**The conjunctural spaces of ‘new India’: Imagined geographies of 2010s India in representations by returnee migrants**

**Abstract**

Focusing on returnee Indian authors, this article contributes to analytical perspectives on imagined geographies. We map the imagined geographies of 2010s Delhi and India, as experienced and created by Indian returnee migrant authors, drawing on the hybrid nonfiction works *India Becoming: A Portrait of Life in Modern India* by Akash Kapur and *Capital: The Eruption of Delhi* by Rana Dasgupta. Juxtaposed, these texts sited on the borderline between fiction and nonfiction, construct and produce knowledge on an imagined ‘new India’, textualised in literary form. Kapur and Dasgupta, having returned from long sojourns in the West are now India-based, are privileged observers of and participants in the very subject of their study – the ground realities of contemporary, twenty-first century India – both temporally and geographically. As diasporic narrators of a ‘new India’, they stand within their physical landscapes as well as the created landscapes of their narrations. This article draws on the construction of imagined geographies, with a focus on the issue of affect and, relatedly, identification, desire, and transgression, and their impact on the representation of an imaginary homeland, to unpack the tension and dissonance between their imagined geographies of India – as residents and as members of the diaspora – and their lived geographies. We conclude that Kapur and Dasgupta’s imagined geographies offer an alternative account of the contemporary processes that geographers are seeking to describe and explain. Not only do their imagined geographies impact reality, but also construct new worlds and realities of ‘new India’ in literary representation. Their hybrid nonfiction texts position India globally, carefully un-glamorising the binary representations of ‘India Shining’ and ‘Dark India’, and recovering the multiplicity of presences in the conjunctural spaces of ‘new India’.

**Keywords**

Akash Kapur, Rana Dasgupta, ‘new India’, imagined geographies, literary geographies, representation

**Introduction**

Every new configuration contains masses of the old.

—S. Hall[[1]](#endnote-1)

This article maps the imagined geographies of 2010s Delhi and India, as experienced and created by Indian returnee migrant authors, drawing on the hybrid nonfiction works *India Becoming: A Portrait of Life in Modern India* (2012) by Akash Kapur and *Capital: The Eruption of Delhi* (2014) by Rana Dasgupta.[[2]](#endnote-2) We follow Rashmi Varma in arguing for a re-politicised and territorialised reading of place, whether local or national (as opposed to a transnational and deterritorialised reading), a critical movement Varma deems should be extended to the reading of fiction,[[3]](#endnote-3) by applying it not only to the reading of fiction and to analyses of the postcolonial city, but also to hybrid nonfiction and to rural India(s) combined with the urban imaginary of the Indian megalopolis.

Dasgupta’s *Capital* concentrates on Delhi and northern India, with the capital of India being mobilised as a ‘conjunctural space’, a space that produces, as defined by Varma, ‘a critical combination of historical events, material bodies, structural forces and representational economies which [propel] new constellations of domination and resistance, and the formation of new political subjects’.[[4]](#endnote-4) This definition of conjunctural space is particularly apt for understanding the fraught socio-political terrain of a consumer-oriented and increasingly conservative ‘new India’, in particular the impacts of the enforcing by the Modi government of Hindutva or Hindu Right politics that purports to uphold more ‘authentic’ Indian values around the triad of family, faith, and community. Writings of rural India by cosmopolitan returnee migrants are far rarer than urban representations, which makes *India Becoming* – even if Kapur’s critique is issued, at times, from an exceedingly conservative political standpoint – valuable in this genre of hybrid nonfiction which unpacks these conjunctures of growing socio-political tensions in which a ‘new India’ finds itself. Juxtaposed, these two texts sited on the borderline between fiction and nonfiction, provide a rich canvas of representation of the imagined ‘new India’, textualised in literary form, where the reader observes continuing practices of despotism and inequality fostered by neoliberalism, both in urban and rural India, that strengthen new inclusions and exclusions of citizenship.

Kapur and Dasgupta, who having returned from long sojourns in the West are now India-based, are privileged observers of and participants in the very subject of their study – the ground realities of contemporary, twenty-first century India – both temporally and geographically. As diasporic narrators of a ‘new India’, they stand within their physical landscapes as well as the created landscapes of their narrations. Kapur and Dasgupta’s vivid accounts overlay on-site, in-depth observations of a ‘new India’, with penetrating insights on cultural dimensions of older and more recent landscapes, and an analysis of personal and emotional reactions. As such, this article draws on the construction of imagined geographies, with a focus on the issue of affect and, relatedly, identification, desire, transgression, and even fantasy, and their impact on the representation of imaginary homelands.[[5]](#endnote-5) Building on the premise that the identity of these subjects of enunciation is, in Stuart Hall’s famed formulation, ‘a “production”, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation’,[[6]](#endnote-6) formed in and by power struggles, this article understands these returnee migrant authors as advantageously sited, given their sociocultural capital, within that which they are representing.

