals, getting up like this was a longstanding habit that she really did not mind: "She got up, as she had been getting up …, ever since she was fifteen years old and became serious about her singing" (*Freedom* 3-4). Her lack of sleep has nothing to do with the azaan: "And, believe me, Mini, I had no sleep last night, I began to think about Bablu and I lay wide awake with my head feeling hot" (*Freedom* 4). The reason she gets up early in the morning is to practice music, and her sleeplessness is caused by worries about her son, both facts ignored by Mini who proclaims "They are going too far!" (*Freedom* 3-4). As Thomas Blom Hansen and Oskar Veerkaik explain: "In contexts that are politically charged, sounds and smells of other ethnic or religious communities may generate feelings such as fear and hate. The repeated conflicts over the *azaan* … in Indian cities is an example of such politicization of competing taste regimes" (15). The past in the present seems for Khuku and Mini to have preserved the sectarian sentiments of the Partition. Khuku continues to live in childhood memories of her brother's stories of "the

Musholmaans … , ghosts who haunted the dark and hilly regions of Sylhet" (*Freedom* 58). Now in their old age, they both continue to speak about the Muslims "defiantly and conspiratorially, as if … playing a prohibited game" (*Freedom* 57). That this game is not generally acceptable is revealed by their secrecy, preventing them from playing it in front of Shib (57). Whereas the homes, in the sense of micro-level neighborhoods, can be perceived as containing the values of the family, it is more problematic in Khuku's case. The feelings she harbors are outright sectarian, making her home an isolated island in which to both hide and act out her sectarianism.

While there seems to be a huge gap between Khuku and the Muslim community, the distance is shown to be shorter than she might herself think. After she sings "Lost heart / On a verdant road," the narrative turns to the nearby Muslim neighborhood: "Park Circus; Shamsul Huda Haq Road" (*Freedom* 135). Sumana R. Ghosh claims that Chaudhuri is making "ironic use of the concept of road by juxtaposing the song … with Park Circus" (in Chaudhuri, "Alaap" 179). While Chaudhuri claims this was not consciously done, the comingling of the two roads (the one of the love song, and the other a physical place) establishes a connection between Khuku's song practice with Suleiman, the Muslim musician who accompanies her, and what is most likely his neighborhood. Khuku may feel emotionally distant from Park Circus, yet it is a mere "twenty minutes' walk from [her] house" (*Freedom* 135). The way Shamsul Huda Haq Road is put next to the lines "On a verdant road" provides an acknowledgment of a Muslim presence not overtly recognized by Khuku. While Mini and Khuku might be reminded of "the daily killings" when they see a billboard "proclaiming Hindu and Muslim amity" (*Freedom* 86), the narrative also includes a Muslim cultural tradition Khuku values. She relies on Suleiman to play the tabla when she practices her singing, and has recently begun to think that "Nazrul Islam was greater than Tagore" (*Freedom* 45).[19] Without overtly commenting on it, Chaudhuri is showing the discrepancy between Khuku in her home singing a song accompanied by a Muslim musician, and her rejection of Muslims in general. The title of the novel, after all, is *Freedom Song*. Through focusing on Khuku as not very religious herself, and by pointing to the rich cultural heritage she enjoys, the novel suggests an alternative to her habitual sectarianism. Her cultural heritage contains both Hindu and Muslim influences, and her attempt to erase one part can only limit the freedom offered by her mixed cultural heritage.[20]

[19] Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) was a Bengali poet, musician, and activist who introduced Islamic elements into Bengali music and warned against religious bigotry. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a Bengali poet and writer involved in the Bengal Renaissance.

[20] The mixed cultural heritage is eloquently described and celebrated in Tharoor's novel *Riot*: "[I] listen to Ravi Shankar playing raag durbari …. I hear the Muslim Dagar brothers sing Hindu devotional songs, and then I attend a qawwali performance by on of our country's greatest exponents of this Urdu musical form, who happens to be a Hindu" (113).

The novel is set in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, and, as discussed above, Bhaskar and his Communist Party workers try to spread a message of unity and harmony. The news contains "[r]umours of atrocities in other cities" (*Freedom* 101), and Bhaskar's extended family is described as joined by "rumours of something like war" (*Freedom* 128). The riots which occurred in Calcutta in 1992 were, it should be noted, on a smaller scale than in Bombay.[21] However, the 1990s "left no doubt that liberal-democratic societies … are susceptible to capture by majoritarian forces" (Appadurai, *Fear* 2). There is for Mini and Khuku a palpable sense of unrest connected with the riots, but also a sense of entertainment. When Mini calls Khuku after the explosions in Bombay in March 1993, this mix becomes clear: "There was a pleasurable and wholly fictitious feeling of doom …, it touched everything about her life at the moment. …. This mood lasted all day" (*Freedom* 159). In this episode, the 'grand events' are transformed into something exciting. In a review of *Freedom Song*, Adil argues that "[i]f Chaudhuri is indulgent to Khuku's 'inconsequential chatter' and her insularity, he is damning about her 'wholly fictitious sense of doom'" (20). Yet it is more complex than that, since Khuku's insularity cannot be separated from her sense of doom. Chaudhuri is indulgent insofar as he does not have his narrator overtly comment on the sectarianism expressed by Khuku, but the planned trip to the market is an instance of the production of locality, where a mediated event, in this case the distant bombs, is turned into a local structure of feeling.

Just as the prospect of possible riots evoke feelings of both apprehension and excitement, so there is a sense of general confusion regarding what is right and wrong:

> The government did one thing today and another tomorrow. Today they said they would rebuild the mosque, and the next day they failed to honour the statement.
>
> Some people thought they'd been too tolerant in the past.

