
Spectral Housing and Urban Cleansing: Notes on Millennial Mumbai

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A Brief History of Decosmopolitanization

Cities like Bombay—now Mumbai—have no clear place in the stories told so far that link late capitalism, globalization, post-Fordism, and the growing dematerialization of capital. Their history is uneven—in the sense made commonsensical by a certain critical tradition in Marxism. It is also characterized by disjunct, yet adjacent, histories and temporalities. In such cities, Fordist manufacture, craft and artisanal production, service economies involving law, leisure, finance, and banking, and virtual economies involving global finance capital and local stock markets live in an uneasy mix. Certainly, these cities are the loci of the practices of predatory global capital—here Mumbai belongs with Bangkok, Hong Kong, São Paulo, Los Angeles, Mexico City, London, and Singapore. But these cities also produce the social black holes of the effort to embrace and

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seduce global capital in their own particular ways, which are tied to varied histories (colonial and otherwise), varied political cultures of citizenship and rule, and varied ecologies of production and finance. Such particularities appear as images of globalization that are cracked and refracted. They are also instances of the elusiveness of global flows at the beginning of the new millennium.

Typically, these cities are large (10–15 million people) and are currently shifting from economies of manufacture and industry to economies of trade, tourism, and finance. They usually attract more poor people than they can handle and more capital than they can absorb. They offer the magic of wealth, celebrity, glamour, and power through their mass media. But they often contain shadow economies that are difficult to measure in traditional terms.

Such cities, too, are the site of various uncertainties about citizenship. People come to them in large numbers from impoverished rural areas. Work is often difficult to obtain and retain. The rich in these cities seek to gate as much of their lives as possible, travelling from guarded homes to darkened cars to air-conditioned offices, moving always in an envelope of privilege through the heat of public poverty and the dust of dispossession. Frequently, these are cities where crime is an integral part of municipal order and where fear of the poor is steadily increasing. And these are cities where the circulation of wealth in the form of cash is ostentatious and immense, but the sources of cash are always restricted, mysterious, or unpredictable. Put another way, even for those who have secure salaries or wages, the search for cash in order to make ends meet is endless. Thus everyday life is shot through with socially mediated chains of debt—between friends, neighbors, and coworkers—stretched across the continuum between multinational banks and other organized lenders, on the one hand, and loan sharks and thugs, on the other.

Bombay is one such city. It has an interesting history as a set of fishing villages, many named after local goddesses, linked by bridges and causeways and turned into a seat of colonial government in western India. Later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, it blossomed as a site of commercially oriented bourgeois nationalism, and, until the 1950s, it retained the ethos of a well-managed, Fordist city, dominated by commerce, trade, and manufacture, especially in the realm of textiles. Well into the 1970s, in spite of phenomenal growth in its population and increasing strain on its infrastructure, Bombay remained a civic model for India. Most people with jobs had housing; most basic services (such as gas, electricity, water, and milk) reliably reached the salaried middle classes. The laboring classes had reasonably secure occupational niches. The truly

destitute were always there, but even they fit into a complex subeconomy of pavement dwelling, rag picking, petty crime, and charity.

Until about 1960, the trains bringing in white- and blue-collar workers from the outer suburbs to the commercial and political core of the city (the Fort area in South Bombay) seemed to be able to move people around with some dignity and reliability and at relatively low cost. The same was true of the city's buses, bicycles, and trams. A three-mile bus ride in 1965 Bombay cost about 15 paise (roughly the equivalent of two U.S. cents at then-current rates). People actually observed the etiquette of queuing in most public contexts, and buses always stopped at bus stops rather than fifty feet before or after them (as in most of India today).

Sometime in the 1970s all this began to change and a malignant city began to emerge from beneath the surface of the cosmopolitan ethos of the prior period. The change was not sudden, and it was not equally visible in all spheres. But it was unmistakable. Jobs became harder to get. More rural arrivals in the city found themselves economic refugees. Slums and shacks began to proliferate. The wealthy began to get nervous. The middle classes had to wrestle with overcrowded streets and buses, skyrocketing prices, and maddening traffic. The places of leisure and pleasure—the great promenades along the shore of the Arabian Sea, the wonderful parks and *maidans* (open grass fields designed for sport and pastime in the colonial era), the cinema halls and tea stalls—began to show the wear and tear of hypermodernization.

As this process began to take its toll on all but the wealthiest of the city's population, the groundwork was laid for the birth of the most markedly xenophobic regional party in India—the Shiva Sena—which formed in 1966 as a pro-native, Marathi-centered, movement for ethnic control of Bombay. Today the Shiva Sena controls the city and the state and has a significant national profile as one of the many parties that form the Sangh Parivar (or coalition of Hindu chauvinist parties). Its platform combines language chauvinism (Marathi), regional primordialism (a cult of the regional state of Maharashtra), and a commitment to a Hinduized India (*Hindutva*, the land of Hinduness). The Shiva Sena's appeal goes back at least to 1956, shortly before Bombay was made the capital of the new linguistic state of Maharashtra and after intense rioting in Bombay over the competing claims of Gujaratis for Bombay to be in their own new linguistic state. In retrospect, 1956 marks a moment when Bombay became Mumbai, the name now insisted on by the official machineries of the city, all of which have been influenced by the Shiva Sena. Since this period, mostly through the active and coer-

cive tactics of the Shiva Sena and its cadres, Bombay's Marathi speakers have been urged to see the city as theirs, and every few years a new enemy is found among the city's minorities: Tamil clerks, Hindi-speaking cabdrivers, Sikh businessmen, Malayali coconut vendors—each has provided the “allogenic” flavor of the month (or year).

A high point of this ethnicization of the city was reached in late 1992 and early 1993, when riots broke out throughout India after the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (in the state of Uttar Pradesh in north India) by Hindu vandals on 6 December 1992. Bombay's Hindu right managed in this period to join the national frenzy of anti-Muslim violence, but this violence, too, had a Bombay flavor. In keeping with more than two decades of the Shiva Sena's peculiar mix of regional chauvinism and nationalist hysterics, Bombay's Hindus managed to violently rewrite urban space as sacred, national, and Hindu space. The decades of this gradual ethnicizing of India's most cosmopolitan city (roughly the 1970s, 1980s, and into the 1990s) were also the decades when Bombay became a site of crucial changes in trade, finance, and industrial manufacture. This essay is in part an effort to capture this more than circumstantial link. I turn now to a series of ethnographic interventions whose purpose is to think through the complex causalities that mediate between the steady dematerialization of Bombay's economy and the relentless hypermaterialization of its citizens through ethnic mobilization and public violence.