Furthermore, conceptualising identity and self as unstable and fluid, in motion and continuously negotiated, underlines the need and desire for the textual construction of imagined geographies of the homeland, particularly for migrants such as Kapur and Dasgupta who have returned to the homeland after a long sojourn. In this sense, the forging of such textual geographies is relatable to the political project of cultural studies and its preoccupation with theories and practices of representation and othering (even if these authors might stand accused of conservative leanings given their privileged social status). Following this critical lineage, this article offers a Gramscian-inspired conjunctural analysis ‘which is embedded, descriptive, and historically and contextually specific’[[7]](#endnote-7) or, in Hall’s words, focused on producing ‘theory as a set of contested, localized, conjunctural knowledges, which have to be debated in a dialogical way’.[[8]](#endnote-8) This aim brings us back to the epigraph of this introductory section, wherein Hall stresses the relevance of thinking conjuncturally for the purposes of critiquing the present moment and achieving cultural and political change.

The relationship between diasporic subjectivity and the necessity of creating imagined geographies has long been established in the field of cultural geography. In the words of Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson:

the irony of these times is that as actual places and localities become ever more blurred and indeterminate, *ideas* of ethnically and culturally distinct places become perhaps more salient. It is here that it becomes most visible how imagined communities come to be attached to imagined places, as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialised anchors in their actuality.[[9]](#endnote-9)

In investigating the imagined construction of place by cosmopolitan returnee migrants who write their understanding of and reception by Delhi and India, this article contemplates the prism of class privilege (resulting in material conditions and economic advantages) these textual representations are refracted through. These representations are issued from a conjunctural ‘new India’, which is in fact an invisible country to most Indians, inhabited by a small elite who has access to business class lounges, five-star hotel suites, and luxury malls – and international publishing platforms.

Against this backdrop, this article unpacks the tension and dissonance between Kapur and Dasgupta’s cosmopolitan (possibly neoliberal) imagined geographies of India and their lived geographies. These returnee migrant authors are part of the transnational ‘displaced peoples’ Gupta and Ferguson refer to in the quote above, but their movements are comparatively frictionless, relatively unrestricted by distance and locality, as they are able to move across national borders with ease. Their occasionally re-orientalistic writing, authorised and celebrated by Western publishing outlets, plays a significant role in shaping the idea of India, both within the country and globally, given their dual status as residents and as members of the diaspora.[[10]](#endnote-10)

**Spaces and places of the imagined**

Imaginative geographies make a difference, that is to say, they are real.

—P.J. Cloke, P. Crang and M. Goodwin[[11]](#endnote-11)

Geographers’ interest in literature was rather marginal until the 1970s, less rejected than ignored, deemed subjective and therefore ‘unfit to serve as solid scientific data’.[[12]](#endnote-12) The reawakening of geographical interest in the textual is a belated response to the linguistic turn in twentieth-century social theory,[[13]](#endnote-13) along with a humanistic Anglo-Saxon geography which promoted the use of literary sources in order to return human agency and rehabilitate subjectivity that had been side-lined by databanks.[[14]](#endnote-14) There are of course obvious areas of research for strategic development in the interstices of geography and literary studies (or in literary geographies), as Silk (1984) suggests: feminism, area-based movements such as regionalism, separatism, nationalism, and landscape or environmental appreciation.[[15]](#endnote-15) We may add to that issues of home, identity, reflexivity, development, children’s geographies, urban geographies, migration, and return-migrations.