[21] The riots in Calcutta after the demolition of the Babri Masjid lasted "between 7 and 10 December 1992, [when] the metropolis was thrown out of gear by large-scale organized rioting" (Suranjan Das, "The 1992 Calcutta Riot" 282). Das also notes that the number of killed ranges between the official figure of 33, and an unofficial number of 50, and that the victims "lost their lives from police/military firing" (292). He goes on to describe how "a large number of [Muslim slums] were reduced to heaps of rubble. The modus operandi of the crowd was strikingly similar. It had 'the stamp of meticulous planning'. In all instances the rampage was initiated between 10 and 10.30 PM. Each raid was generally of a short duration. Rioters entered the targeted areas in lorries or vans, armed with bombs, pipe-guns, lathies, rods and other lethal weapons. Red and green signals were used to direct the attacks. On many occasions an organized dissemination of provocative rumours preceded the actual act of rioting" (294). Das also claims that the primary motivation behind the riots was not Muslim-Hindu tensions, but that this was used as an excuse to clear land for new construction. Chaudhuri notes in an interview that "you must probably remember that I am not talking of Bombay here or some of the other cities where these riots, these physical realities, took place. Calcutta has always had a Communist Party, so communal tension has been kept under control and it did not experience the physical turmoils or riots" ("On Belonging" 50).

> Some people thought that the whole conception their country had been based on was flawed; so they must start again. Speeches were expended on the 'idea' of the country and what the meaning of that idea was.
>
> The word 'fundamentalism' travelling everywhere and belonging nowhere: people tried to understand what it meant.[22] (*Freedom* 87)

Nearly fifty years after independence the idea of the country is thus explored again. The rise of the militant Right brings memories of the Partition to the fore, and a sense of being dislocated. Khuku's claim that she may even vote for the BJP in the next elections foregrounds how their electoral base grew in the middle-classes.[23] Fundamentalism, the novel suggests, is hard to pin down and make sense of. Khuku expresses fundamentalist views, yet an actualization of these views would impoverish her cultural heritage, her repertoire (her "stock" of songs and the beliefs they express) and thus her cultural capital.

As the newspapers fill with reports of riots and violence, the characters, and "especially Khuku," become enmeshed in reading (*Freedom* 128). The narrator focuses on two photographs in the reports, one of a murdered man and one of huddled people. Public photographs, often spread through media, carry meaning beyond the private sphere, and a small number of these "enter collective memory" (Ruchatz 373). These public photographs relate to and interact with other mementos that are part of the cultural memory stock. One of the photographs depicts "a Muslim butcher" who has been murdered for unknown reasons. There is an ambiguity, as the narrator, presumably focalizing through Khuku, relays: "He seemed to sleep uncomfortably, his lips parted and eyes closed" (*Freedom* 129). There is an attempt to neutralize the violence by describing the man as sleeping, but also the opposite: the man's uncomfortable sleep disturbs the living, including Khuku who has difficulties expelling it from her mind. The other photograph "of people sitting in a railway station … looking like the nomads of old, suddenly uprooted, without an address, waiting to depart from the city" (*Freedom* 128) becomes a memento, recalling the uprooting of Partition and makes it seem as if there is a continuous link between the different times. Mini's childhood experience of the Partition is similarly described: "the upheaval came" and all were "uprooted, as if released, slowly, sadly, by the gravity that had tied them to the places they had known all their life…" (*Freedom* 120). Above, I discussed how this uprooting has profound influence on Mini and her future sense of home, or lack thereof. However, her memory of the Partition is not only an individual experience, but part of a cultural memory. The Partition is contained in

[22] Chaudhuri has elsewhere remarked that the "concordance, in Hindutva, of cultural extremism and materialism makes it less like a 'Fundamentalist' religious movement than like fascism" ("Thoughts" 20).
[23] The BJP is the Bharatiya Janata Party [Indian People's Party].

the "archive of memory" (Appadurai, *Future* 288) and relates directly to the present troubles, part of a rhizome-memory connected to the "grand narrative of India after 1947" (Appadurai, "In My Father's Nation" 111). Chaudhuri has described how he has "written against" the central trope of Partition ("Alaap" 184), but in the novel the events surrounding it are nevertheless frequently recalled. The photos of the present that Khuku sees in the newspapers also become mementos of the past, because they activate rhizome-memories of the previous troubles. The present riots are therefore not perceived as new, but as something that re-enacts the founding trauma. What Chaudhuri is writing against in *Freedom Song* is rather the demolition in Ayodhya, the central event that links the present riots with the partition.

While the Partition is remembered in relation to the present troubles, there are also memories of "young India," and this meeting of past and present implies the potential for the creation of something new. The current unrest brings the unfulfilled promises of Independence, and of the secular Bengali heritage, to the fore. The novel seems to indirectly depict this other, less destructive heritage, as an opportunity for rejuvenation. Two early periodicals devoted to the questions of colonization and independence bore the name *Young India*: one published in New York by Lala Lajpat Rai (1918-1919) and one published in Ahmedabad by Gandhi (1919-1931).[24] While I do not think these titles are the direct reference for the young India in the narrative, they highlight the connection between the imagined community (in Benedict Anderson's sense) of the "youth" of the nation (India as an official nation was not formally formed until 1947) and the present day memories of it, memories which seem to indicate a discrepancy between what was imagined and what was produced.

In the wake of the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992, Calcutta is numbed by a curfew.[25] References in the novel to the time of the curfew, which is remembered as lasting seven or ten days, can also be approached through the concept of the rhizome-memory. Just like photographs and newspaper accounts, the curfew brings older riots to mind. Instigated to maintain order within the city, the curfew is perceived as unnatural: "ten days of nothing happening" (*Freedom* 114). Khuku and Shib are suddenly at home all day, and Khuku, in the unusual silence "in which the sound of a single car horn became disconcerting" (*Freedom* 114) starts worrying excessively, not about the state of the nation but about Shib's habits and health. S. Majumdar discusses how the ordinary and everyday shed light on grand events: "An unmediated engagement

[24] For an astute reading of Lajpat Rai's *Young India* as utopian writing, see Dohra Ahmad, *Landscapes of Hope*, especially chapter 2.

[25] On 14 December, 1992, the *New York Times* reported that "Curfews were lifted during daylight hours in … the two largest cities, Calcutta and Bombay. More than 20,000 people who fled their homes because of fighting returned to their homes in Calcutta, but 10,000 others remained in refugee camps, city officials said" ("India Arrests").

with the local and the ordinary, as opposed to a narrative fixation of dramatic or 'important' events, … not only enables a better understanding of history but also a more nuanced appreciation of the events themselves" (*Prose* 174). The grand events of narrative/historical importance are not necessarily perceived as worth more attention than the ordinary in *Freedom Song,* yet concerns for Shib's health are a transferred focus from the national problems. Thus, in *Freedom Song*, grand events are transformed and manifested on the personal micro-level. There is a correspondence between the larger scapes, 'the grand event', and their most local manifestations, 'the ordinary', and by focusing on the ordinary, Chaudhuri is indirectly able to comment on the grand event.