I have suggested so far that Bombay belongs to a group of cities in which global wealth and local poverty articulate a growing contradiction. But this essay is not an effort to illuminate a general class of city or a global urban dilemma. It is an effort to recognize two specificities about Bombay that mark and produce its singularity. The first is to note the peculiar ambiguities that divide and connect cash and capital (two quite distinct forms of wealth) from one another. The second is to show that this disjuncture is part of what might let us understand the peculiar ways in which cosmopolitanism in Bombay has been violently compromised in its recent history. I do this by sketching a set of circumstances to make an argument about wealth, housing, and ethnic violence, that is, at this stage, circumstantial. Future work on Mumbai may allow me to be more precise about causalities and more definite about comparisons.

City of Cash

In some ways, Bombay is as familiar with the history of capital as the most important cities of Europe and the United States. Long a site of seafaring

commerce, imperial trade, and colonial power, Bombay's colonial elite—Parsis, Muslims, and Hindus (as well as Baghdadi Jews, Syrian Christians, Armenians, and other exotics)—helped shape industrial capitalism in the twilight of an earlier world economy built around the Indian Ocean. That earlier world economy (made vivid in Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*) can still be glimpsed in the traffic of dhows between the west coast of India and the states of the Persian Gulf, in the escalating illegal traffic in gold along this circuit, in the movement of thousands of migrants to the Gulf states from Kerala and elsewhere on the west coast, in the post-OPEC invasion of Arab tourists into Bombay seeking the pleasures of the monsoon, cheap medical care, the flesh trade, and the cheaper-than-Harrod's prices for many delicious goods. Bombay's citizens began to complain that they could no longer afford their favorite summer fruit—the Alphonso mango—because exports to the Middle East had shrunk local supplies and pushed mango prices beyond their reach.

Partly because of its huge film industry (still among the world's largest); partly because of its powerful role in trade, banking, and commerce; and partly because of its manufacturing sector, centered on textiles but extending to metalworks, automobile factories, chemical industries, and more—for all these reasons, Bombay after World War II was quintessentially a cosmopolis of commerce. People met in and through “business” (a word taken over from English and used to indicate professions, transactions, deals, and a whole ethos of commerce), and through “business” they forged and reproduced links across neighborhoods, ethnicities, and regional origins. No ethnicity in Bombay escaped stereotyping, and all stereotyping had its portfolio of jokes. What counted was the color of money.

And money leads a complex life in today's Mumbai. It is locked, hoarded, stored, and secreted in every possible way: in jewellery, in bank accounts, in household safes and mattresses, in land and housing and dowries, in boxes and purses and coffee tins, and behind shirts and blouses. It is frequently hidden money, made visible only in the fantastic forms of cars and mansions, sharp suits and expensive restaurants, huge flats and large numbers of servants. But even more, Mumbai is a city of visible money—of CASH—where wads, stacks, piles of rupees are openly and joyously transacted.

I remember a local street hood in my 1950s Bombay neighborhood who managed to become the local controller of the numbers racket. He wore a terylene shirt with semitransparent pockets in which there was always the glimmer and clink of a huge number of little coins, the currency of his trade. The numbers racket then was tied to the daily close of the New York Cotton Exchange (or so I was told), and this flashy fellow never tired of strolling around with a little jingle

sounding from his chest. He would laugh as he bought *pan* (betel nut rolled in betel leaf) from the local *panwalla* “on credit”; and when the *panwalla* would grab for his transparent pocket, he would flit away, laughing, gently guarding the coins near his heart. Coins were still tokens of wealth then. Today, he would need paper money in order not to look silly.

And it was also widely felt that cash, chance, and wealth were linked. This same numbers racketeer, who happened to come from the Tamil south of India and thus could speak to me in my native Tamil, always grabbed me on the street to ask, with a half smile, for me to give him two numbers so that he could use them to place his own bets. At issue was some notion of small children as bearers of good luck, idiot savants of probability, and I, a Brahmin child from a respectable Tamil family, probably embodied bourgeois prudence as well. This flashy hood somehow fell out with his bosses, turned into a humiliated beggar over a period of a few years, and, spurned by those very street people he had used and perhaps cheated, died broke. He surely never moved out of the magic circle of cash into the hazy world of bank accounts, insurance policies, savings, or other prudential strategies. He represented the raw end of the cash economy. Today, the numbers trade, still a major part of Bombay’s street economy, has shifted away from the proto-global link to U.S. commodity markets to—so the popular narrative goes—the play of pure chance: the pulling of cards out of a pot in a rumored-to-be real location in suburban Bombay every evening, with runners fanning out in minutes to report the results. This system is simply called *matka* (pot).

Yet there is a lot of interest in today’s Bombay in such things as bank accounts, shares, and insurance policies—instruments all concerned with protecting money, providing against hazard, hedging risk, and enabling enterprise. Bombay’s commercial economy includes a large part of its citizenry. Even poor wage-earners strive to have small savings accounts (with passbooks) and, more fascinating, no one is immune from the seduction of “whole-life” insurance. I have sometimes suspected that all of India is divided into two groups: those who sell insurance (an extremely popular trade for the less credentialed among the literate classes) and those who buy these policies. In Bombay, the Life Insurance Corporation of India is mainly housed in a building the size of a city block—a monumental vault that contains hundreds of thousands of small policies bought and sold most often from one individual to another. Starting as early as the 1960s, ordinary middle-class housewives began to see the benefits of various forms of corporate paper, including stocks, shares, and related instruments. These were bought mostly to be held—not sold—and their circulation through various

financial markets was restricted and sluggish, until the last few years, when money markets have begun to get fast, volatile, high-volume, and speculative.

But back to cash. Much of Bombay's film industry runs on cash—so-called black money. This is a huge industry that produces more than three-hundred Hindi films a year for a worldwide market and reaps huge revenues at the box office. As a shrewd local analyst said to me, there is no real film *industry* in Bombay, since there is no money that is both made and invested within the world of film. Rather, film financing is a notoriously gray area of speculation, solicitation, risk, and violence, in which the key players are men who have made killings in other markets (such as the grain trade, textiles, or other commodities). Some of them seek to keep their money out of the hands of the government, to speculate on the chance of financing a hit film and to get the bonus of hanging out with the stars as well. This sounds similar to the Hollywood pattern, but it is an entirely arbitrary cast of characters who might finance a film, so much time is spent by “producers” in trolling for businessmen with serious cash on their hands. And since these bankrolls are very large, the industry pays blockbuster prices for stars, and the entire cultural economy of the film world revolves around large cash transactions in black money. Periodically big stars or producers are raided by income tax officials, and a media bloodletting about seized assets is offered to the public, before business as usual resumes.

This sort of cash is everywhere in Bombay's “business” world, in huge rumored payments to government officials or businessmen to get things done, and equally in the daily small-scale traffic in black market film tickets, smuggled foreign goods, numbers racket payments, police protection payments, wage payments to manual labor, and so on. It has been said that the “parallel” or “black” economy in India might be half again as large as the tax-generating, official economy. In Bombay, the ratio is probably higher.

