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The Rhetoric of Return

Diasporic Homecoming and the New Indian City

“We set out, [my father] and my mother and I, for Karol Bagh. ‘15/64 Western Extension Area, Ajmal Khan Road,’ he chanted momentarily in the back of the car. We drove through the wide, fluid streets of the bureaucratic area...the entire area was bursting at the seams: shops and warehouses extended out onto the streets, apartments had grown upwards and outwards into every possible gap, and parked cars filled in the rest. We missed our turn and had to do a U-turn, a mistake that cost us half an hour... My father became increasingly upset as we penetrated deeper and deeper into the end-of-day clamour. ‘Karol Bagh used to be a *bagh*,’ he said, ‘a *garden*. I used to ride my bike on these streets. What happened?’”—Rana Dasgupta¹

“Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets.”—Jane Jacobs²

In 2000, the novelist Rana Dasgupta moved from New York to Delhi in pursuit of a woman he loved. His father had left India in 1962, determined never to return, and Dasgupta’s decision to “[emulate], contrariwise” that earlier act of migration surprised his parents. It needn’t have. Although Dasgupta was, on one level, following his heart, his movements were part of a broader phenomenon of diasporic homecoming to what is now known, in popular parlance, as “New India.” With the publication of *Capital: The Eruption of Delhi* (2014), Dasgupta became the latest writer

Opposite: Model by Tina Lee and Wesley Harkonen from *Dense Ecologies / City and Bay*.

to participate in the zeitgeist of return as the precondition of writing a nonfiction account of globalizing urban India.

The past decade has seen a flood of nonfiction books on New India's cities, starting with Suketu Mehta's *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (2004) and culminating in three series commissioned by major Indian publishers: Penguin India's ten city-focused anthologies, Aleph Book Company's half-dozen city "biographies," and OUP India's two-volume *The Oxford Anthology of the Modern Indian City* (2013).³ The city-books are part of a larger narrative movement identified by Manu Goswami as a "neoliberal genre of emergence," comprised, on the one hand, of texts like Edward Luce's *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India* (2006), which triumphantly dates the arrival of New India to the liberalizing economic reforms of 1991, and, on the other hand, more critical accounts of the counterfactual narrative of the rise like Siddhartha Deb's *The Beautiful and the Damned: A Portrait of the New India* (2012).⁴ If one were to club together the books on India's global arrival, critiques of New India, and works on the modern Indian city (this footed list being one, incomplete attempt⁵), a striking commonality emerges: the majority of the authors are, or have at one time been, Non-Resident Indians living in diaspora, and their respective "returns" to India serve as occasion for the writing of their nonfiction works.⁶ By that same token, the rhetoric of India's rise—which they both produce and respond to—provides the discursive scaffolding for the twinning of the author's reterritorializing journey and New India's emergence.

Despite being a late entrant into the genre, Dasgupta's *Capital* exemplifies its conventions: it is a memoir of return to an emerging nation, and an account of living in India at the dawn of its incarnation as "new." It interweaves the author's personal journey with that of his interview subjects and the trajectory of globalizing India, a triangulation

that nearly every text of the genre strives to approximate. However, as a city-book specifically, and not just an account of national myth-making in New India, *Capital* is marked by the author's attempt to cognitively map, inhabit, and moor himself in the material structures and conditions of Delhi's urban space. It testifies to the diasporic returnee's struggles to find his way in, and assert belonging to, a city that has, in recent years, become unrecognizable, even to those who "never left"⁷ India. A privileged subject in class and caste terms, the returnee must nevertheless reconcile his estrangement from an India that has, in the throes of its own global reimagining, thrown up new obstacles to its inhabitation. Dasgupta's outing with his father in Karol Bagh, described in the epigraph, is thus illustrative of the problems and possibilities of diasporic homecoming more generally: return fulfills what is, in some cases, a lifelong desire to recover, revisit, and re-inhabit the past, and yet, it is a moving horizon, an impossible aspiration, which, when attempted, never entirely lives up to its promise.

I want to flag the temporal dimensions of diasporic recovery (the goal being the re-inhabitation of the past, and not the nation as such), for it suggests one significant feature of the present-day reterritorialization of India: the returnee seeks to fulfill or assuage a temporal longing for the past through the spatial operation of relocating (back) to India, and the writing that ensues emerges from this time-space conflation. In this way, the diasporic subject can be understood as a type of pilgrim, one whose search for the irrecoverable past "is pursued in terms of the most material details...where Christ died, where the relics are or the whole water flows,"⁸ or, in this case, where he himself was born (the majority of return-writers are male, an issue to which I will return). A pilgrim is one who journeys, a wanderer who "travels from place to place" and is characterized by a kind of constitutive rootlessness. The pilgrim is marked, on the one hand, by a temporal relation to space:

the pilgrim is neither “here” nor “there” for long but instead moves in time. On the other hand, a pilgrim is someone who makes a directed, voluntaristic journey to a “sacred place as an act of religious devotion.”⁹ In this definition, it is place that is privileged—the pilgrim is headed somewhere in particular, because of what that place has meant to others in the past, what it means now, and what it will mean in the future.

This double valence of the pilgrim—as one both aimless and purposeful, subject to chance and yet goal-oriented—dovetails with an account of the diasporic subject as one who moves both volitionally and despite himself. Return to India fulfills what is, in many cases, an unconscious yearning; the diasporic subject is drawn to the Indian city by what can only be grasped as a force outside himself, an otherworldly calling, what the novelist Amit Chaudhuri calls, in *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (2013), an “atavistic concern.”¹⁰ Certainly, one aspect of the movement in question is the diasporic subject’s capitalization on the facts of inherited national belonging, a kind of expedient taking up of the “right of return.” But I also read the city-books as a literature of reckoning, a narrative performance of reterritorialization as an act of homage and respect, even reverence. To this end, return might be understood as a form of profane pilgrimage to the unholy sites of New India’s increasingly unequal and stratified cities, a pilgrimage undergirded by the diasporic subject’s desire to participate in a world-historical moment that both precedes and exceeds the self.