The curfew itself is described in a short, stand-alone paragraph: "That had been a particularly empty time. For the seven days of the curfew the country had been like a conch whose roar you could hear only if you put your ear to it" (*Freedom* 97). It is the silence associated with the curfew which is the most troubling aspect of it. Silence is not a part of Calcutta, especially not the Calcutta of Chaudhuri's fictions. Khuku, as intimated above, is more concerned about Shib than about the bigger picture. To her, the curfew is most notable for its disruption of the ordinary: Jochna, her servant, is unable to come to work for two days, and although this ordinarily "would have irritated Khuku, … this time the atmosphere … of strife precluded any response, *unfortunately*, except sympathy" (*Freedom* 73; emphasis added). Khuku's ordinary annoyance is precluded because Jochna is exposed to the dangers of sectarianism. Jochna, the narrator tells us, "was becoming increasingly pretty" (*Freedom* 73), and it seems her beauty brings out the specific risk of sexualized violence during riots.[26] A reference to having to live "nakedly," coming right after the description of Jochna's prettiness, seems to allude to male aggression: "It was at such times that the sketchy unfencedness of their existence became palpable, that they must lead lives perpetually and nakedly open to duress" (*Freedom* 73). The episode also highlights how the likelihood of riots varies between different neighborhoods. As Ashutosh Varshney points out with regards to both Delhi and Calcutta, these are cities which "benefit from what might be called a scale effect. Given their sheer size, violence in some areas, unless truly ghastly, does not affect routine life in other parts" (106). Whereas the threat of violence is concrete in Jochna's neighborhood, for Khuku it disrupts the ordinary only as "an atmosphere, distant but palpable" (*Freedom* 73).

One of the two most prominent changes affecting the characters is these consequences of Hindutva, the other, involving the financescape, is the opening up of the economy. The two are in fact connected: the cultural stagnation indicated by sectarianism is reflected in a financial stagnation. Consequently, Bhaskar's nephew Mohit is described

[26] For reports on riots and rape, see for example Stanley Tambiah's "Urban Riots" and Thomas Blom Hansen's *Wages of Violence*.

as becoming an emigrant, since "[a]round him, the city decayed" (*Freedom* 94). The decay alters the country "gradually and almost imperceptibly" as "[m]emories died and new ways of life came into being" (*Freedom* 108). The main characters belong to the middle-class, yet they resist liberalization because they fear the uncertainty that may follow. The novel investigates the financescape through two companies: Goodforce Lightrod, co-owned by Bhola, which produces cranes and other engineering equipment, and Little's, a candy production company where Shib works. Goodforce is privately owned, whereas Little's is deemed a "sick" unit and has been taken over by the state. The sense of stagnation is acutely perceived by Shib, who after his retirement from a successful private company has been hired to get Little's back from the brink of bankruptcy: "Each time a state- or government-supported company closed down, it was like a death-knell that no one heard. And Shib heard it these days" (*Freedom* 112). But however distressing Shib may find the fear of bankruptcy and the bureaucracy surrounding Little's, the company "was … a relaxing place to be in, like withdrawing to some outpost that was cut off from the larger movements of the world" (*Freedom* 21). While Shib is hampered by bureaucracy in his work, he privately benefits from the investment possibilities that the new economic opening has suddenly yielded, an area where his "curiosity" and "play" are means for him to exercise his agency (*Freedom* 113). The stagnation of Little's, in which "the history of Calcutta could be seen to have been written" (*Freedom* 91), is thus contrasted to the opportunities offered by deregulation.

The mirroring of Little's history to that of Calcutta's is repeated with Bhola's company as well, although it has a shorter history. Bhola and his business partners were civil engineers who wanted to contribute to the new country by producing cranes and other equipment to be used in the construction of dams and bridges. The idealism of producing equipment for the construction of the modern nation is complemented with an anticipation of there being "big money in it" (*Freedom* 141). However, the business is struggling, and goes bankrupt "during the years of the Naxals" (*Freedom* 141), a communist uprising that originated in 1967 in the area of Naxalbari in West Bengal.[27] The Naxalite movement thus prefigures the current changing financescape. Whereas the latter is caused by liberalization and the former by a communist revolt, the effects can be disastrously similar, or so Bhola and Bhaskar seem to predict (*Freedom* 139). The relationship between the scapes "is deeply disjunctive and profoundly unpredictable" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 35), and it is therefore difficult for the characters to understand the shifts.

[27] See, for example, Sumanta Bannerjee's *India's Simmering Revolution* for more on the Naxalite uprising.

Bhaskar has taken up a position in Goodforce Lightrod, which for unknown reasons has started to do better (*Freedom* 142). To get to the factory he has to leave the city: "Here South Calcutta receded; homes, children, mothers, servants were replaced by men in dirty overalls wandering about the workshed" (*Freedom* 139). He suffers from a more or less chronic back-ache aggravated by the poor condition of the road leading to the company (*Freedom* 138), which can be seen as a reflection of its state of business, reminiscent of the implied connection between Mini's crippling arthritis and the state of the city.

Bhaskar has two functions within the company: he oversees "what everyone else was doing" and he secures "fresh orders" (*Freedom* 139-40). It is possible, though unstated, that the recuperation of Goodforce has to do with Bhaskar's involvement: "He gave himself … whole-heartedly to securing fresh orders. He went off to meet Marwari traders; he went to Ranchi to confer with representatives of small companies" (*Freedom* 143). Like his involvement with the CPI(M), it is possible that the company only provides him with a diversion, but as Appadurai states, "where there is pleasure there is agency" (*Modernity* 7). The observation that "[h]e tasted the food in various small towns" (*Freedom* 143) may indicate either that he is primarily in it for his own enjoyment, or that he takes pleasure in his job – or a mixture of both. However much personal enjoyment characterizes Bhaskar's involvement with the company or with the street theater, he is still the character most actively engaged with the city. His father thinks of him as a child of the city, and while Calcutta has changed in the thirty years Bhola has lived there, "he loved it as one who had come here and made his life here" (*Freedom* 55). In his children, "in the way they spoke and in what they spoke of, he saw Calcutta more truly than in himself; they were the children of this city" (*Freedom* 55). Since Manik lives in Germany, and Piyu is described as "tongue-tied" (*Freedom* 55), it is presumably Bhaskar who 'speaks Calcutta.'