Money is still considered real—in most circles—insofar as it is readily convertible to cash. Liquidity is the dominant criterion of prosperity, for both corporations and individuals, and new understandings of monetary phenomena such as credit, mortgages, and other technical or temporal “derivatives” are only now entering Bombay—and that, too, for its upper middle classes. Even the most sophisticated international and national financial strategists and czars, who are now responsible for putting Bombay permanently on the map of global investment, find it difficult to escape the sensuous appeals of cash. Wealth is understood to be an abstraction, but it is never seen as fully real in forms of paper that are not currency.

Bills and coins are not primarily what moves global wealth through Bombay's

industrial houses, government offices, and corporate headquarters, but they are still the hallmarks of wealth and sociability, anchors of materiality in a world of invisible wealth. This is a shadow economy whose very shadows take on their density from the steady flow of real bills and coins through the lives of many kinds of transactors. Nor is this just money fleeing the tax collector. It is also money seeking immediate expenditure, racing from pocket to pocket without the logistical drag of conversion, storage, restriction, accounting, and dematerialization to slow the fuel of consumption. And this is true for the poor and for the rich. Whether you want 10 rupees to send to your mother in a postal money order or 4,000 rupees to have a bottle of Chivas Regal delivered to your door, cash is king. The rest is rumor.

Note that none of this has much to do with galloping inflation, any simple kind of fetishization, or the absence of immense local skills in money handling, credit, trade, and trust-based transactions that are truly global. It is entirely wrong to imagine that cash transactions imply limited trust. On the contrary, since parting with cash is decisively terminal, giving and taking cash requires larger amounts of trust than dealings in other sorts of monetary instruments. Cash handed over—even more than in other cases in the world—vanishes without a trace. The diamond industry, for example, which links cutters and polishers in coastal Surat (Gujarat) with caste-linked traders in Bombay, London, Antwerp, and beyond, is an exquisite case of global transfers that use every available form of credit (based on trust) but run on the fuel of hard cash at every critical switch point.

Nor is this corruption-at-large, where cash is best for extortion and fraud, though both exist in substantial measures. Rather, cash rules in Bombay as the mobile and material instantiation of forms of wealth that are known to be so large as to be immaterial. This is more nearly a commoditization of the fetish than a fetishization of the commodity, since currency here is itself treated as powerful in the extreme. What is invisible is not the currency behind the currency at hand but the WEALTH embedded in it. So moving currency around takes materialities that are themselves deeply powerful—fetishes if you will—and puts them into generalized circulation. Cash here, to borrow Fredric Jameson's phrase from a very different context, is a central "signature of the visible."

What we know about Bombay in the nineteenth century and—more hazily—before that time, certainly suggests that cash and its circulation through various kinds of commerce was a vital ingredient of sociality. It was the guarantee of cosmopolitanism because its sources were distant and varied, its local traffic crossed ethnic and regional lines, and its presence was both entrepreneurial and civic.

The vital importance of Parsi philanthropists in the civic and public life of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Bombay is one of many examples of the cosmopolitanism of its public sphere.

What then is new today about cash in the city of cash? One answer is that cash and capital have come to relate in a new and contradictory manner in Bombay since the 1970s. While cash still does its circulatory work, guaranteeing a complex web of social and economic relations and indexing the fact that the business of Bombay is “business,” capital in Bombay has become more anxious. This can be seen in two areas. The first is the flight of industrial capital away from the city, which is addressed later in this essay. The second is that financial capital in Bombay operates in several disjunct registers: as the basis for multinational corporations tempted by new market seductions in India, as speculative capital operating in illegal or black markets, and as entrepreneurial energy operating in a city where it is increasingly difficult to coordinate the factors of capitalist production. Yet a large cash economy still governs Bombay. This uneasy relationship between cash and capital can be seen in a variety of arenas, but housing is perhaps the best place to follow how this disjunct relationship helps create the conditions of possibility for ethnic violence.

Spectral Housing

It is a banality to say that housing is scarce in Bombay. This is so widely known to be true that it is scarcely ever discussed abstractly. But it haunts many conversations about resources, plans, hopes, and desires among all of its citizens, ranging from those who live in multimillion-dollar penthouses to those who pay protection money for rights to six feet of sleeping space in an aqueduct. It is always at issue when jobs are mentioned (But where will you live?), when marriages are negotiated (Will you give my son part of your flat as part of his dowry?), when relatives are visited (Is cousin Ashok staying with you now?), or when neighbors speculate on the identities of people going in and out of each other’s flats (Is X a subtenant or a relative, or both?).

To speak of spectrality in Bombay’s housing scene moves us beyond the empirics of inequality into the experience of shortage, speculation, crowding, and public improvisation. It marks the space of speculation and specularities, empty scenes of dissolved industry, fantasies of urban planning, rumors of real estate transfers, consumption patterns that violate their spatial preconditions, and bodies that are their own housing. The absent, the ghostly, the speculative, the fantastic all have their part to play in the simultaneous excesses and lacks of

Bombay's housing scene. It is these experienced absurdities that warrant my use of the term *spectral* in a setting where housing and its lack are grossly real. What are these swollen realities?

The social traffic on Bombay's extraordinary vital metropolitan train service is entirely premised on the fact that millions of people travel increasingly huge distances (two hours and fifty miles is not uncommon) to get from home to work and back. And many of them undergo complex transformations in transit, turning from oppressed dwellers in shantytowns, slums, and disposable housing into well-dressed clerks, nurses, postmen, bank tellers, and secretaries. Their "homes" are often unstable products—a bricolage of shoddy materials, insecure social relations, poor sanitation, and near-total lack of privacy. As they move into their places of work, this vast army of the middle and working classes usually moves into more secure spaces of recognition, comfort, and predictability than the "homes" they return to at night, even when their jobs are harsh, poorly paid, or dangerous.

And this does not speak of the truly destitute: beggars; homeless children; the maimed and the disfigured; the abandoned women with small children; and the aged who wander deaf, dumb, or blind through Bombay's streets. These are the truly "homeless," who wander like their counterparts in other world cities from Chicago and Johannesburg to Frankfurt and Bangkok. These are in some cases "street people," although this category must not be taken to be wholly generic across different cities and societies. And that is because the streets themselves constitute specific forms of public space and traffic.

Much could be said about Indian street life and the life of Bombay's streets in respect to housing. But a few observations must suffice. Bombay's "pavement dwellers" (like Calcutta's) have been made famous in both sociology and popular media. It is true that there is a vast and semiorganized part of Bombay's population that lives on pavements—or, more exactly, on particular spots, stretches, and areas that are neither building nor street. These pavement dwellers are often able to keep their personal belongings with others in shops or kiosks or even inside buildings (for some sort of price, of course). Some actually live on pavements, and others sleep in the gray spaces between buildings and streets. Yet others live on roofs and on parapets, above garages, and in a variety of interstitial spaces that are not fully controlled by either landlords or the state. As we shall see in the concluding section, "pavement dwellers" and "slum dwellers" are no longer external labels but have become self-organizing, empowering labels for large parts of the urban poor in Bombay.