Scholars writing on hyphenated ethnic and post-national subjectivities have long questioned the nature of the connection to what happened “before the break,” whether that break is construed as emigration from one’s native country or birth in a foreign land. In the early 1990s, Arjun Appadurai described the emerging globalized world as one of displacement, deterritorialization, repatriation, asylum, and exile—a world marked specifically by non-territorial forms of

allegiance.¹¹ Writing in the same moment, James Clifford insisted that diaspora identities are formed *outside* of and beyond continuous space-time.¹² The diasporic returnee's allegiance, by contrast, is specifically territorial, material, sensual, corporeal; it is only by physically returning to India, by standing on Indian soil and breathing Indian air, by materially replanting his roots, that he can express his particular affiliations and attachments.

One familiar cliché about India is that it is an exotic medium through which searching Westerners, from E.M. Forster's Adela Quested in *A Passage to India* (1924) to the aged pensioners of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2012), have sought to "find themselves." This cliché has, of course, been grounded in the fact that India is, as Diana L. Eck has shown, "a sacred geography," "a great network of pilgrimage places" that "anchor millions of people in the imagined landscape" of the country.¹³ The diasporic returnee-pilgrim can be distinguished from India's "Adela Questeds" and its Hindu devotees by his intimate, biographical, blood-born connection to the nation in question and by a combination of motivating filial piety and economic expedience that trumps the desire for spiritual realization.

At the close of the 20th century, significant numbers of diasporic Indians went "home to bootstrap the economy and reestablish cultural roots," in response to the perception of both American economic decline and Asia's global rise. In memoirist Shoba Narayan's words, "the East was the new West."¹⁴ In a philosophical register, we might say that the Hegelian world spirit had finally moved on from the United States, and the subject who once emigrated from India now found himself on the wrong side of history. Although imperatives of "return" had always characterized diasporic structures of feeling and modes of living, return now took the form of physical reverse migration.¹⁵ The economy was only half the story in this latest manifestation of what Aihwa Ong has

termed “flexible citizenship,” as a sense of familial duty, broadly defined, undergirded the return journeys of all of those who heard India calling, both those raised in diaspora, like Rana Dasgupta, and those who spent their formative years in India, like Amit Chaudhuri.¹⁶ The operative phrase here is “India calling.” For, unlike an expatriate of a different era, James Baldwin, whose move to France from New York in 1948 “was a matter of getting out of America,” these returnees were motivated by a desire to connect to the nation of their “real roots.”¹⁷

Each work of return-writing attempts to give an account of the lived contradictions of urban India. Dasgupta’s *Capital* details the eruption of money in Delhi—more “black” than “white,” to use the colloquial distinction between illegal and legal—that has expanded existing hierarchies and deepened segregation, neither creating jobs nor decreasing poverty, but inaugurating new structures of prejudice and inequality in the city. Chaudhuri’s *Calcutta* tracks the rise of a “new breed” of Indians that feels most at home “in the mall,” and the transformation of his favorite childhood haunts into “bright retail site[s] that [symbolize] the liberalized Indian’s lack of interest in any one thing.”¹⁸ Both books can be read as critiques of urban India, and yet each is a striking testament to the fact that the Indian city nevertheless continues to function as a locus of attachment for the reterritorializing diasporic subject. This essay explores this generative internal contradiction—the simultaneous lure and repulsion of a globalizing home—which I am calling the rhetoric of return.

Writing Return

Pilgrimage, in Rebecca Solnit’s words, is a practice “almost universally embedded in human culture.”¹⁹ Likewise, the rhetoric of return extends beyond the Indian case and beyond the nonfiction form. For example, Han Ong’s *The Disinherited* (2005) centers on Filipino-American

Roger Caracera's return to Manila to bury his father. Caracera has "no overwhelming positive feeling about America" and yet chafes against the "life of automaton guilt and obedience" he observes in the Philippines.²⁰ When Jamal returns to his father's home in Pakistan, in Hanif Kureishi's *Something to Tell You* (2008), he feels like he has "a name and a place" for the first time, despite also being "too alien; there was no way we could fit in."²¹ In *Every Day is for the Thief* (2007), Teju Cole's narrator confronts the fact that he has "returned [to Lagos] a stranger."²² Cole's own photographs of the city are presented as documentation of his narrator's return-trip to Nigeria from New York City, inviting a reading of the novel as veiled autobiography.

The shock-of-arrival-upon-return has also been thematized before in the Indian Anglophone novel; for example, in Amit Chaudhuri's *A New World* (2000), the Kolkata streets leave Jayojit Chatterjee, recently returned from Claremont, Iowa, feeling "conspicuous," "strange and doubtful," "assailed."²³ In Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2005), American-born Piyali Roy's affected posture on a train platform in Dhakuria reveals that she is "not Indian, except by descent."²⁴ The experience of being unmoored in urban India has found its fullest expression in recent narrative nonfictions like *Capital* and *Calcutta*, which offer autobiographical narratives alongside macrohistorical ones. This allegorical twinning, through which diasporic reterritorialization comes to figure India's global rise, brings to the fore what sociologist Richard Sennett has called "the dilemma of sheer, durable attachment to the city."²⁵ If one of New India's promises to its diaspora is that its cities are now legibly "global"—i.e., spaces of efficient capital accumulation, which are hospitable to a range of cosmopolitan performances—then, certainly, a poignant test of that globality is whether or not the diasporic subject in the West, once referred to as a "brain-drainer," is able to return and make himself at home in the Indian city.²⁶

To this end, the returnee is uniquely positioned to testify to the world that the Indian city is in the throes of what Dasgupta calls “eruption.” As an ambassador and translator of both East and West, with attachments in and to more than one culture, he is essential to the project of New Indian national and civilizational imagining. On the other hand, the returnee’s testimony is overdetermined by his idiosyncratic experience of time’s passing, his individual perception of change. To put a finer point on it, it is no coincidence that the India-returned writer finds an India transformed relative to the country he, or his parents, once left—in most cases, for higher education in the United States or the UK: to return to a place is, by definition, to encounter it anew, and to reencounter oneself in the process. Like the pilgrim, the diasporic returnee enacts a journey that has been taken before and will be taken again; it is not his alone, not a unique trajectory. Yet, the desired outcome of return—both for the returnee and for his India—is singular.