Bhaskar and his wife leave Calcutta to go on their honeymoon. They decide to go to Darjeeling in northern West Bengal, and the road there is described "like a well-known line of poetry" – consequently more familiar than "the wife he hardly knew" (*Freedom* 194):

> They passed roads that had been made by the British, connecting Bengal to the rest of the country, and which were still more or less unchanged, passing the dirty ponds and warm villages of Bengal, hungry children and women with their heads lowered, bulls sunning themselves; INDIA IS GREAT said the message that disappeared between two places…. (*Freedom* 194)

With the description of poverty and hungry children, the message of India's greatness seems ironic. Priyamvada Gopal discusses how

> 'India' figures as an idea [through] becoming variously a honeymoon itinerary – 'a series of small hotels, connecting routes, different climates existing at once, peculiarities of cuisine' and the 'INDIA IS GREAT' graffiti that mark the landscape on which they travel. It lurks at the edges of the imagination, one way or another. (187)

Bhaskar, seeing "these things as a husband and holiday-maker rather than one who'd become involved in the struggle" (*Freedom* 194), thus repeats the blindness discussed above about the servants. He experiences the trip as a flâneur, taking in the sights but not investing them with any other meaning than as a tourist. The discrepancy between "INDIA IS GREAT" and the hungry children is one he does not feel. Perhaps this is meant to signal that Nehru's visions for the nation is an unfulfilled promise which remains to be achieved. India may remain out of focus, but Calcutta belongs to the larger entity of the nation.

The involvement of Bhaskar's mother Abha with the city is limited, and she cannot understand Bhaskar's political choice: "she thought about Bhaskar worrying for the poor people in the world and she thought just how difficult a place to live in and understand the world was. Look after your own, was her own view" (*Freedom* 77). Through her recently opened savings account she is doing just that, yet what may seem as lack of participation can also be viewed as discomfort over the "larger narrative." Quoting Thomas Dumm, S. Majumdar elaborates that "boredom may be understood … as an expression of discomfort at not wanting to be a part of a larger narrative while being acutely aware that one is" (*Prose* 21-22). Boredom, as S. Majumdar's argues, may be a "mark of one's inability to choose one's own sociohistorical role" (*Prose* 21). Thus, choosing not to act can also be an action. The contexts of the neighborhood provide parameters affecting Abha's domestic situation. Abha's life has been conditioned by others. She married Bhola "solely because her father had decided it should be so" (*Freedom* 144): "it was almost as if [Bhola]'d made whatever he wanted of their lives, and she'd sat back and allowed him to do it" (*Freedom* 81). Unlike Bhola, Abha is described as having "a sharp business sense; but her energies must be devoted to the housekeeping accounts" (*Freedom* 77), which seem to indicate that the patriarchal structures are upheld by her allowing herself to be conditioned by others. Yet, the narrator states that it is only recently she has created a savings account, and that she had, at first, not informed Bhola about its existence.

The patriarchal structures are clear in relation to many of the female characters. The female domestic servants, as seen in the discussion of Jochna and the riots above, seem more exposed than their male counterparts. Florence D'Souza argues that in Chaudhuri's novel the "traditional family life is based on patriarchal conceptions where the women are reduced to the limited agency of wives and mothers within their homes" (83). The wedding between Sandhya and Bhaskar seems to be a way in which to solidify community, to keep it intact and ensure its future: the marriage is "an illustration of the maintenance of ancient tradition" (D'Souza 82). Yet, the marriage also means the introduction of a new person into the household, who will change its locality. On the day of Bhaskar's wedding, his mother Abha is the last person to leave the house. Sitting alone in her home, she is described as having "become a shadow in the house she'd come to so many years ago" (*Freedom* 174). Abha seems to be transformed, no longer the young bride herself, she is now a shadow. Sandhya's entry into the home changes the micro-neighborhood, and while the search for a bride is much about ensuring the continuation of the family, it also entails a change in the family. Drawing on S. Majumdar it is possible to better understand Abha's reason for only partially exercising agency: "Banality and boredom," Majumdar suggests, "stifle the possibilities of catharsis" (*Prose* 178). In an undramatic manner, Abha seems to represent a character without the prospect of catharsis. Events happen without her participation or permission, and her agency is reduced. She remains an elusive and self-effacing character, even if she sometimes asserts her own will, an act of resistance to a life which she has let others dictate. Whereas the stagnation of the city is reflected in Abha's lack of motivation, her savings point to the capacity, or the hope, of the city's continuance.

The title of the novel is enigmatic, and I will conclude this part of the chapter with a discussion of the implications for the novel of the words "freedom" and "song". The title is never mentioned in the narrative, and there are no clear indicators of what exactly a freedom song entails, yet the title provides an interpretative frame that brings both freedom and song to the foreground. As regards "freedom," Anu Shukla points out that "we find that the absence and not presence of freedom (social, economic, individual) happens to be at the core of the narrative" ("Such Stuff" 98). She sees the novel as singing "not [of] the freedom of the country but what freedom has come to" ("Such Stuff" 98). In this view, the novel is a lament at unfulfilled dreams of independence. Yet a patriotic song sung by a young party member highlights how freedom remains an ideal, not as utopian visions but made concrete through specific acts made by the characters (*Freedom* 50). Bhaskar's involvement in the party, against the wishes of his family, can be seen as exercising such individual freedom. Similarly, Shib's recent investments represent a new kind of freedom. Both of these examples highlight how freedom is still possible,

however limited by social or economic factors. As regards "song," the second word of the title, Khuku's sectarianism is countered by her interest in music. Her cultural heritage, I argued above, would be severely limited without its diversity. It is through her singing that she is most free to enjoy her "stock of songs," the Indian cultural repertoire. Drawing on the classical Indian music form of a raag, which is often classified according to time of day or season, such as "afternoon raag," we can consider "freedom" as the denominator for the song.[28] Thus, *Freedom Song* is a lyric 'sung' in a time of freedom, regardless of whether or not that freedom has materialized as imagined.