The important point here is that there is a vast range of insecure housing, from

a six-foot stretch of sleeping space to a poorly defined tenancy situation shared by three families “renting” one room. Pavements shade into *jopad-pattis* (complexes of shacks with few amenities), which shade into semipermanent illegal structures. Another continuum links these structures to *chawls* (tenement housing originally built for mill workers in Central Bombay) and to other forms of substandard housing. Above this tier are the owned or rented flats of the large middle class and finally the fancy flats and (in a tiny number of cases) houses owned by the rich and the super rich. These kinds of housing are not neatly segregated by neighborhood, for one simple reason: the insecurely housed poor are everywhere and are only partly concentrated in *bastis* (slums), *jopad-pattis*, and *chawls*. Almost every one of these kinds of housing for the poor, including roofs, parapets, compound walls, and overhangs, is subject to socially negotiated arrangements. Very often, control over these insecure spaces is in the hands of semiorganized crime, where rent and extortion shade into one another.

Even in the apartment buildings of the rich and upper middle class, especially in the commercial core of South Bombay and in the posh areas of Malabar Hill, Cuffe Parade, Worli, and Bandra, there is a constant pressure from the house poor. The poor set up house anywhere they can light a fire and stretch out a thin sheet to sleep on. As domestic servants, they often have small rooms in the large apartment buildings of the rich, and these servants (for whom such housing is a huge privilege) often bring friends and dependents, who spill out into the stairwells, the enclosed compounds, and the foyers. The official tenants, owners, and landlords wage a constant war against this colonization from below, but it is frequently lost because—as in all societies based on financial apartheid—one wants the poor near at hand as servants but far away as humans.

At the same time, small commercial enterprises sprout on every possible spot in every possible street, attached to buildings, to telephone poles, to electricity switching houses, or to anything else that does not move. These petty enterprises are by nature shelters, so many commercial stalls are, *de facto*, homes on the street for one or more people. The same is true of the kitchens of restaurants, parts of office buildings—indeed, any structure where a poor person has the smallest legitimate right to stay in or near a habitable structure, especially one that has water or a roof. Electricity and heat are rare luxuries, of course.

In this setting, for the very poor, home is anywhere you can sleep. And sleep is in fact the sole form of secure being. It is one of the few states in which—though usually entirely in public—there is respite from work, from harassment, and from eviction. Sleeping bodies are to be found everywhere in Bombay and indeed at all times. People walk over sleeping bodies as they cross streets and as

they go into apartments, movie theaters, restaurants, and offices. Some of these people are sleeping in spaces to which they are legitimately connected through work or kinship. Others, as on park benches and street corners, are simply taking their housing on the hoof, renting sleep, in a manner of speaking. Public sleeping is the bottom of the hierarchy of spectral housing, housing that exists only by implication and by imputation. The sleeping body (which is almost always the laboring body or the indigent body) in its public, vulnerable, and inactive form is the most contained form of the spectral house. Public sleeping is a technique of necessity for those who can be at home only in their bodies.

Here we must resituate the sleeping, indigent, and exhausted body back in the specificities of Bombay's terrain of habitation, lest we slip into the generic sense of the urban poor as a global type. For the huge presence of the not-properly-housed is part of a bigger network of fears, pressures, and powers that surround housing for everyone in Bombay. Bombay has a shrinking but still large body of tenants, governed by an obsolete rent control act that has been the subject of enormous contention since the beginnings of economic liberalization in the early 1990s. Landlords, especially in South and Central Bombay, are at war with their "old" tenants, who pay tiny rents for real estate worth fortunes in these desirable parts of Bombay. In the mid-1990s, in spite of a dramatic drop in real estate prices across the country, prices per square foot for flats in the most desirable parts of Bombay were between 8,000 and 12,000 rupees. Thus, in U.S. dollars, a fifteen-hundred-square-foot apartment would be valued at between \$300,000 and \$350,000. Prices in less desirable areas were predictably lower, but consider such prices in a country where more than 40 percent of the population live below the poverty line.

Since about 1992 there have been wild swings in the real estate market, partly fuelled by financial speculators, both local and global. Since 1994 or so, when real estate prices hit their all-time high, there have been drops. There is a complex legal battle, involving the city of Bombay, the state of Maharashtra, and the union government (in Delhi) to reform the tenancy acts pertaining to urban real estate to give some semblance of market rationality to real estate prices. But the tenants are powerfully organized (though relatively small in number), and the landlords like the inflated prices when they sell but not when they have tenants who pay old rent. Homeowners, in cooperatives and condominium style arrangements, also help the upward spiral since they have to think of housing as their most precious possession, potentially convertible into all sorts of other privileges.

In this context, mythologies of housing run rife, and no one is immune from dreams and fantasies. Tenants dream of a day when they will be allowed—by

state fiat—to buy their houses for, say, fifteen years' worth of the “old” rent, which, from the point of view of the market, is a pittance. Landlords dream of a free market where they can kick out their poor tenants and bring in wealthy multinationals (believed to be honest and evictable). In the meantime, they allow their buildings to decay, and the municipality has now imposed a forced program of repair and restoration since the façades of these buildings and their internal structures are falling apart, creating a few major collapses and lots of accidents. So South and Central Bombay are strewn with repair projects based on a forced levy on tenants and landlords. Meanwhile, many of these old rent buildings feel like mausoleums, as tenants die or move but hold onto their places by locking them up or having servants take care of them. The vista looking from one of these buildings to another is of ghostly spaces, shut windows, silent verandas—spaces of houses without occupants, often gazing at bodies without houses on the streets and pavements below.

The market in “rental” houses is brisk and illegal, involving vast sums of cash, transacted as so-called *pagri* (key money), which often amounts to more than the market value of the house. The *pagri* is paid by the new “tenant,” who comes in on a much higher rent, and is shared by the landlord and the “selling” tenant who, in fact, is selling his right to stay on distorted rental terms. The landlord seeks the best black money deal, and the buyer pays whatever the market demands.

This black market in “rentals” is even more distorted because its upmarket end is occupied by the multinationals who (through their middlemen) are willing to pay huge down payments (equivalent sometimes to rent for twenty years), along with a high monthly rental. In addition, dealings with multinationals allow such transactions to be legally binding and relatively transparent, as well as, in some ways, prestigious. The growing presence of multinationals with needs for office and residential space has done much to keep real estate values very high in the best parts of Mumbai, in spite of the emergent drift to find headquarters outside the city. This upper end of the market is also the zone of indigenous speculators with large amounts of black money who wish to make big returns. Below this level is the universe of middle-class owners and renters who typically entertain dreams of the big kill when they are in a position to sell their property or their rental rights. And still further down the hierarchy are the varieties of rights in tenements, slums, pavements, and shantytowns, where the buying and selling of rights is decisively connected to local thugs, ward-level politicians, and other smalltime peddlers of influence.