While geography’s ‘borrowing’ from literature is not new, geographers have been charged with being looters of literature,[[16]](#endnote-16) using fiction in a superficial way, as a source of pretty descriptions, selecting excerpts which reinforce what geographers already know and which fit with their own existent comprehension and interpretation of places or situations.[[17]](#endnote-17) This limited deployment meant that literature was not problematised within geography, under-used in challenging and destabilising entrenched positions, the subversive potential of literature left unexploited. Literature was regarded as a warehouse of handy descriptions and taken at face value, instead of being regarded as a means of cultural communications,[[18]](#endnote-18) a product in the circuit of culture, with its own politics of production and consumption. In 2005/6, Miles Ogborn called for a re-evaluation of the relationship between geography and literary studies.[[19]](#endnote-19) However, even as recently as 2010, Angharad Saunders noted that ‘some of the more recent and incisive texts on the relationship between geography and literature come not from geography but from literary studies’, which continues to pose questions about ‘the resilience of geography’s literary imagination and the motivations which shape geographical engagement with a text’.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Notwithstanding concerns about how literature is deployed – or fails to be deployed – in geography, as well as the still limited relationship between the two disciplines, cultural geography has incorporated in the last few decades more critical literary material and strategies than ever before, with textual datasets which concentrate attention on the conceptualisations of space and place. In fact, Shiela Hones (2008) noted that from the mid-1990s onwards there have been important changes already with geographers’ engagement with literature, with an increasing understanding of the need to engage with not only the *text* itself, but the *context* – of writing, reading, publishing, promoting. However, Hones notes that there are still two strands – notably, the textuality of space and the spatiality of text – which ‘remain stubbornly distinct.’[[21]](#endnote-21)

In this article, we extend the engagement between literary studies and geography through Kapur and Dasgupta’s writings, by exploring their positionality, postcoloniality, and re-orientalism. We home in on not just the context, but also *texture of representation*, attempting to engage with the twin strands of textuality in space and the spatiality of text. For the first, we take into account the spaces of ‘new India’ which these returnee authors encounter, as well as how, in the encounter, they engender imagined new spaces of ‘new India’, which are then performed in the latter strand, in the spatiality of text within a postcolonial setting with its particularised positions of entrenched power and authority.

Literary geographies have contributed to foreground the *geographical* in fields such as the postcolonial, where previously it was the historical which held centre stage. In this field, chief amongst the sources which have served as key datasets for cultural geographers are novels, in particular social realism novels, which feature prominently in postcolonial Indian writing in English (IWE). A master trope of postcolonial IWE at least since the 1980s–90s, the construction of imagined homelands through fiction has been the focus of geographers interested in exploring the associations between the geographical and the literary. However, nonfiction has also found a place in literary geographies, especially in what could be loosely termed ‘hybrid nonfictions’. In addition to Salman Rushdie’s hybrid nonfiction *Imaginary Homelands*, paradigmatic of the use of this trope of imaginary homelands are the novels *The Enigma of Arrival* by V.S. Naipauland *Midnight’s Children* by Rushdie.[[22]](#endnote-22) *India Becoming* and *Capital* share, with these earlier works, an awareness of how ruptures and discontinuities have shaped not only Indian cultural identities, at home and particularly in the diaspora, but also *ideas* of ‘India’. In this respect, Kapur and Dasgupta’s texts reflect some of the enduring key themes involved in the reinvention and restoration of imagined geographies, such as assimilation vs alienation/anomie and tradition vs modernity.

The extended social commentaries of returnee migrant Indian authors such as Dasgupta and Kapur are not fiction *tout court*, but nevertheless present a strong narrative thread, a large measure of reportage from observation and personal testimony, much analysis and even a sense of exposé. Annjeanette Wiese would have it that hybrid nonfictions such as Dasgupta and Kapur’s ‘perhaps best represent truth claims at the beginning of the twenty-first century’[[23]](#endnote-23) because they are ‘narratives that play with the boundary that readers expect will delineate fiction from nonfiction in order to emphasise the difficulty of representing experience’.[[24]](#endnote-24) This fluidity with boundaries, both textual as well as spatial, is a very significant characteristic of literary geographies, which facilitates the porous approach of cultural geography to place.[[25]](#endnote-25) More than twenty years ago, Doreen Massey had already outlined a far more progressive global sense of place,[[26]](#endnote-26) incorporating an extended world connectedness, and flagging up how far-flung spaces are far less circumscribed and disconnected than previously conceptualised. In Massey’s words:

Instead (…) of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself.[[27]](#endnote-27)

Cosmopolitan writers like Dasgupta and Kapur are archetypal cultural producers of precisely the kinds of reconceptualisations of borders – spatial and social –through imagined geographies, with their hybrid nonfictions reflecting their own personal mobilities characterised by frictionless cultural and geographical crossovers.