The new Indian city can thus be said to emerge from the equation of the diasporic returnee’s re-encounter with home—the newness he perceives in the flyover where there was once a cricket pitch, the newness he perceives in the gray hairs of his aging parents—and the nation’s present relationship to its history and the world. This is a narrative strategy and conflation we have seen before, as the city-books blend memoir, reportage, extended biographical portraits, and amateur ethnography, in the tradition of V.S. Naipaul’s travelogues, specifically his India trilogy.²⁷ In *An Area of Darkness: A Discovery of India* (1964), *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1976), and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990), Naipaul famously grappled with his own ambivalent relation to India (“[India] isn’t my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it...I am at once too close and too far”²⁸) while offering a trenchant diagnosis of India’s ill-fated mimicry

of Western modernity. The trilogy cemented Naipaul's reputation as a formidable critic, but it also earned him significant enmity in India and from his fellow diasporic writers who chafed against his depiction of India as a nation of flagrant roadside defecators, his unsparing account of the tenacity of the caste system, his diagnosis of the Indian penchant for symbolism over action, and the evaluation of what he saw as the spectacular failure of Gandhi's project of social reform.

In his study of Naipaul's nonfictions, Rob Nixon argues that the novelist's turn to travel writing, broadly defined, enabled him to adopt and exploit a "semiethnographic, distanced, analytic mode" of writing, on the one hand, and "an autobiographical, subjective, emotionally entangled" mode, on the other.²⁹ The Naipaul travelogue effected at once a critically disinterested posture toward the world from which its author was always already an exiled "outsider" (in his own self-description), as well as an intimate, implicated relation to the post-colonial societies in which he traveled as an "insider." Nixon reads this dual posture as having duped Anglo-American critics, who eagerly embraced Naipaul as an authority on the non-West, despite his selective and "suspect" adaptation of "para-ethnographic" methods in the imperial (and imperious) tradition of Victorian travel writing: "A narrative of dislocation ultimately bolsters the myth of [Naipaul's] detachment."³⁰

In contrast to Naipaul's trilogy, the city-books stake their claims to analytic purchase on their authors' locatedness, not dislocation; they offer avowal of attachment to India, as opposed to exilic detachment. Naipaul returned to India multiple times—he even returned to his grandfather's village—but he never entertained the idea of staying. The current wave of return-writing pivots on each author's commitment to stay and make a life in urban India. Yet, to return to the thwarted Karol Bagh quest, each book is suffused with the diasporic ambivalence that Naipaul first memorably charted. Dasgupta experiences Delhi

as “a segregated city” entirely lacking “democratic spaces,” in which the sidewalks are “a hoax,” not only because he has not yet learned to navigate the city, but also because the city itself, in its planning and configuration, produces hierarchies. Delhi’s failure, he senses, is one of imagination, owing to having had its “values destroyed”³¹ repeatedly throughout history, just as, for Naipaul, India’s primary ill was its “intellectual depletion,” owing to the “established destitution” of a nation “often invaded, conquered, plundered.”³² Despite this, Dasgupta decides to stay and raise his daughter in Delhi, a city with which he has “[fallen] in hate.”³³ Chaudhuri’s move to Calcutta, a city which he doesn’t “actually *like*,”³⁴ implicates his wife and daughter as well; he returns with his family in 1999 because he’s “had enough of England....enough of Britain under Blair.”³⁵

Much has been written about the motivations for diasporic return. How are we to understand the returnee’s decision *to stay* (in a unlikely city, no less)? I am interested in the affective labor performed by the returnee upon going back to India, his effort to connect and assert belonging to an alienating and alienated city. I want to suggest that it is, in fact, the very illegibility and inhospitality of the New Indian city that draws him in. Like Frantz Fanon’s Negro of the Antilles, who returns from France “talk[ing] like a white man,” the diasporic returnee adopts “a critical attitude” toward his countrymen—not because they have changed while he remains himself, not because he moved on while they were left behind, but because the truth lies somewhere in between.³⁶

After returning to Calcutta, the city of his birth, Chaudhuri swiftly realized that he “didn’t really ‘belong’” to the city: “[N]ot having grown up or been educated here, I possessed neither the credentials nor the friends to pass for an authentic member of the community.”³⁷ Chaudhuri’s concern with authenticity allows us to read *Calcutta* as an account of the demand placed on Indian-origin returnees that they be legible to the

communities to which they return. By contrast, non-Indian residents of India do not experience the demand to be “authentic” nationals in the same way; nor, for that matter, does an India-born, British citizen like Salman Rushdie have to assert his American bonafides in order to live in the United States. Living in France, Baldwin may have been “everywhere confronted with the question of his identity,”³⁸ but it was his *American* identity at stake; he did not need to be—indeed, he would and could never be—an authentic Frenchman to find himself at home in Paris.

Could it be that the returnee internalizes the obstacles thrown up by the city—obstacles to both visualization and inhabitation—as an invitation to assert an urban ethic that is lacking in New India, but which exists in the India to which he aspires to belong? As a form of pilgrimage, diasporic return is a “journey...radiant with hope,”³⁹ hope that return to India will have spiritual and material benefits, and hope that the clear-eyed apprehension of India’s ills might be able to effect its change. As David Harvey has shown, the “sociospatial forms” of modern cities are organized so as to enable the conditions for capitalist profit making. A robust critique of New India’s cities requires the recognition of the ways in which built environments serve the interests of capital by design, but what are the enabling conditions of such recognition? Must one feel at home in the city in order to really “see” it? In the next two sections, I read passages from Dasgupta’s *Capital* and Chaudhuri’s *Calcutta* in order to chart a course from the returnee’s lament (“I used to ride my bike on these streets...What happened?”) to the returnee’s resolve (“What can we do?”). Each section deploys a different definition of the city: first, as a space of locomotion; second, as a space of estranged interlocution. Walking and relational engagement concretize my figuration of diasporic return to India as a form of pilgrimage, for, in traversing the reterritorialized nation and meeting the eyes on its

streets, the returnee, like the pilgrim, pursues the intangible “in terms of the most material details” of the city.