Knitting together this complex edifice of housing-related hysteria is a huge

disorganized army of brokers and dealers, whose subculture of solidarity, networking, and jealousy is notorious and resembles that of pimp sociologies in many big cities. These are the individuals who turn up like vultures in every context of viewing or potential sale or change of tenant, ever fearful that buyer and seller will cut them out or that they will lose their share of the deal to others in their own business. These are the individuals who constitute the fiber optics of rumor, price information, news about potential legal changes, and solutions to tricky problems of money transfer, security, and value. They are the foot soldiers of the spectral housing scene, themselves fuelled not by the volume of transactions but by the ideology of the big hit, when a single big transaction will make their fortunes. They are also critical parts of the “nervous system” of spectral housing in Mumbai, in which rumors of big sales, big fees, and “good” and “bad” landlords circulate. It is also these brokers who ruthlessly boycott tenants who “show” their flats just to check the market, but always back out at the last moment, just as certain buyers always back out after everything has been settled. Given the huge cash sums, the secrecy and fear, the greed and transient trust that is required for these deals to be consummated, a reputation for being a “tease” in this market can be fatal.

Beyond all this nervous greed and fluid dealing, in which few explorations actually lead to real changes of owner or occupant, and against the steady buzz of rumors about changes in the law that governs tenancy, ownership, sales, and rights, there is a larger picture of globalization, deindustrialization, and urban planning in which the nervous system of real estate deals meets the muscularity of long-term structural developments in Mumbai’s economy. This story has several interactive parts.

Over the last thirty years or so, Bombay has been steadily deindustrialized, especially in its historically most important industrial sector, the production of textiles. An industry that represented the most clear case of a workable compact between state support, entrepreneurial skill, civic amenities, and productive union organization, the mill sector of Central Bombay was for decades the heart of the modernist geography of manufacture in Bombay, with the mills and their associated tenement houses occupying an area of several square miles in Central Bombay (and smaller areas elsewhere). These were solidly working-class neighborhoods, much as in the industrial cities of Europe and the United States at the height of the industrial revolution, and, like them, tied to the imperial-global economies of the nineteenth century. Over the last two decades, several forces have played havoc with this manufacturing core of Bombay. These include the growing obsolescence of equipment, as textile industries worldwide become high

tech, and the reluctance of Bombay's indigenous capitalists to negotiate with the unions, stemming from their recognition that cheaper and less militant labor was available in the smaller towns of Maharashtra state (Nasik, Pune, Aurangabad, Nagpur, and many others). This process (as in many parts of the world) has been both a cause and an effect of the move towards flexible, part-time, and insecure forms of labor, the growth in which has steadily taken the fangs out of the union movement in Bombay. In recent years, a more disturbing global pull has reinforced this local process, as major multinationals also start to flee Bombay seeking lower rents, cleaner environments, more pliant labor, and simpler logistical systems.

This trend, in which national and transnational manufacturing is steadily leaving Bombay, is counterbalanced by the continued importance of Bombay's legal, political, and fiscal infrastructure, which cannot be fully outsourced to smaller towns and industrial centers. So the new geography of post-Fordism in Bombay has a set of abandoned factories (or unprofitable ones) at its heart, a growing service economy that has locational advantages not yet matched by smaller towns, a working class that is little more than a host of fragmented unions, and a workforce that has massively shifted to the service sector—with jobs in restaurants, small offices, the film industry, domestic service, computer cafes, “consulting” outfits, street vending, and the university system. In this regard, Bombay fits the broad global profile of swollen megacities that localize national/global speculative and service-oriented interests. In a sense, these are “octroi” economies that subsist by charging fees for intermediary services in transport, licenses, and the like, as industrial work fails to sustain a substantial proletariat.

Among the families that control large parts of these manufacturing enterprises that are being moved out to smaller towns, there is an effort to repackage their motives in the idiom of real estate, arguing that, as they vacate their erstwhile mills, large spaces will be opened up for the “homeless” with appropriate compensation for themselves through the state. Here is another major spectral narrative that dominates the upper ends of the nervous system of Mumbai's housing. A new imaginary is afloat, where thousands of acres of factory space are rumored to be lying idle behind the high walls that conceal the dying factories. Workers still live in the tenements of Parel, Worli, and Nagpada, and many of them listen to the sirens of the factories as they trudge towards this dying field of industrial dreams. But many of the buildings behind these high walls are silent, and, it is rumored, deals are being brokered between these industrialists, big developers, large corporations, and criminal syndicates to harvest these imagined thousands of acres in the very industrial heart of Mumbai. Rumors abound of major presen-

tations by big developers in corporate boardrooms, displaying these lands with aerial shots and projecting the feast of hidden real estate just beyond the famine of the streets and buildings of visible Mumbai.

Here is the great imaginary of vast lands for Mumbai's poor and homeless, which might magically yield housing for those who, for a few decades, have had to go further and further out in order to find a space to live. This is the master specter of housing in Mumbai, a fantasy of huge tracts, some with very few structures on them, ready to be transformed, at the stroke of someone's pen, into Mumbai's paradise of habitation. Thus is the logic of deindustrialization and capital flight rewritten as the story of a chimerical landscape of trees, lakes, and open air waiting to be uncovered just behind the noise of the madding crowd of Central Mumbai. Yet global finance and its indigenous counterparts—as well as a host of other enterprises that rely on trade, speculation, and investment—still find Mumbai seductive, so that the pyramid of high prices and rampant inflation is kept alive and every square foot of housing is defended as personal patrimony.

From the point of view of street life, consumption is fuelled by the explosive growth in small-scale hucksters, vendors, and retailers that have flooded Mumbai's pavements, rendering them almost impassable. Many of these vendor-dominated streets peddle items having to do with the fantasy of a global, middle-class consumer, with the truly smuggled, the imitated pirates, and the home-grown simulacrum all joyously mixed with each other: bras and juicers, lamps and window shades, underwear and cutting knives, sandwich makers and clothespins, decorative kitsch and T-shirts, women's dressing gowns and men's Levis. There seems to be no real annoyance with these vendors, despite the fact that they put pedestrians in the awkward position of either walking on the road (nudged by cars that could kill them), falling into the sewage grates just next to the curb (which are sometimes open), or picking their way through carpets of T-shirts, sneakers, and drinking glasses. In this extraordinary efflorescence of street vending, we see again that cash is king, that money moves, and that some entrepreneurial energy in the greater Mumbai area has moved massively into this retail sector, its provisioning, and its marketing. This market in petty goods, itself fuelled by Mumbai's relatively high wages, has taken the place of other forms of income (for the sellers) and of expenditure (for the buyers).