Conclusion

In *Freedom Song* Amit Chaudhuri describes a family intertwined with Calcutta. Through focusing on different levels in the production of locality, I have shown how the areas of the domestic, the streets, and the city are interconnected in a rhizomatic manner, and how the neighborhoods are conditioned by sweeping changes in the ideoscape through the Hindutva discourse and in the financescape through the prospect of liberalization. There is a sense of displacement, as the characters negotiate their roles and places within the city, and references to the past are made to explain the present. While there are few references to the future – symptomatic of the city's condition of decay and stagnation – a continuance is implied through the marriage of Bhaskar and Sandhya.

On the domestic level, different homes represent different perceptions of permanence or stability. While Mini fears losing her home, and Khuku's is "a cave of wonder," Bhaskar's home is invoked as a safe container for the family. The house is a memento, or site of memory, in its own right. The streets literally connect the homes with the city, and it is on the street level that Chaudhuri primarily focuses on issues of visibility/invisibility, coupled with sight/insight, and the lack thereof. On the city-level, the changes in the ideoscape and the financescape are positioned as conditioning the neighborhood. While Hindutva seems to offer an easy answer to Mini's and Khuku's annoyance over the azaan, it similarly impoverishes the cultural heritage and limits the cultural capital. Liberalization both allows for new kinds of investments and new ways in which to exert agency, yet it is also perceived as possibly threatening the futures of the businesses.

Chaudhuri claims to write "against" the central trope of Partition ("Alaap" 184), but the novel shows rather what effects the Partition, or for that matter the demolition of the Babri Masjid, have on the family members in their attempts to negotiate past and

[28] Ganapathy-Doré explores *Freedom Song* as formed as a raag in "A Dawnlight Raag".

present. The perspective is domestic rather than national, focusing on the everyday rather than giving primacy to the grand events themselves. This altered perspective plays out not only in the homes but also on the streets and on the city-level. The politically significant events, the rehearsals of political plays or the making of graffiti, are continuously interrupted by ordinary occurrences, such as breaks for tea and having a smoke. The ongoing liberalization of the economy is also focalized through the characters' engagement, whether Bhola and Bhaskar's worries or Shiv's embrace of liberalization. Chaudhuri also brings the discourse of sectarianism and communalism down to the level of how it is enacted in the everyday. His focus is not on the victims of sectarianism, but on its everyday perpetrators. Yet through the discrepancy between Khuku's expressed sectarian sentiments and the musical heritage she values, the novel problematizes sectarianism by showing how it reduces cultural richness.

Freedom Song foregrounds the value of cultural capital, expressed both in Khuku's repertoire and in Bhaskar's street performances. The epiphanic moment in Bhaskar's childhood when he realized that "We are Bengalis!" is acted out through participation in cultural and political acts. Thus, although the changes in both ideo- and financescapes are difficult to comprehend, Bhaskar participates in the production of locality by engaging with these new contexts. Different places also evoke different senses of locality. The city provides contexts on a macro level, and engages Bhaskar and the other party members in either propagating the communist agenda or contesting liberalization. Thus, the city is dynamic and changing. In contrast to the changing city, Bhaskar's home is a point of stability. While the house itself indeed has gone through changes in its capacity of locality, it is rather portrayed as needing protection to remain a shelter for the family. The locality of the home is thus rendered as more fragile, whereas the city and its streets seem more open for change. An example is Bhaskar's involvement with street theater and spreading a political message, which is contrasted by his blindness at home.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored three Indian cities as described and created in the novels *In Times of Siege*, *Love and Longing in Bombay*, and *Freedom Song*, and I have done so by applying Arjun Appadurai's anthropological concept of the production of locality to literature. The novels selected have not been studied from the perspective of locality before. While the importance of place is more obvious in *Love and Longing in Bombay*, as indicated by the title, place figures more subtly but no less vitally in *In Times of Siege* and *Freedom Song*. Approaching the novels from the perspective of the production of locality has allowed me to investigate the function of the cities in these texts. Since the production of locality is a work of the imagination, literature lends itself well to insights into how place matters beyond the geographical location. Set in different cities and employing different narrative strategies, the novels respond to the political and social changes of the early 1990s. The changing ideoscape affected all of India, but, like the authors, I have maintained a city-based perspective throughout, employing Appadurai's notion of neighborhoods as sites which both reflect and contest national ideologies. In the course of my analysis, I have also hoped to show that Appadurai's theory of the production of locality can usefully serve as an interpretative approach to future studies of literature and by extension other forms of art.

One of my main points has been to demonstrate that the novels do not merely reflect or map localities, but engage in their production. Although applying an anthropological theory to literary texts is quite different from conducting traditional anthropological field-work, literature nonetheless provides exemplary views of how locality is produced and what cities and neighborhoods may mean. To examine the production of locality, I have approached the neighborhoods on different levels: as domestic or public micro sites (such as a home or a university office), or as the larger units of street and city. The micro sites are central to the narratives, but they are also linked to the surrounding cities through the adjoining streets. Appadurai makes a distinction between neighborhood and locality, which sheds light on the potential discrepancy between a place and the feelings it generates, i.e. its sense of locality. As I have shown, the focus of the novels is frequently on instances where there is friction between neighborhood and imagined locality. The desired city, in the sense of locality, is often distinct from the actual neighborhood. Thus, the focus on locality allows both for an investigation into the meaning of place, as well as a study of how place is produced in literary texts.