Delhi: A City Without Sidewalks

“The first thing one notices [in Delhi],” Dasgupta writes, “is that little allowance is made for walking.” He continues:

Middle-class newcomers from other cities sometimes try to walk here, but...they discover for themselves that Delhi’s sidewalks, where they exist, are a hoax...they have found themselves clambering over great piles of rubble, throwing bricks ahead of themselves on which to step through lakes of stagnant water, running madly across eight lanes of a highway—and they have quickly decided to buy themselves a car.⁴⁰

Throughout *Capital*, Dasgupta reflects on the fact that Delhi frustrates the city-dweller’s attempt to both visualize and traverse it. There are “no truly democratic spaces” in the “segregated city”: the rich live in gated enclaves, and the only place to view the city in its entirety is from the vantage of a car on the congested roads.⁴¹ In the wealthiest areas of the city, where land values have skyrocketed, streets have become like “building site[s]...construction powders the tongue [and the] air screams with the roar of masonry saws on Italian marble.”⁴²

One way to inhabit a city is to walk it, and being at home in the city means, in Jane Jacobs’ account, being at home on the city streets. To call a city one’s own is, in part, to possess an intimate knowledge of it, an intimacy born of being able to navigate a path through the city without having to consult a map or local. Yet walking is not a simple or transparent activity: it is both locating and dislocating, process- and goal-oriented, familiarizing and estranging. In his reading of Amit

Chaudhuri's novels, Saikat Majumdar emphasizes that "walking in the city" ("urban *flânerie*," to use the language of high modernism) enables "a concrete re-mooring within the city's environment," on the one hand, and establishes the diasporic subject's "dislocation within it,"⁴³ on the other. This is because walking is not only about learning and establishing a place; it is also, in Michel de Certeau's words, about the "lack" of a place: "[Walking] is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper."⁴⁴ De Certeau's account speaks equally to the processual nature of pilgrimage, a mode of walking that is at once a form of embodied work, labor, and physical privation, and a quest for the spiritual, otherworldly, and "intangible."⁴⁵

Walking, like pilgrimage, is a culturally inflected and highly gendered practice. In her work on the "geography of affect" in Delhi, Melissa Butcher describes Delhi's public spaces as "patriarchal": "there is no escaping the predominance of the male body."⁴⁶ Her female informants report feeling anger, irritation, frustration and fear when navigating the streets in certain Delhi communities, especially the unplanned and less affluent parts of the city. The 2012 gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh Pandey (known as Nirbhaya) in Munirka, South Delhi, has only heightened consciousness of the visibility and vulnerability of women in the city, many of whom experience the streets as spaces of potential danger, crowds as threatening menaces, and stranger-men as probable assailants. Of course, gender disparities in the ability to traverse the city streets extend beyond the Indian context. Rebecca Solnit observes in her history of walking that "women have routinely been punished and intimidated for attempting that most simple of freedoms, taking a walk, because their walking and indeed their very beings have been construed as inevitably, continually sexual."⁴⁷

The fact that women do not walk in the city with the same freedom as their male counterparts is one reason why the majority of return-

writers in the emergence genre are men. How many diaspora-returned Indian women of the writing classes, with elderly parents waiting at home with dinner, can hang out in Bara Tooti Chowk labor market with construction workers and rickshaw pullers, as Aman Sethi does in *A Free Man* (2012), or “go slumming” in Annawadi like American journalist Katherine Boo, author of *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* (2012)? Then, there is the irreducible question of class: not only who *has* to walk (while others drive), but who can walk *where*? Who has access to which road, what colony, and when? In *Perpetual City: A Short Biography of Delhi* (2013), Malvika Singh describes the Delhi of her youth as one in which “a jaunt through the labyrinthine lanes of the Old City at night would last most of the night...A late dinner at Karim’s...a walk through the gallis selling old books, posters and other memorabilia...We would wander up to the mosque, sit on the steps and look out at the crenellated walls of the Red Fort...[that was] our open-to-the-sky ‘nightclub.’”⁴⁸ Singh, like Jacobs, has her most formative urban experiences while walking, but her account is one of unusual privilege. She is a member of the “First Family of New Delhi,” someone who takes lunch with the Prime Minister and who walks about the city with her driver tailing closely behind.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau elaborates a “rhetoric of walking,”⁴⁹ in which the pedestrian’s steps on the city streets are as much about the search for meaning as the articulation of it. Just as reading is a dynamic process of engagement with the written text, walking might be understood as a form of “directed creation”⁵⁰ of the city. De Certeau shows that pedestrians have three discrete effects on the city: first, the pedestrian walks within “the constructed order” of the city, thus validating and actualizing how it has been planned; second, the practices of the pedestrian cannot be anticipated, as he is free to walk at

whatever pace and in whichever improvised direction (or clamber over rubble or throw bricks), thus creating a new possible city, an impromptu plan for the city's organization; and finally, insofar as the pedestrian has his own sense of where he cannot or will not go—which neighborhoods appear unsafe, which streets bring back bad memories—he increases the range of possible “prohibitions” in the city.⁵¹ De Certeau analogizes this triplicate relation of walking to the urban system to “what the speech act is to language”: “a space of enunciation,” of appropriation, acting out, and differential relation between the pedestrian-writer and the city-text.⁵²

The inability to walk in the city bars the city-dweller from playing a pedestrian role that is, by turns, collaborative, co-creative, and disruptive. The inability to walk in Delhi means an inability to fully apprehend and inhabit it. It also means not being able to participate in its creation by improvising the city through a differential relation to its streets, never mind accruing the benefits of pilgrimage, in which walking is the requisite “work” for eventual spiritual reward.⁵³ For Dasgupta, this means that Delhi, the second-most populous urban area in the world, does not actually feel like a city: “There is nothing urban about this place, I think. No metropolitan ethos emerges from all these multitudes who live together.”⁵⁴ By metropolitan ethos, Dasgupta is referring to the kind of urban sociality described by Jacobs, in which the interaction of city-dwellers on the streets could be likened to “an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole.”⁵⁵ To walk in the city is to both animate and be animated by it, to participate in an organic and unorganized movement of individuals who belong to both themselves and to each other.