This immense landscape of street-level traffic in the petty commodities of everyday life is often physically contiguous to permanent shops and glitzy stores where the "A" list versions of the street commodities are also on display. These street markets (a late industrial repetition of the sort of medieval European markets described by Fernand Braudel) allow Mumbai's poorer working people,

whose money is scarce but who have bought into the object assemblages of Mumbai's cashocracy, to enter the world of consumption—a world deeply influenced by real or imagined foreign objects, their local incarnations and applications.

But there is more to this than a surfeit of cash among Bombay's middle and working classes (for the indigent can only gaze at these piles of cargo). The key elements of these street bazaars (though the full taxonomy of vendor's goods is as complex as anything Jorge Luis Borges might have imagined), are the materialities of modern domesticity: bras, children's underwear, women's dresses, men's T-shirts and jeans, perfume, cheap lipstick, talcum powder, decorative kitsch, sheets and pillows, mats and posters. The people who throng these places and succeed in negotiating their deals walk away with virtual households, or elements of the collection of goods that might constitute the bourgeois household in some abstract modernist dream. Among other things, there are hundreds of vendors in Mumbai who sell old magazines from the West, including such discrepancies as *Architectural Digest* and *Home and Garden*, ostensibly meant for the creative designer in Mumbai but actually looked at by humbler consumers living in one- or two-room shacks.

These public dramas of consumption revolving around the accoutrements of domesticity constitute an investment in the equipping of houses that may be small and overcrowded, where individual space and rights may be highly restricted, and where much in the way of modern amenities may be limited or absent. These humble objects of domestic life are thus proleptic tools of a domesticity without houses, houseless domesticity. In the purchase and assemblage of these objects, which imply a domestic plenitude that is surely exaggerated, Bombay's working poor and nonprofessional service classes produce their own spectral domesticity, which in its sensuous, cash-based, pleasurable social reality recognizes the shrinking horizon of the actual houses in which these objects might have a predictable life. Of course, all modern shopping (in Mumbai and beyond) has the anticipatory, the imagined, the auratic, and the possessive about its ethos. But street shopping in Mumbai, like public sleeping, is a form of claim to housing that no one can contest or subvert in the city of cash. This is where the specters of eviction meet the agencies of consumption.

We now turn to an explicit effort to engage the slippage between Bombay and Mumbai, in this essay and in the social usages of the city. If Bombay was a historical space of commerce and cosmopolitanism, through what project did Bombay become Mumbai, so that, today, all official dealings, from control-tower traffic at Sahar airport to addresses on letters mailed to the city, must refer to Mumbai? What killed Bombay?

In the section that follows, I try to answer this question by linking the problems of scarcity and spectrality in the housing market to another kind of shrinkage, which is produced by the repositioning of Bombay's streets, shops, and homes as a sacred national space, as an urban rendition of a Hindu national geography. As struggles over the space of housing, vending, and sleeping gradually intensified, so did the sense of Bombay as a site for traffic across ethnic boundaries become reduced. The explosive violence of 1992–93 translated the problem of scarce space into the imaginary of cleansed space, a space without Muslim bodies. In and through the violence of these riots, an urban nightmare was rescripted as a national dream.

Urban Cleansing

In 1996 the Shiva Sena proclaimed that Bombay would henceforth be only known as Mumbai. Even prior to this date, Mumbai had been the name for the city preferred by many of the Marathi-speaking majority, and especially by those who identify with the Shiva Sena. In one sense, the decision to officialize the name “Mumbai” is part of a widespread Indian pattern of replacing names associated with colonial rule with names associated with local, national, and regional heroes. It is an indigenizing toponymic strategy worldwide in scope.

In the case of Bombay, the move looks backward and forward simultaneously. Looking backward, it imagines the deity Mumba Devi (a goddess of one of the shrines that was vital to the fishing islands that later became Bombay). It evokes the fishing folk of these islands, and, because it is the name that was always used by Marathi speakers, it privileges their everyday usage over those of many other vernacular renditions of the name (such as the “Bambai” favored by Hindi speakers and the “Bambaai” of Tamil speakers). Of course, it gains respectability as an erasure of the Anglophone name, Bombay, and thus carries the surface respectability of popular nationalism after 1947. But its subtext looks to the future, to a counter-Bombay or anti-Bombay, as imagined by the Shiva Sena, whose political fortunes in the city wax and wane (as of this writing) but whose hold on urban life no one has dared to write off.

This is a future in which Marathi and Maharashtrian heroes and practices dominate urban culture, and this purified regional city joins a renascent “Hindu” India; it is a future that envisions Mumbai as a point of translation and mediation between a renascent Maharashtra and a re-Hinduized India. This Mumbai of the future is sacred national space, ethnically pure but globally competitive. Balasaheb Thackeray, the vitriolic head of the Shiva Sena, was happy to welcome

Michael Jackson to his home a few years ago and had no trouble facilitating a major deal for Enron, a Texas-based multinational that wanted a major set of concessions for a new energy enterprise in Maharashtra. So the transformation of Bombay into Mumbai is part of a contradictory utopia in which an ethnically cleansed city is still the gateway to the world.

When the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was destroyed by Hindu vandals on 6 December 1992, a watershed was marked 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. The events of December 1992 were themselves the product of an immensely complex process by which the major political parties of the Hindu right, most notably the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), managed to turn a series of recent political changes in the Hindi-speaking northern part of India to their advantage. These changes—most important among them the new political power of lower castes—were often results of violent confrontations between lower and upper castes over land tenure, government job quotas, and legal rights. In the late 1980s, building on a century of localized movements towards Hindu nationalism and nationalized Hinduism, the BJP and its allies had mobilized hitherto fragmented parties and movements under the single banner of Hindutva (Hinduness). Seizing on the failures of other national parties, they managed to launch a full-scale frontal attack on the ideals of secularism and interreligious harmony enshrined in the constitution and to convince Hindus of all classes that their salvation lay in Hinduizing the state.

In the process, they focused particularly on a series of neoreligious strategies and practices, drawing on existing cultural repertoires, to construct the imaginary of a Hindu soil, a Hindu history, and Hindu sacred places that had been corrupted and obscured by many outside forces, none worse than the forces of Islam. Anti-Muslim sentiments, available in various earlier discourses and movements, were transformed into what Romila Thapar called “syndicated” Hinduism, and one form of this politicized Hinduism took as its major program the liberation of Hindu temples from what were argued to be their illegitimate Muslim superstructures. The Babri Masjid became the symbolic epicenter of this more general campaign to cleanse Hindu space and nationalize the polity through a politics of archaeology, historical revisionism, and vandalism. The story of the events surrounding the destruction of the Babri Masjid have been well told elsewhere, and many scholars have placed these events in the deep history of Hindu-Muslim relations on the subcontinent.