Literature has always informed imagined geographies, and indeed it was Edward Said, a professor of literature at Columbia University, who first coined the term ‘imaginative geographies’, arguing how non-Western cultures had been depicted in very particular ways by Western cultures (which essentialised and fixed them as backward and exotic, and in perpetual binary with the West), and that thus such imaginations – and representations – have gone on to influence the history of global power relationships.[[28]](#endnote-28) Intersecting the fields of postcolonial studies and cultural geography, Said’s theory of Orientalism, as Joanne Sharp notes, maps an imagined geography which ‘shaped the real geographies practised in the space of the Orient’,[[29]](#endnote-29) because, ‘[f]irst, Europeans imagined a single culture into the space of the “Orient” that was at odds with the diversity of the peoples, cultures and environments contained within the space of the Orient, and second, this space was defined by texts and not by people from the Orient itself’.[[30]](#endnote-30) In Said’s phrasing, ‘stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonised people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history’.[[31]](#endnote-31) As the theory of Orientalism demonstrates, imagined geographies were originally based on myth and legend, particularly of peoples and places that lay beyond the borders of Europe, initially producing ‘a textualised world rather than one based on observation and experience’.[[32]](#endnote-32)

The construction of imagined geographies has come a long way, and is now often well-grounded in participant observation, ethnographical studies, and in-depth research. Imagined geographies are not just subjective products of individual perception, more than the work of individual minds. In Paul Cloke, Philip Crang, and Mark Goodwin’s words, ‘[t]he process of making imaginative geographies involves a variety of embodied practices and knowledges; it is not simply a product of conscious thought’.[[33]](#endnote-33) These geographers also flag up the important point that ‘imaginations are social as well as individual’[[34]](#endnote-34) – it is not necessarily the single literary work which may be of greatest impact, as it is often the collective body of literature of a genre which is representative and influential, and which colours and shapes the image, identity, and culture of a given group of a particular time-space axis. Imagined geographies thus illustrate the role, relevance, and impact of ideas in the real world and lived experiences, even in individuals’ actions,[[35]](#endnote-35) and create collective imaginations about identity and difference which are then part of constructing ‘real’ worlds. In this respect, Elleke Boehmer and Dominic Davies stress the collective when they maintain that ‘literary forms not only reflect, but also stimulate different modes of spatial imagining’.[[36]](#endnote-36) .

Much research has been dedicated to the exoticisation and marketing of the local in postcolonial literatures,[[37]](#endnote-37) specifically to the glamorising and fetishising of ‘Dark India’, which remark upon the commodification of India’s underbelly and the essentialising of Indian identity aligned on such representations.[[38]](#endnote-38) Many celebrated fictional and nonfictional works on India (such as Aravind Adiga’s Booker Prize winning *The White Tiger* and his subsequent novels, Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People*, Kavery Nambisan’s *The Story That Must Not Be Told*, and Katherine Boo’s *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*[[39]](#endnote-39)) have depicted ‘Dark India’, the underbelly of Indian cities with its slums. Arguably, through the commodification of poverty and destitution, and of Indian endemic corruption and systemic exploitations, these texts present the ‘neo-colonial visage of the third world city as a disorderly and dysfunctional entity’,[[40]](#endnote-40) an argument that can also be levelled against the representation of Delhi in *Capital*, for example when Dasgupta describes the endemic corruption in the city:

Delhi is a place where people generally assume – far more, say, than in Bangalore or Mumbai – that the world is programmed to deny them everything, and that making a proper life will therefore require constant hustle – and manipulation of the rules. Everyone, myself included, uses bribes and connections to get the things they need – a visa, a driving license, a quick resolution of a legal case, a place in a school, a place on a guest list – and if this city seems obsessed with status it is for good reason: power, wealth and networks deliver an immeasurably easier and better life.[[41]](#endnote-41)

Literary representations have long given rise to the construction of imagined geographies, and forcefully so for urban imagined geographies of the postcolony in India because so much of its writing in English has focused on the major cities ­– Mumbai and Delhi, but also Kolkata, Bangalore, and Amritsar. Against this backdrop, Leonie Sandercock’s metaphor ‘mongrel city’, inspired by *The Satanic Verses*,[[42]](#endnote-42) is well suited to Indian cities, describing as it does a ‘new urban condition in which difference, otherness, fragmentation, splintering, multiplicity, heterogeneity, diversity, plurality prevail’.[[43]](#endnote-43) *The Satanic Verses* is, in Rushdie’s well-known phrase, ‘a love-song to our mongrel selves’; ‘a love song to our mongrel cities’ is the subtitle of the introductory chapter of Sandercock’s *Cosmopolis II*:

For some this is to be feared, signifying the decline of civilization as we know it in the West. For others (like Rushdie and myself) it is to be celebrated as a great possibility: the possibility of living alongside others who are different, learning from them, creating new worlds with them, instead of fearing them.[[44]](#endnote-44)

Urban spaces that are mapped in creative practise can ‘explore and negotiate, and at times disrupt and reconstruct’.[[45]](#endnote-45) This perspective is useful in examining the postcolonial city (and sometimes the ‘unintended city’[[46]](#endnote-46)) of the Global South, where, ‘[e]ndless informal proliferation marks most cities in the postcolonial world, and India is no exception’.[[47]](#endnote-47) The space of the literary is clearly a particularly suitable space in which to investigate the pluralities of India as homeland and its capital Delhi, a megacity of eleven million-plus, with its urban area (extending to cover the Union territory) encompassing twenty-six million people. Dasgupta’s and Kapur’s books narrate the cohabiting of the exploited and victimised (‘Dark India’), with ‘the members of that rising, moneyed section of the Indian urban population who see themselves as the primary agents – and beneficiaries – of globalisation’ (‘India Shining’).[[48]](#endnote-48) Both these works and other recent nonfiction narratives of ‘rising India’, such as Suketu Mehta’s *Maximum City* which might be said to have initiated these types of narratives in 2005,[[49]](#endnote-49) have been read as correctives to celebratory narratives of post-liberalisation,[[50]](#endnote-50) wherein the economy of the subcontinent is being restructured in accordance with the spending power of the ‘new Indian middle class’.[[51]](#endnote-51) Nevertheless, in many ways the hybrid nonfictions by Dasgupta and Kapur – and also by Aman Sethi, Amit Chaudhuri, Amitava Kumar, among others – offer radical representations of India that depart from worn-out representations of India as the place of exotic poverty. This much is conveyed by Kapur:

It was a cliché to write about poverty in India, a cliché to point out the contrasts and inequalities within the nation. These stories have been told for decades. India is tired of hearing them, as is much of the world. And so, over the last decade or two, the narrative has changed, now people write stories about India’s upliftment, about a nation on the move, emerging from the shadows of poverty into the glitter of twenty-first-century prosperity.[[52]](#endnote-52)

These revamped, arguably neoliberal representations tend to be pitched neither at the East nor the West, but seemingly more at the cosmopolitan reader who is acquainted with both worlds (not to mention proficient in literary English), and who is able to see (and importantly to conceptualise and imagine) the Orient and Occident in relative rather than absolute terms. Drawing on *India Becoming* and *Capital* as paradigmatic of these new representations, the next section of the article demonstrates that these texts are deeply personal accounts, and yet are also empirically drawn from ‘fieldwork’, bordering on ethnography, and demonstrating considerable authorial integrity in the concerted conveyance of an as faithful and representative depiction as possible of the India they have encountered and revisited upon return.

***India Becoming* and *Capital*: India and Delhi imagined**

*India Becoming* and *Capital*,like most hybrid nonfiction texts about post-liberalisation India, are embedded in conjunctural spaces – material and historical contexts, as well as actual and socially constructed geographies. The representation of the conjunctural spaces of a ‘new India’ not only mirrors political and economic power struggles, but also has a real impact on social debates about national identity, cultural belonging, and the meaning of the modernisation and development of the subcontinent. While the issue of homelands as social constructs has been discussed exhaustively by scholarship, especially in postcolonial studies, notably, the place of affect in the relationship between, in this case, returnee migrants to India and their homeland is vital, though it has been relatively overlooked. The returnee’s entangled identity construct is clearly a result of affective displacement. As such, this article foregrounds affect as a key component in the sometimes painful, often re-orientalistic creation of contemporary imagined geographies.