Ironically, the only place where Dasgupta finds anything approaching a “metropolitan ethos” is Bhalswa Colony, a settlement

north of Delhi that sits aside a noxious garbage dump. Bhalswa is “a place of unwanted lives, of people who can find almost no connection to the economic boom that surrounds them.”⁵⁶ There is no drinking water, chemicals from the dump have poisoned the soil, and there is no infrastructure to speak of, and yet Dasgupta is struck by the seeming abundance of space, the “almost pastoral openness to the landscape.”⁵⁷ As he walks through Bhalswa with the settlement’s self-appointed community organizer, Meenakshi, he reflects on the comparable urbanity of the lives of the slumdweller:

We enter the streets of the settlement, which are strikingly well-made compared to the streets of rich south Delhi neighborhoods. The surface is brick, with gentle camber. Bright yellow and blue washing is hung across the street; bicycles are parked in front of the houses. Inside, people are making household brooms: in one house they are cutting bristles, in another they are making the handles. There is a smell of frying garlic.⁵⁸

The slumdweller, to whom Delhi officials have entirely abdicated responsibility, serve as “their own builders, town planners and politicians.”⁵⁹ They “own themselves,” Dasgupta notes, which is more than can be said for the insecure, status-conscious, and anxiety-ridden Delhi-ites he encounters, who have no attachments to the city, feel no responsibility to their fellow city-dwellers, and exhibit no will to change the status quo. It takes a reterritorializing diasporic subject to grasp what ails New India’s Delhi—the abdication of the urban ethic by the “deterritorialized elite”⁶⁰—and recognize its corrective in those outcast by the city.

Calcutta: “These are our citizens”

If the diasporic subject is by definition one who is “‘not-here’ to stay,”⁶¹ then Amit Chaudhuri, prior to his return to India, was an exemplary

case. In contradistinction to the exilic philosophy of another well-known diasporic writer, Richard Wright (“I have no traditions. I’m free. I have only the future.”⁶²), Chaudhuri kept a proverbial candle lit for Calcutta throughout his time living and studying in England. There, he often experienced “random and involuntary yearning[s]...a desire, like a muted undercurrent, to go to Park Street.”⁶³ Importantly, Chaudhuri’s yearning for Calcutta was not a general yearning for India, but one specific to the city in question. The city-books of the emergence genre are replete with statements about the irreducible singularity of each author’s chosen metropolis (“Kolkata is like no other city that exists,” Indrajit Hazra declares in *Grand Delusions: A Short Biography of Kolkata* [2013]⁶⁴), even as they also gesture outward to the New Indian city’s increasingly legible, shared global form: “What was unfolding in Mumbai was unfolding elsewhere, too,” writes Katherine Boo⁶⁵; “If the city of Delhi is globally interesting,” Dasgupta notes, “[it is because] it is the world’s future.”⁶⁶

Unsurprisingly, then, Chaudhuri’s *Calcutta* reads as the recuperative effort of a returnee who has felt most at home on *this* city’s streets and who walks through Kolkata in search of confirmation that his Calcutta still exists.⁶⁷ Chaudhuri maps aloud the city (“You have Free School Street on one end, Middleton Row, narrower and shorter, on the opposite side, and, at a right angle to these two, Park Street...”⁶⁸), drawing parallels to the urban space he recalls from his youth, and which still seems to him “the ‘real’ Calcutta.”⁶⁹ Despite Chaudhuri’s efforts to be present, the Free School Street that existed a quarter-century ago continually interrupts his thoughts, threatening to conceal from him “the ways in which people belon[g] to the city” *now*.⁷⁰ “I can remember a time when these businesses didn’t exist in this location,” he muses, unable to avoid the pejorative language of the dispossessed: “Ramayan Shah and two other low-level entrepreneurs...have appropriated the terrain here.”⁷¹

Chaudhuri's lamenting tone is misleading, for the very project of *Calcutta* is to see and engage with the likes of Ramayan Shah. In 2007, inspired by conversations with the poet Utpal Kumar Basu, Chaudhuri realized that he had been "studiously ignoring"⁷² the people around him, Kolkata's *nagarik*, or citizen city-dwellers, people like the homeless woman, Khurima, whose street sense ("To be homeless, destitute, and mad meant you were totally defenseless"⁷³) he found inspiring. "*Erai amader nagarik*," Basu told Chaudhuri. "*These* are our citizens."⁷⁴ Chaudhuri set out to contextualize the relation between his move to "a city I no longer admired"⁷⁵ and Khurima's aphoristic wisdom, marveling that he, a diasporic returnee, could in fact participate in and assert his belonging to the narrative public sphere of Khurima's Kolkata.

Richard Sennett's definition of the city is instructive here: a city is "a place where people can learn to live with strangers, to enter into the experiences and interests of unfamiliar lives...[and] to develop a richer, more complex sense of themselves."⁷⁶ Sennett rightly emphasizes that a city is a place of inhabitance; there is no city without city-dwellers, no Calcutta without the *nagarik*. More to the point, the city is a place of *relational* inhabitance; we live in the city with and amongst others. Sennett stresses that those others with whom we live in the city are strangers (as opposed to intimates, friends, or relations), whose "eyes upon the street,"⁷⁷ in Jane Jacobs' words, ensure our safety and well-being. Ideally, our strangerly relations evolve into a generative form of sociality, or urban cosmopolitanism, predicated on the knowledge that each of our actions has consequences for the other, with whom we share space, time, and infrastructure. For Sennett, the threat of capitalism is not only that it homogenizes the city, but also that it "creates a regime of superficial and disengaged relations."⁷⁸

Engaging with the *nagarik* of Kolkata is a challenge for Chaudhuri. As he daily approaches Ramayan Shah's pavement food stall, he reflects:

Earlier, I would have denied this place its existence, would have seen it but shut it out, would have looked upon it as a stubborn aberration while my mind pieced together, image by image, the “real” Free School Street...Now, for the first time, I studied it properly, not for the sake of ethnography, or from a sense of duty, but to experience again the ways in which people belonged to the city I lived in.⁷⁹

I want to propose that the returnee-writer is perfectly positioned to disrupt and re-engage relations in the self-estranged city; as a repatriated exile, the returnee belongs to no social strata in particular (to return to Chaudhuri’s language, he cannot pass for “an authentic member of the community”); thus, he must try equally hard to relate to those at home and those who are homeless. Chaudhuri, because he speaks Bengali, is able to engage in what Simon During terms “eccentric reportage”⁸⁰: he turns up, unannounced, at Shah’s stall every day hoping to catch him, striking up conversations with the ironing man and the pot-scrubber in the meantime.