There were riots after 6 December 1992 throughout India, substantially amounting to a national pogrom against Muslims (though there was some Mus-

lim violence against agents and sites of state power). But this was the first time there was a massive, nationwide campaign of violence against Muslims in which soil, space, and site came together in a politics of national sovereignty and integrity. Not only were Muslims seen as traitors (Pakistanis in disguise), but also their sacred sites were portrayed as a treacherous geography of vandalism and desecration, calculated to bury Hindu national geography at both its centers and its margins. In a sense, the political geography of sovereignty, focused on border wars with Pakistan, was brought into the same emotional space as the political geography of cultural purity, focused on the deep archaeology of religious monuments.

As it was the home of the Shiva Sena, Mumbai was drawn into this argument about national geography as Hindu geography in December 1992 in a special way. The story of the growth of the Shiva Sena from the 1960s to the present has been well told and analyzed elsewhere, so just a few points need be made here. The party has succeeded in identifying with the interests of Mumbai's growing Marathi-speaking lumpen proletariat while also actively destroying its left (communist) union culture. After starting mainly as a group of urban thugs, the Shiva Sena has managed to become a regional and national political force. It has hitched its regional nationalism (with deep roots in Maharashtra's ethnohistory and vernacular self-consciousness) to a broader national politics of Hindutva. It has created a relatively seamless link between its nativist, pro-Maharashtrian message and a national politics of confrontation with Pakistan. It has sutured a specific form of regional chauvinism with a national message about Hindu power through the deployment of the figure of the Muslim as the archetype of the invader, the stranger, and the traitor. The Shiva Sena has achieved this suture by a remarkably patient and powerful media campaign of hate, rumor, and mobilization, notably in the party newspaper *Saamna*, which has been the favorite reading of Mumbai's policemen for at least two decades. The Shiva Sena has done all this by systematically gutting the apparatus of city government, by criminalizing city politics at every level, and by working hand-in-glove with organized crime in many areas, notably in real estate, which brings us back to space and its politics in Mumbai.

Here we need to note certain important facts. According to several analysts, about 50 percent of Mumbai's 12 million citizens live in slums or other degraded forms of housing. Another 10 percent are estimated to be pavement dwellers. This amounts to more than 5 million people living in degraded (and degrading) forms of housing. Yet, according to one recent estimate, slum dwellers occupy only about 8 percent of the city's land, which totals about 43,000 hectares. The

rest of the city's land is either industrial land, middle- and high-income housing, or vacant land in the control of the city, the state, or private commercial interests. Bottom line: 5 million poor people live in 8 percent of the land area of a city no bigger than Manhattan and its near boroughs. As some have observed, it is amazing that in these conditions of unbelievable crowding, lack of amenities, and outright struggle for daily survival, Mumbai's poor have not exploded more often.

But they did explode in the riots of 1992–93. During the several weeks of intense rioting after 6 December, there is no doubt that the worst damage was done among those who lived in the most crowded, unredeemable slums. The worst zones of violence were among the very poorest, in areas such as Behrampada, where Hindu and Muslim “toilers,” in Sandeep Pendse’s powerful usage, were pitted against each other by neighborhood thugs, Shiva Sena bosses, and indifferent police. Though the Indian Army was called in to impose order, the fabric of social relations among Mumbai’s poor was deeply damaged by repeated episodes of arson, rape, murder, property damage, and eviction.

In these few weeks of December 1992 and January 1993, there was also a frenzied mobilization by the Shiva Sena of its sympathizers to create public terror and to confront Muslims with the message that there was no public space for them and that they would be hunted down and killed or evicted from their homes wherever possible. There was a marked increase in ethnocidal uses of a new ritual form—the *maha arati*¹—which was a kind of guerrilla form of public worship organized by Hindu groups to push Muslims out of streets and public spaces in areas where the two groups lived cheek by jowl. These ritual acts of ethnic warfare were mostly conducted in the middle-class rental zones of Central Mumbai; but in the slums and jopad-pattis of the north and west there was fire-bombing and arson, street murders and beatings, and the main victims were the poorest of the Muslim poor—rag pickers, abattoir workers, manual laborers, indigents. Across the city, the Shiva Sena mobilized a national geography,

1. The *maha arati* is widely conceded to be a ritual innovation by the Shiva Sena, first developed in December 1992, in which a domestic Hindu ritual, traditionally conducted indoors, was converted into a large-scale, public devotional offering to various Hindu gods and goddesses. It is marked by the centrality of sacred fires (as in most domestic worship among Hindus), and, in this new format, was also accompanied by elaborate and incendiary anti-Muslim speeches and exhortations by pro-Hindu politicians and public figures. By various reliable estimates, it appears that several hundred of these inciting rituals were staged in the period between 6 December 1992 and 15 January 1993 in major streets, intersections, parks, and neighborhoods in Bombay. The *Report of the Srikrishna Commission* notes the high correlation between these public rituals and the frenzied destruction of Muslim lives and property when the crowds dispersed after these high-intensity politico-ritual spectacles. A full account of this major new cultural form is yet to appear in print.

spreading the rumor that the Pakistani navy was about to attack Mumbai from its shoreline on the Arabian Sea, and anxious Hindu residents turned searchlights onto the ocean to spot Pakistani warships.

Meanwhile, inside the city, Muslims were cornered in slums and middle-class areas, in their own crowded spaces, hunted down with lists of names in the hands of organized mobs, and Muslim businesses and properties were relentlessly put to the torch. There was a strange point of conjuncture between these violent efforts to create Hindu public spheres and spaces, to depopulate Muslim flats and neighborhoods, and to destroy Muslim bodies and properties, and an ongoing form of civic violence directed against Mumbai's street dwellers, which I discuss below.

In the weeks preceding 6 December, there had been a renewed effort by the Municipal Corporation to destroy the structures built by unlicensed street vendors and to destroy unauthorized residential dwellings that had sprouted throughout Mumbai. Here, municipal zeal (personified by G. Khairnar, an overzealous city official who was strangely not a Shiva Sena client) joined with political propaganda to create a tinderbox in the heavily Muslim areas of Central Bombay from Bhandi Bazaar to Byculla, especially along Mohammed Ali Road, the great Muslim thoroughfare of contemporary Mumbai. In this neighborhood, Muslim gangsters had worked with the connivance of shady financiers and corrupt city officials to build many unauthorized residential structures (through intimidation, forgery, and other subversions of the law) while terrorizing any potential resisters with armed force.