By viewing the production of locality "as a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of a situated community" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 189), I have been able to focus on place "as a dimension or value" (*Modernity* 179). While my methodology is anchored in a close reading of the novels, the anthropological approach allows for a wide contextualization, which is needed in order to examine how the novels enact and engage with the flow of Appadurai's "scapes". The scapes, as Appadurai notes, are in a disjunctive relationship and "each of these landscapes is subject to its own constraints and incentives … at the same time as each acts as a constraint and a parameter for movements in the others" (*Modernity* 35). Thus, while all scapes, encompassing the constant flow of people, money, ideas, technology and media, are present, they are not equally visible but are given different emphasis in the novels. I have focused on what I perceive to be the most prominent scapes in the different cities as they are described in the novels. In Githa Hariharan's political locality, the ideoscape dominates the narrative, while Vikram Chandra and Amit Chaudhuri take a less direct approach. In the three novels, Delhi is presented as the center of politics, Bombay as a financial metropolis, and Calcutta as a declining intellectual center. That the localities of the respective cities are envisioned differently is supported by Chaudhuri's statement that "Bombay is about money; Delhi about power; Calcutta is about parents" (*Calcutta* 249). This is not to say that the cities do not share scapes. For example, while Bombay is a financial metropolis, the financescape is also important in Chaudhuri's Calcutta novel. These cities provide contexts for the production of locality but are also themselves products of locality. Chaudhuri's and Hariharan's novels can be contrasted with each other in important ways: the political troubles are in Chaudhuri internalized and perceived as no more disturbing than returning from the market with the wrong kind of fruit, while they fundamentally challenge earlier ideoscapes and provoke an active response in Hariharan's novel.

The discussion of how the respective cities are imagined in the novels can be summed up as follows: Delhi, the nation's capital, is in *In Times of Siege* described as the seat of political power, but other kinds of power also infuse the narrative. The novel finally situates its active center in an individual participating in society, thus linking power to both individual and collective agency. Hariharan's Delhi is in the final analysis not so much a seat of political power as of resistance to recent developments of that power. The novel shows how power permeates the neighborhood through the uses and abuses of history. In such a context dissent may be the only viable option and an active effort to reimagine what it means to be at home in the city. Bombay on its part, is traditionally linked to ideas of diversity and tolerance, but *Love and Longing in Bombay* not only foregrounds this common conception but also chronicles how sectarianism affects the ideology of place. In Chandra's Bombay, a city characterized by reterritorialization largely

a result of its prominence as a financial and industrial capital, stories become a means of identifying with the city. As Chandra observes, "The question is not so much whether we choose to live in Bombay or Mumbai, but what kind of imagined city, or imagined future city people want to construct" ("Greater"). Calcutta, finally, emerges as a city depleted of the younger generation caught in a limbo between the past and the future, a stagnant city where families and businesses dwindle, but also a city that nurtures and shelters both the protagonist and his prospective bride, turning their union into a sign of continuation. *Freedom Song* enacts how cemented sectarian ideas threaten the cultural capital, seemingly unbeknownst to those who cherish it the most. The protagonist's involvement in politics and street theater is both an escape from the everyday mundane for personal enjoyment, and simultaneously a participation in the everyday production of locality. While the ideoscape and financescape affect the perception of locality, the protagonist engages in both politics and business in the hope of a possible renewal of the city.

I have expanded on Appadurai's concept of locality to address the specific ways in which agency is manifested in the novels. I have in particular focused on historiography, storytelling, and reappropriation as ways of exercising agency for characters that strive to create a sense of belonging and a sense of place. Agency involves being "empowered to act socially" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 181) and since the production of locality is inherently shared by a group, I have extended Appadurai's theoretical framework to better address collective agency. While Appadurai has stated that collective agency was not a primary concern when he wrote *Modernity at Large*, I have shown how this concept is central to all three novels. However, although individual agency is intimately linked to collective agency, the production of locality is not necessarily accomplished in unison: different perceptions of locality as a structure of feeling can be present at the same time. While the characters in the novels usually belong to a majority group and sometimes feel attracted to some form of sectarianism, all are in the final analysis alienated or negatively affected by such excluding mechanisms. In the final analysis, the collective side of agency is what is emphasized in all three novels. In Hariharan's *In Times of Siege*, Shiv thus leaves his regular "safe zone" when he embarks on the path of collective dissent by defending history lessons which are complex and nuanced. Many of the characters in Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* establish a sense of belonging to, or in, the city through their construction of common narratives. Indeed, Chandra inscribes Bombay as a narrative location, and to be members of the city the characters become storytellers. I have discussed how the novel is not only the primary narrator Ranjit's coming-of-age story as he becomes a storyteller in his own right, but also how the novel is a 'coming-of-place' story. Being or becoming a Bombayite is thematized throughout the novel as Ranjit specifically becomes a *Bombay* narrator. Becoming a Bombayite therefore has nothing to

do with birth or ancestry (indeed it is entirely besides the point [*Love* 110]), but with the ability not only to tell stories, but also to be sensitive to the stories of the city. In *Freedom Song*, the focus on theater and reappropriation of space indicates agency and participation. "Where there is pleasure there is agency" (*Modernity* 7), Appadurai has stated, and the correlation between pleasure and agency is explored in the novels. Whereas Shiv in Hariharan's novel eventually gains a sense of self strong enough to shield his values, and the characters in Chandra's novel find meaning and pleasure in the city through the diverse narratives they create, in Chaudhuri's novel enjoyment is impossible to separate from political activism, such as Bhaskar's involvement in political theater.

The novels in this study have all explored different angles of the "willingness to live together" (Appadurai, "Minorities" 124). This ever-current issue in today's world, however, is highlighted by stories that display the opposite, namely alienation and estrangement functioning as the antithesis of being involved in the production of locality. Although agency is central to the novels the lack of agency, indicating non-involvement in the production of locality, is no less important. While choosing not to act may be a choice (as discussed in the chapter on *Freedom Song*), the lack of agency primarily arises in the novels when the sectarian ideoscapes dominate and become alienating. Alienation as a result of displacement and disorientation (Appadurai, *Modernity* 58) is thus explored in many of the stories as characters try to negotiate their sense of place and belonging. Being-at-home in Hariharan's power-infused Delhi for Shiv entails something more, or different than merely residing there. When his home feels like exile, the discrepancy between being-at-home and feeling-at-home becomes acute. He not only comes to realize that the ideoscape is changing, but that it directly affects him and his possibility to be and believe in who he is. Similarly, Iqbal in Chandra's Bombay experiences a sense of estrangement caused by an approaching riot. The conflict that posits him and his lover as members of different, and opposite, ethnoscapes is mediated through his perception of the city as "fearsome" (*Love* 219-20). The "willingness to live together" is in Chandra's novel explored through protagonists who strive for a better position in society, be it through changing perceptions of the urban rich, or through the more exposed situation of those marginalized in an increasingly sectarian city. In Chaudhuri's novel, the entire city and life in it comes to a standstill as a result of the increased sectarianism. Perceived as an unnatural situation, it displays what divisions along religious and ethnic lines can entail.