Calcutta is a self-conscious, meta-textual document of the returnee’s adventures in participant observation. One afternoon on Free School Street, Chaudhuri finds himself in conversation with a young woman, Baby Misra, who asks for money to buy medicine. As he walks with her and her son, Jitinder, to the closest pharmacy, he thinks “there was something else I was supposed to be doing, which I was being kept from...” until he realizes, chastened, that this—engaging with the *nagarik*—is “exactly what I’d set out to do.”⁸¹ Later, he acknowledges getting distracted from an interview because he wants to get a table at the posh Flury’s teashop. Chaudhuri questions a man dicing vegetables on the street about his wages, “since,” he reasons, “sociological rigour is

essential when you're writing of a city."⁸² These monological asides are indicative of the thought process that Chaudhuri, the writer, attributes retrospectively to his reporting self, and it suggests that his project is as much an exploration of his amateur performance of ethnography as it is the writing of the city.

Chaudhuri is ambivalent about his attempt to get to know his fellow city-dwellers. As he moves from pavement stall to a ledge outside Flury's, awkwardly interviewing people of "a different class background,"⁸³ he becomes keenly aware of the precarity and contingency of his own belonging to the city. Even Kolkata's homeless are comparatively more "intimate with the piece of pavement they [possess]."⁸⁴ The confident writer is "undone" by his conversations with the *nagarik*, in Judith Butler's sense of not staying "intact"⁸⁵ in the face of the encounter with the other, and yet this discomfiting, desirous interaction with the citizens of Kolkata is, I want to suggest, the enabling condition of Chaudhuri's text. In his obstinate and even farcical effort to see the city as it is, as opposed to how he remembers it or how he wants it to be, Chaudhuri resists the temptations of "indifference" which broadly characterize life in the global city. He revives, instead, the ethos of "the community of pilgrims," in which people come together in space and time on a shared journey, despite their differing class backgrounds, their "various bodies and various styles."⁸⁶

Building on the work of Partha Chatterjee, Swati Chattopadhyay has argued that vendors and hawkers like Ramayan Shah, in a city like Calcutta, must "create lines of communication with middle-class residents and government functionaries" in order to maintain their entitlement to occupy the streets.⁸⁷ After all, Kolkata's *nagarik* may be "intimate" with certain roads and corners of the city, but they often have no legal claim, no paperwork documenting their rights to live or work there. By exhibiting what Sennett values most about the urban

disposition—namely, “simple human curiosity about other people”⁸⁸—Chaudhuri is also laying the groundwork for interpersonal, cross-class relations with potentially major political significance.

Conclusion: “A Self-Flagellatory Pilgrimage”

Chaudhuri describes his return to India as both a determined exercise of personal volition (“I didn’t want to discover one day that I was old, not far from death, and still living in England”⁸⁹) and the inevitable consequence of filial piety (return is an obligation borne of his “atavistic concern” to do right by his parents). This conjunction of choice and tradition, voluntarism and given-ness is, as I’ve been discussing it, broadly characteristic of diasporic consciousness and the experience of pilgrimage. It is also an affective state of categorical indeterminacy that is characteristic of all subjects under the conditions of globalization, perhaps even characteristic of the experience of living as such: of belonging both here and there, of acting because of and despite oneself. As R. Radhakrishnan writes, “[Take] away the cartography of betweenness, and along with it vanishes the human subject.”⁹⁰

Toward the close of *Calcutta*, Chaudhuri reflects on the “homecomings” (and goings) of the *kaajer lok*, or domestic help, who work for his middle-class family in India:

[Working people] lack a proper notion of [recreation and holidays]...For days they’ll go back to their home or desh or gram or village or family, the very place whose devastation drove them to Calcutta in the first place...and return to their employer’s apartment looking barely alive. No middle-class person would have undertaken this excursion—they’d simply have severed ties with their hometown. Sometimes they insist on embarking on a self-flagellatory pilgrimage—my parents’ driver, Mahinder, did

this: he went off to the famous Tarakeshwar temple, took a train from Howrah and got off at Sheoraphuli, collected water from the Ganga in two earthen pots which he hung from both ends of a pole resting sideways on his shoulders, then walked forty kilometers barefoot, as is customary, to the temple. He resumed work gaunt as a ghost...⁹¹

Chaudhuri is unable or unwilling, in this passage, to relate Mahinder's "self-flagellatory pilgrimage" to his own return to Calcutta, but I want to suggest in closing that it is a powerful allegory of diasporic return. Chaudhuri, like other returnees, was, at one time, driven to the West by the perception of limited opportunity in that "very place," India, to which he not only refused to "sever ties," but also imaginatively returned repeatedly over the years in the writing of his novels, before eventually undertaking to physically reterritorialize. Indeed, part of what I hope to have shown in this discussion is that the diasporic subject embarks on "a self-flagellatory pilgrimage" to the New Indian city for the same reason that Mahinder offers when questioned by Chaudhuri: "devotion and stuff."⁹²

A pilgrim is not only one who is prepared to suffer for spiritual reward, to push himself to the point of "looking barely alive," but also one who will go to the lengths of "[making his] journey harder."⁹³ The pilgrimage of diasporic return is not necessarily a journey of physical privation, but it is one in which the infrastructural and ethical poverty of global urbanity, and the question of one's participation in the perpetuation of inequalities, come violently into relief. *Capital* and *Calcutta* depict Delhi and Calcutta as what de Certeau calls "migrational, or metaphorical" cities in addition to, and in excess of, their identities as "planned and readable" ones.⁹⁴ In the former text, Dasgupta calls into question both the organization and legibility of Delhi, while nevertheless searching

out a space of possibility for the cultivation of a metropolitan ethos. The latter text confronts the limits of Chaudhuri's unschooled ethnography of his fellow city-dwellers, while holding up his effort to engage the *nagarik* as a promising sign of Calcutta's rehabilitation. Together, they offer a vision of the city as an "immense social experience of lacking a place [that is] compensated for by the relationships...that intertwine and create an urban fabric."⁹⁵

The rhetoric of return lays bare the urgency of critique as a means of metabolizing the experience of homecoming. *This* place of former and present devastation is one to which the diasporic subject, despite his better judgment, continues to feel utmost devotion. This, the New Indian city, is where the returnee *must* go, where his life's journey will inevitably take him: the city of contradiction; where many have gone before but none will see as he does; the place he loves and hates, and can no more live than leave.