The Bombay municipality has had a tradition of chasing after street vendors for at least three decades in a constant public battle of cat-and-mouse that the vendors usually won. There was also a long and dark history of efforts to tear down slum dwellings, as in other cities in India. But in the late 1980s, this battle was intensified, as the nexus between real estate speculators, organized crime, and corrupt officialdom reached new heights. Although this nexus involved illegal housing and unlicensed vending throughout Mumbai, Khairnar's municipal gendarmerie just happened to focus their civic violence on an area dominated by the Muslim underworld. Thus, tragically, just before the Babri Masjid was destroyed in Ayodhya, Bombay's Muslim underworld was in a rage, and Mumbai's Muslim residents were convinced that there was, indeed, a civic effort to dismantle their dwellings and vending stalls. This is where the battle for space—a heated triangle involving organized mafias, corrupt local officials and politicians, and a completely predatory class of real estate speculators—met the radical politics of Hindutva in December 1992.

The story of this encounter is sufficiently complex as to require detailed treatment elsewhere. But the big picture is relevant here. The geography of violence in Mumbai during December 1992 and January 1993 is overwhelmingly coincident with the geography of urban crowding, street commerce, and housing nightmares in Mumbai. In this violence, two grisly specters came to haunt and animate one another in the world of Mumbai's poorest citizens, as well as its working classes: the specter of a zero-sum battle for residential space and street commerce, figured as a struggle between civic discipline and organized crime; and the specter of Mumbai's Muslims as a fifth column from Pakistan, ready to subvert Mumbai's sacred geography.

In this macabre conjuncture, the most horrendously poor, crowded, and degraded areas of the city were turned into battlegrounds of the poor against the poor, with the figure of the Muslim providing the link between scarce housing, illegal commerce, and national geography writ urban. In 1992–93, in a word, spectral housing met ethnic fear, and the Muslim body was the site of this terrifying negotiation. Of course, the middle and upper classes suffered as well, largely through the stoppage of commerce, movement, and production. But the overwhelming burden of violence—both its perpetration and its suffering—was borne by the bodies of Mumbai's toilers and the massive sense of having no place in Mumbai (reinscribed as India) was overwhelmingly borne by its Muslims.

Here we must return to consider the links between spectral housing, the decosmopolitanizing of Bombay, and the ethnic violence of 1992 and 1993. The deliberate effort to terrorize Bombay's Muslims, to attack their vending stalls, to burn their shops and homes, to Hinduize their public spaces through violent ritual innovations, and to burn and maim their bodies can hardly be seen as a public policy solution to Bombay's housing problems. Neither can it be laid at the door of a single agency or power, even one so powerful and central to these events as the Shiva Sena. But it does seem plausible to suggest that in a city where daily sociality involves the negotiations of immense spatial stress, the many spectralities that surround housing (from indigent bodies to fantasy housing schemes and empty flats) can create the conditions for a violent reinscription of public space as Hindu space. In a city of 12 million persons, many occupying no more space than their bodies, it is not hard to see that imagining a city without Muslims, a sacred and Hindu city, free of the traffic of cash and the promiscuity of "business" (think of all the burnt Muslim shops of 1992 and 1993), could appear—briefly—to be a bizarre utopia of urban renewal. This monstrous utopia cannot be imagined without the spectral economies of Bombay's housing. But it also

needed a political vision—the Shiva Sena’s vision of a Hindu Mumbai—to move it towards fire and death.

The rest was contingency—or conjuncture.

Arguments for the Real

This is a grim story about one of the world’s most dramatic scenes of urban inequality and spectral citizenship. But specters and utopias—as practices of the imagination—occupy the same moral terrain. And Bombay does not lack for a complex politics of the real. Throughout the twentieth century, and even in the nineteenth century, Bombay had powerful civic traditions of philanthropy, social work, political activism, and social justice. These traditions have stayed powerful in the last three decades of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, where globalization, deindustrialization, and ethno-urbanism have become linked forces. Both before and after the 1992–93 riots, there have been extraordinary displays of courage and critical imagination in Mumbai. These have come from neighborhood groups (*mohulla* committees) committed to squelching rumors and defusing Hindu-Muslim tensions; from housing activists; from lawyers and social workers; and from journalists, architects, and trade union activists. All of these individuals and groups have held up powerful images of a cosmopolitan, secular, multicultural Bombay, and a Mumbai whose 43,000 hectares could be reorganized to accommodate its 5 million poorly housed citizens.

These activist organizations—among them some of the most creative and brilliant pro-poor and housing-related nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—are making their own arguments about the political real in Mumbai. Their story, which, among other things, has forced the publication of an extraordinary judicial report on the 1992–93 riots (which the Shiva Sena government tried mightily to bury), will be fully told elsewhere. This story is also linked to the extraordinary courage of ordinary people in Mumbai, and often among the poorest of the poor, to shelter their friends and neighbors from ethnocidal mob violence. These utopian visions and critical practices are resolutely modernist in their visions of equity, justice, and cultural cosmopolitanism. In the spectral world that I have described, they are not naive or nostalgic. They are part of the ongoing struggle for that space where Mumbai’s Real meets the real Bombay.

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include “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination” (*Public Culture*, winter 2000) and “The Grounds of the Nation-State: Identity, Violence, and Territory” in *Nationalism and Internationalism in the Post–Cold War Era* (2000), edited by K. Goldmann, U. Hannerz, and C. Westin.

Bibliographical Note

There is a large scholarly literature that constitutes the foundation for this ethnographic essay. In lieu of detailed citations, I offer some indications of a few major debts and scholarly engagements. This essay would have been unthinkable without the major two-volume collection of essays on Bombay edited by Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner—*Bombay: Mosaic of Modern Culture* and *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1995). See also *Bombay: The Cities Within* by Sharada Dwivedi and Rahul Mehrotra (Bombay: India Book House, 1995) and *Damning Verdict: Report of the Srikrishna Commission* (Mumbai: Sabrang Communications and Publishing, n.d.). My sense of the predicament of megacities in Asia and elsewhere has been deeply informed by the work of my friend and colleague Saskia Sassen. My understanding of Bombay’s special housing dilemmas has been enriched by a series of case studies and reports produced by A. Jockin, Sundar Burra, Celine D’Cruz, and Sheela Patel. My debts in regard to the analysis of Hindu nationalism in Bombay are too many to list, but special mention must be made of the ongoing work of Thomas Blom Hansen—see, for instance, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999)—Ranjit Hoskote, and Kalpana Sharma. See also Romila Thapar, “Syndicated Hinduism” in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, edited by Günther-Dietz Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1989), and Sandeep Pendse, “Toil, Sweat, and the City” in Patel and Thorner’s *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*. My recourse to the trope of the *spectral* is on an ongoing engagement with the work of Jacques Derrida, Fredric Jameson, and James Siegel, though they may well not recognize themselves in this text.