All three novels engage with an eclectic and diverse Hindu heritage which the authors perceive to be constricted by sectarian politics. In *In Times of Siege* the Hindu right is constantly present, encroaching upon the intellectual integrity of Professor Shiv Murthy by creating a political discourse that restricts his freedom of action. In turn, he actively contests the Hindutva notion of a glorious Hindu past by highlighting a past that is more

eclectic and socially accepting. Hariharan agrees with Shiv's (and Basava's) critique of norms that exclude, and challenges the hagiographic image of Basava as a compliant saint. Chandra, on his part, employs the Kamasutra to highlight how some aspects of the Hindu heritage are contested in the present, while Chaudhuri parallels the financial decline of the city with a cultural decline.[1] The concern with and the reaction against the increasingly sectarian ideoscape run through all three novels: Chandra's multi-voiced narrative explicitly foregrounds how Bombay's cosmopolitan nature emerges through its diverse inhabitants and their stories; the only time the militant right is mentioned at all is to show how their limited view of the city is starkly contrasted to the protagonist's sense of belonging. While Chandra celebrates and defends the cultural diversity of Bombay, Hariharan tackles sectarianism head on, and Chaudhuri foregrounds how sectarian views may be expressed by characters who simultaneously cherish a culturally multivalent heritage.

In order to explore how the novels engage with the past, I have also investigated to role of haunting, drawing on Avery Gordon's work. Haunting, the forceful reminder of issues of the past that will not stay buried, is a social phenomenon, a something-to-be-done that can be connected to Appadurai's explorations of the capacity to aspire. While embedded in the past and the present, haunting as a something-to-be-done is primarily concerned with the future, as is the capacity to aspire. I particularly focused on haunting in Hariharan's *In Times of Siege*, where it causes an interruption of the everyday. I argued that haunting arises in the novel not only from the past, but also from the present. Hariharan's protagonist navigates through the past to make sense of the present, which will (ideally) provide a better future. Although Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay* opens with a ghost story, haunting has different connotations in this novel. Its ghost is individual rather than collective, and facing the ghost enables a homecoming for the protagonist that situates the story and the rest of the novel in Bombay. In Chaudhuri's *Freedom Song* the past lingers through mementos rather than through hauntings in a rapidly changing city where memories, both personal and cultural, become increasingly important. Instead of dealing with the ghosts of the past, Chaudhuri describes youth as an "apparition" in the ageing city (*Freedom* 150).

In addition to my exploration of agency, alienation and haunting, I have also engaged with the novels' specific narrative strategies. The three novels are constructed quite differently from each other but share the avoidance of a single, traditional story line. Hariharan's narrative is frequently interrupted by inserted newspaper articles, letters to the editor, or hate mail. The function of these alternative genres and text types is to show

[1] And argues elsewhere that Hinduism as we know it is being altered ("Thoughts" 20).

how Shiv's metaphorical bubble is bursting, exposing him to the surrounding city and the larger world. Chandra's novel consists of separate stories, but this narrative strategy does not lead to fragmentation but puts the focus on the frame narrative and on the city as being constituted by stories. Chaudhuri in turn uses fragments of the everyday: rumors, memories, and photographs.

While my focus has been on the cities in the novels, the issue of what it means for the characters to belong in and to their respective cities has ramifications for India as a nation. In an interview, Chandra discusses the connection between Bombay and the nation:

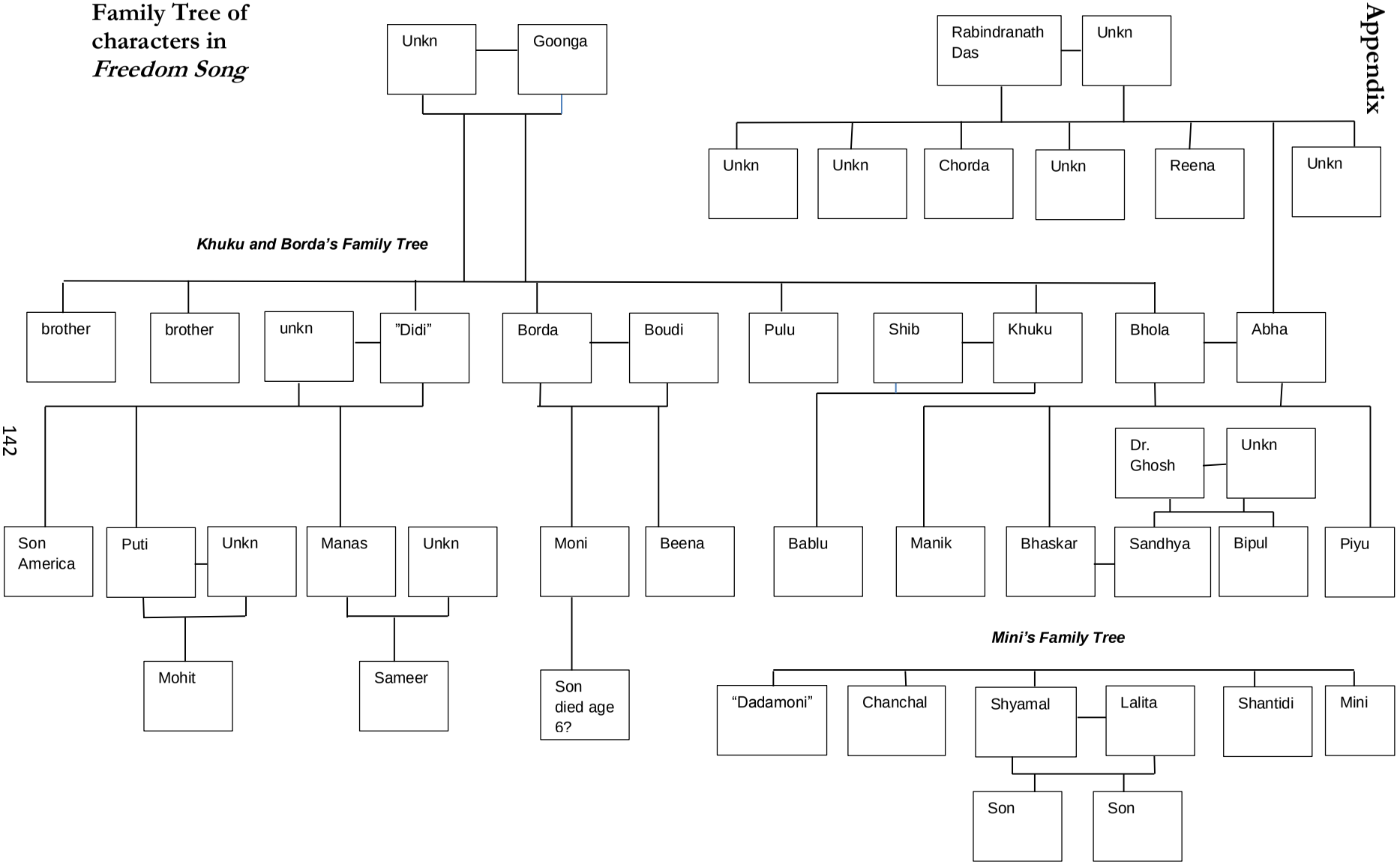
> I think Bombay is still an imaginative location; there's still this image of the dream, of coming to Bombay a nobody and becoming a star. But there's also a corresponding hopelessness about what the city's become and where it's going. Everyone's acutely aware of the creaking infrastructure and social breakdown. [P]eople talk about how bad the city is and how much worse it's going to get, yet there's still a strong attachment to the place. I think maybe in a larger sense, it also points the way to something that happens on a nationwide scale. (Interview by Chambers 47)