[Endnotes]

1. Rana Dasgupta, *Capital: The Eruption of Delhi* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014), 46-47.
2. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961, 1992), 37.
3. See Nakul Krishna, "How Can I Describe the Desolation?" *The Caravan*, June 1, 2014, <http://www.caravanmagazine.in/books/how-can-i-describe-desolation> (accessed September 13, 2014)
4. Manu Goswami, "The American Dream Outsourced," *Public Books*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.publicbooks.org/nonfiction/the-american-dream-outsourced-india-and-the-genre-of-growth> (accessed September 13, 2014); See also Heather Timmons, "Naming Your India Book: A Pocket Guide," *The New York Times*, India Ink (March 22, 2012).
5. Goswami clubs Patrick French (*India: A Portrait*) and Pico Iyer (*The Global Soul*) with Giridhardas and Luce, and names Pankaj Mishra (*Temptations of the West*) and Arundhati Roy (*Broken Republic*) as critics of the rise. She classes some texts, like Akash Kapur's *India Becoming: A Portrait of Life in Modern India* (2012), as

straddling the divide between avowal and critique. There are numerous other texts which belong on both sides of the list, among them: Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound: The Social and Economic Revolution from Independence to the Global Information Age* (2000); Shashi Tharoor, *The Elephant, the Tiger and the Cell-Phone: Reflections on India in the 21st Century* (2007); Arvind Panagariya, *India: The Emerging Giant* (2008); Nandan Nilekani, *Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation* (2009); William Dalrymple, *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India* (2009); Shashi Tharoor, *Pax Indica: India and the World of the 21st Century* (2012); Aseem Shrivastava and Ashis Kothari, *Churning the Earth: The Making of Global India* (2012); Shoba Narayan, *Return to India: An Immigrant Memoir* (2012); Atul Kohli in *Poverty Amid Plenty in the New India* (2012); Arundhati Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014). Then, there are those texts which approach the idea of New India through the lens of its cities: William Dalrymple, *City of Djinns: A Year in Delhi* (1993); Suketu Mehta, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (2004); Amit Chaudhuri, *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (2013); Rana Dasgupta, *Capital: The Eruption of Delhi* (2014); Amitava Kumar, *A Matter of Rats: A Short Biography of Patna* (2014); Nirmala Lakshman, *Degree Coffee by the Yard* (Madras); Naresch Fernandes, *City Adrift* (Bombay); Indrajit Hazra, *Grand Delusions* (Calcutta); Malvika Singh, *Perpetual City* (Delhi). And finally, if we look backward, a number of texts explored the idea of India before it was New, including: V.S. Naipaul's *India* trilogy (1964, 1977, 1990); Gita Mehta, *Karma Cola* (1979); Octavio Paz, *In Light of India* (1995); Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India* (1997); Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to Millennium* (1997); William Dalrymple, *The Age of Kali: Indian Travels and Encounters* (1998); Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (2007).

6. These authors include Amit Chaudhuri, Rana Dasgupta, Siddhartha Deb, Pico Iyer, Amitava Kumar, Pankaj Mishra, and Shashi Tharoor. They are also all male and are known (in some cases, better known) as novelists, which are issues I take up in my larger dissertation project on the discourse on New India.

7. Dasgupta 2014, 47.

8. Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 50.

9. The OED online.

10. Amit Chaudhuri, *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 247.

11. Arjun Appadurai, "Patriotism and its Futures," *Public Culture* 5. The University of Chicago, 1993.

12. James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3). The American Anthropological Association (1994).

13. Diana L. Eck, *India: A Sacred Geography* (New York: Harmony Books, 2012), 2, 7.

14. Shoba Narayan, *Return to India* (Jasmine Books, 2012), 130.
15. Diaspora theorists have long explored the dynamics of arrival and return in equal measure: arrival into alternately welcoming and hostile host countries; return, both psychic and physical, to originary homelands. In some cases, as in the anti-Zionist diasporic theory of the Boyarins, return is that which must forever be deferred. In others, as in the Sikh diaspora, the fantasy of return goes hand in hand with the fantasy of nationality. Return is chosen, as in the case of certain European diasporas, and compelled, as in the case of those the United States deports south of the border. Return also speaks to the religious and cultural practices, community formations, performances, and textual productions through which diasporas attempt to keep home "there" alive "here." See Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin. "Diaspora: Generation and the ground of Jewish identity." *Critical Inquiry* (1993): 693-725.
16. Calcutta became available to Chaudhuri as a locus of a return for a host of reasons: his parents and in-laws were there, he had spent holidays there as a child, and he had made his career as a writer by romanticizing Calcutta in his novels. The city occupied a central place in what Brian Axel would term his "diasporic imaginary," a formation of "temporality, affect and corporeality" through which Chaudhuri created Calcutta as a homeland to which to return. See Brian Axel, "The diasporic imaginary." *Public Culture* 14.2 (2002): 411-428. See also Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).
17. Jordan Elgrably, int., "Interviews: James Baldwin, The Art of Fiction No. 78," the *Paris Review*, 1984, <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2994/the-art-of-fiction-no-78-james-baldwin> (accessed April 1, 2015).
18. Chaudhuri 2013, 216, 32-33.
19. Solnit 2000, 46.
20. Han Ong, *The Disinherited* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 16-17.
21. Hanif Kureishi, *Something to Tell You* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), 68, 138.
22. Teju Cole, *Every Day is for the Thief* (New York: Random House, 2007), 17.
23. Amit Chaudhuri, *A New World* (London: Picador, 2000), 50-53.
24. Amitav Ghosh, *A Hungry Tide* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 3.
25. Richard Sennett, "Cities without Care or Connection," *New Statesman*, June 5, 2000, <http://www.newstatesman.com/node/137800> (accessed September 12, 2014).
26. The return to India from the United States began in the late 1990s, as the dot-com bubble inflated to bursting, leading to the recession of the early 2000s. The exodus intensified in the first decade of the 21st century for a number of reasons. After the 2008 global financial collapse, for example, nativist calls spurred the U.S. Congress to pass a bill restricting financial companies from hiring foreign nationals on H-1B visas. See David Heenan, *Flight capital: The alarming exodus*

of *America's best and brightest* (Davies-Black Publishing, 2005). See also Vivek Wadhwa, "An Outflow of Talent: Nativism and the U.S. Reverse Brain Drain," *Harvard International Review* (Spring 2009).

27. In fact, Naipaul's India trilogy has served as a touchstone for many of the writers of the New India city-books. Suketu Mehta read Naipaul "like a textbook" when composing *Maximum City*. "My discovery of Naipaul," Amit Chaudhuri has said, "became part of my discovery of myself as a writer." See Karan Mahajan, "Suketu Mehta," *The Believer*, February 2008, http://www.believermag.com/issues/200802/?read=interview_mehta (accessed September 13, 2014); see also Amit Chaudhuri, "Nobel Thoughts," *The Guardian*, October 12, 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/oct/13/fiction.vشناipaul> (accessed September 13, 2014)

28. V.S. Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), x.

29. Rob Nixon, *London Calling: V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15.

30. Ibid, 18.

31. Dasgupta 2014, 149.

32. Naipaul 1977, 7, 20, 36.

33. Dasgupta 2014, 36.

34. Ibid, 44-45.

35. Chaudhuri 2013, 99.

36. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 5, 7.

37. Amit Chaudhuri, Introduction *Memory's Gold: Writings on Calcutta*, ed. Amit Chaudhuri (Viking by Penguin Books India, New Delhi: 2008), xiv.

38. James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 134.

39. Solnit 2000, 50.

40. Dasgupta 2014, 17.

41. Ibid, 16.

42. Ibid, 179.

43. Saikat Majumdar, "Dallying with Dailiness: Amit Chaudhuri's Flaneur Fictions," *Studies in the Novel*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (2007), 459.

44. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 103.

45. Solnit 2000, 45.

46. Melissa Butcher, "Distinctly Delhi: Affect and exclusion in a crowded city," *Urban Theory Beyond the West*, ed. Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne (New York: Routledge, 2012), 187.

47. Solnit 2000, 233.

48. Malvika Singh, *Perpetual City: A Short Biography of Delhi* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2013), 24.
49. Ibid, 100.
50. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949, 1988), 54.
51. De Certeau 1984, 98.
52. Ibid, 97-98.
53. Solnit 2000, 45.
54. Dasgupta 2014, 186. Of course, the claim that there is nothing “urban” about Delhi might seem preposterous to someone with a different conception of the urban. In Singh’s view, the “New New Delhi” is increasingly “competitive and increasingly volatile in its expression and style,” which means it “has become a real city.” Interestingly, Singh, a lifelong Dilliwallah, reports that she has in recent years started to feel “like an alien” in her own city. In the larger project from which this paper is drawn, I examine more explicitly the relationship between Indian diasporic and Indian national apprehension of the city. See Singh 2013, 119.
55. Jacobs 1961, 50.
56. Dasgupta 2014, 252.
57. Ibid, 236.
58. Ibid, 239.
59. Ibid, 244.
60. Ibid, 437.
61. Clifford 1994, 311.
62. Quoted in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 146.
63. Chaudhuri 2013, 44-5.
64. Indrajit Hazra, *Grand Delusions: A Short Biography of Kolkata* (New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2013), 63, 87.
65. Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*, 211
66. Dasgupta 2014, 439.
67. In order to assimilate the English name to the Bengali one, Calcutta began to be officially spelled “Kolkata” in 2001 as part of a wave of nationalist vernacularization that had, for example, earlier substituted “Mumbai” for Bombay and “Chennai” for Madras. So, it is not only that Kolkata is singular, as Hazra writes, but that Calcutta is not Kolkata, just like Mumbai—the city, its ethos and values, the experience of living in it, what it stands for—is not equivalent to Bombay. See Thomas Blom Hansen, *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
68. Chaudhuri 2013, 23.

69. Ibid, 30-31.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid, 22. What the returnee sees, in de Certeau's words, are "the presences of diverse absences... 'you see, here there used to be...' but it can no longer be seen" (1984, 108).

72. Amit Chaudhuri, "My New Perspective on Calcutta," *The Guardian*, February 1, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/feb/02/amit-chaudhuri-new-perspective-calcutta> (accessed September 13, 2014). (Hereafter cited as "New Perspective")

73. Chaudhuri 2013, 4.

74. Ibid.

75. Chaudhuri, "New Perspective"

76. Sennett 2000.

77. Jacobs 1961, 45.

78. Sennett 2000.

79. Chaudhuri 2013, 30.

80. Simon During, "Calcutta's Via Negativa," *Public Books*, August 6, 2013, <http://www.publicbooks.org/nonfiction/calcuttas-via-negativa> (accessed September 13, 2014).

81. Chaudhuri 2013, 51.

82. Ibid, 60.

83. Ibid, 61.

84. Ibid, 30.

85. Judith Butler, "Beside Oneself," *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 19.

86. Solnit 2000, 60, 53.

87. Swati Chattopadhyay, "Urbanism, colonialism and subalternity," 89. See also Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

88. Sennett 2000.

89. Chaudhuri 2013, 247.

90. R. Radhakrishnan, *History, the Human, and the World Between* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 8.

91. Chaudhuri 2013, 258-259.

92. Ibid, 259.

93. Solnit 2000, 46.

94. De Certeau, 1984, 93.

95. Ibid, 103.

Opposite: Frank Lawyer, Cypress College, Cypress, California, 1966. Photograph by Sarah Ramsey.