The nationwide scale is made visible in the novels through the timespan of the settings, from 1992 to 2000, and through the ways in which the authors have responded to the Hindutva campaign and the tumult caused by the demolition of the Ayodhya mosque, explicitly referred to in two of the novels and alluded to in the third. None of the authors see the contemporary militant right as an isolated phenomenon, but they frequently connect it to the Partition. Chaudhuri has claimed that the Partition is a trope he is writing "against," yet, as Chandra notes, the effects of the Partition "still roll on in our lives" (interview by Jai Arjun Singh). The Partition is one aspect of the past that comes up in all three novels. The negotiations of place and belonging in the novels' present time are often conducted through associations with this previous troubled time. By connecting the present upheavals with those of the Partition, the authors highlight its reverberating effects. The Partition and the secular achievements and strivings of Nehru have become a grand narrative, as Appadurai notes in "In My Father's Nation" (111). In fact, it is the perceived failure of the secular project that drives Shiv's father to despair, and which inspires Shiv to work towards its continuation. The novels are thus not just about the imaginaries of three different cities, but also about the imaginary of India. Hariharan traces the concept of tolerance back to the medieval times of the Shaivite Bhakti movement and the poet-reformer Basava. The past, whether of the medieval period, of

the Bengal Renaissance, or of the Partition, is frequently recalled in order to understand and explain the present. It seems that the authors are highlighting how previous troubles, riots and separatism have been negotiated, with the implication that the same kinds of negotiations are necessary again. Refraining from seeing the past as a golden age, they instead inscribe the legacy of the past as a trope in the present.

I began this thesis with a line from Chandra's *Love and Longing in Bombay*: "I am walking in my city" (267). The novels do not provide maps of the characters' movements, but it is clear that the walking which Ranjit embarks on at the end of Chandra's novel is a consequence of his perception of the city as a locality, which enables hearing the city's dreams and the search for "life itself". For de Certeau walking is a way of constructing the city as pedestrians can subvert and appropriate the urban space through alternative paths: a "*migrational*, or metaphorical, city … slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city" (*Practice* 93). The point I have wished to make is that the agency represented by the characters' walking stems from being participants in the production of locality. Thus, I see the intentional walks in the novels as the result of having become "empowered to act socially" (Appadurai, *Modernity* 181). The constant flow between neighborhoods and locality as context-providing and context-generating also has a bearing on the walking: through their active walking, the characters feed back into the production of locality. In *In Times of Siege*, Shiv postpones a meeting at the university in order to take a walk that manifests both dissent from and participation with his city. The alienation he had earlier felt was not only a result of the increasingly sectarian ideology, but also of his lack of interaction with the city. In the end, his neighborhood may still feel alienating, but he no longer lives in exile since he has become part of a larger network where his individual agency is linked to a collective something-to-be-done. Whereas *In Times of Siege* and *Love and Longing in Bombay* both end with a walk, *Freedom Song*, a novel in which walking is intrinsic to the narrative, ends with a planned trip. Just as movement and the comings and goings of the rhizomatic family have been intrinsic to the narrative, so the end indicates that it will continue. The city may change in the meantime, but the planned trip and Bhaskar's new marriage are both indicators of continuance. By making and maintaining the value and feelings of a designated place, the characters all attempt to produce a better locality.

Family Tree of characters in *Freedom Song*



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“I am walking in my city”

At the center of this study are three Indian novels with an urban setting and dealing with political and social issues of the 1990s: Githa Hariharan’s *In Times of Siege* (2003), Vikram Chandra’s *Love and Longing in Bombay* (1997), and Amit Chaudhuri’s *Freedom Song* (1998). The Delhi of *In Times of Siege* is portrayed as a city infused with power but also haunted by a troubled past. The Bombay of *Love and Longing in Bombay* is primarily imagined as a narrative locality in which storytelling is central. The Calcutta of *Freedom Song* is explored through a resident family, blurring the distinctions between the home and the city. The three novels all negotiate an increasingly sectarian environment.

The three cities of the novels are explored through the framework of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai’s concept of the production of locality, which sees place as a value and a dimension of social life. By approaching the cities through locality, it is possible to discern how the authors construct place as meaningful. This study thus extends the anthropological concept of locality into literature, addressing the specific strategies through which the authors portray and create their respective cities. Key concepts explored in the novels include agency, haunting, storytelling, and memory.

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