Dasgupta’s feelings of being at home in his ‘adopted city’[[53]](#endnote-53) are not always easy. In ‘a world of encounters’, his emotional state is frequently intertwined with the perception of out-of-placeness and the affect of *‘non-belonging*’.[[54]](#endnote-54) While for both Dasgupta and his father, understanding India, concurrent with an understanding of the diasporic self, brings perplexity and disappointment, this proves particularly painful for the father, who had left his ‘home’ Calcutta for Britain in the 1960s. After half a century, in a completely changed Kolkata, ‘he can find nothing of himself’.[[55]](#endnote-55) He also does not recognise the area of Karol Bagh where he had lived with his family in Delhi in the 1950s, as, ‘[w]here the house must have been was now a row of steel-fronted warehouses’.[[56]](#endnote-56) Such a complexity of the identity of Dasgupta’s father’s diasporic self and his state of affective displacement can be confronted with Purnima Mankekar’s arguments about the ways transnational public cultures, built on the circulation of media and commodities, participate in the production of ‘affective and sensorial ecologies’ (and geographies) at home and abroad.[[57]](#endnote-57) Drawing on Sara Ahmed,[[58]](#endnote-58) Mankekar examines precisely, ‘the relationship between transnational public cultures and the affective regimes that underpin processes of in/habitation, being moved, feeling attached, and feeling in or out of place’.[[59]](#endnote-59) Highlighting an idea of social disintegration and lack of connectivity,[[60]](#endnote-60) the two ‘failed homecomings’ of Dasgupta’s father are compounded by emotional states of out-of-placeness. Likewise, drawing on the idea of homecoming, Kapur’s book was also a working out and coming to terms with the ‘new India’ he found on his return from New York, as the author discloses: ‘This book is in part a story of that homecoming – of how I embraced and found myself revitalized in the new India …’;[[61]](#endnote-61) ‘[this book] represents my effort to come to terms with the forces remaking my home’.[[62]](#endnote-62)

Dasgupta’s and Kapur’s writings seek to understand the ‘new India’ they find primarily through immersion in Indian life upon arrival, participant observation, reflection, discussion, and textualisation of first-person observations; these methodologies become visible in their texts through narrating the life stories of many Indians whom they befriend and interview, and whose myriad perspectives and range of lifestyles and everyday life situations are shared with the reader in the piecing together of the mosaic that is the India of the twenty-first century. In seeking to understand the India they had left long ago and then returned to after many years in the West, these migrant returnee writers have questioned much and listened intently, finding, like many before them, that the massive diversity which comprises India is most effectively engaged with via the lives and stories of its people, in fact, through an imagined India. Both these hybrid nonfictions share a desire to depict and comment upon their changed nation and country in ways neither apologist nor condemnatory, yet candid and even-handed. The subject matter of *India Becoming* ranges from the rural to urban comparisons and contrasts, from people working in the agricultural sector, to urbanites in IT, consultancy, outsourcing, and sales, and people moving into real estate and development. Similar to Dasgupta’s *Capital*, Kapur’s book assesses the impact of India’s rapid economic development on winners and losers, though the comparison comprises urban and rural industries and lifestyles and is concentrated in southern India, occasionally taking the cities of Bangalore and Mumbai into its cultural geography.

The India Kapur finds is unfamiliar to him, offering the promise of an optimistic future. As he states at the beginning of the book: ‘India was emerging from its depression, a centuries-long misadventure of colonialism, poverty, and under-development. Now, on its way to what was surely a better future, the country was giddy, exuberant’.[[63]](#endnote-63) In the context of the transnationalisation of labour, he sees the employees of new industries such as IT start-ups as foot soldiers driving the new economy with confidence, a willingness to work hard, and enthusiasm. For a while, Kapur is borne on this tide of optimism surrounding the idea of ‘India Shining’, as it seems the nation, now a strategic site of global capital, is benefitting from the transnational and translocal dynamics of globalisation:

By the time I returned home, India was determinedly shedding the abstemiousness and detachment that had defined it since independence. ‘Material acquisition’ was no longer the preserve or Americans. The ‘otherworldliness’ of an earlier era – a certain apathy, a charming if ultimately unproductive indifference – was being replaced by the energetic (and often ruthless) ambition of a new generation. (…) I felt as though India was co-opting the very qualities that defined America.[[64]](#endnote-64)

This buoyancy is shared by Dasgupta when he thinks that the rapidly-growing Delhi could become a heuristic space, able to produce and offer knowledge about alternative modernities: ‘perhaps the Third-World city, long thought of as a place of desolation and despair, might actually contain implicit forms of knowledge that all places could benefit from’.[[65]](#endnote-65) However, both Dasgupta and Kapur soon begin to doubt this unrelenting optimism, deeming it a blinkered faith, even a utopia. Kapur finds his nation, to its peril, in the thrall of its own economic success:

I began to feel that the country was being engulfed in its encounter with capitalism (...). Millions of Indians have risen out of poverty since the nation’s economic reforms. But millions more remain in poverty, and millions, too, are being subjected to the psychological dislocation of having their world change, of watching a social order that has given meaning to them – and their parents – and their grandparents before them, slip away. Development, I came to understand, was a form of creative destruction. For everyone whose life was being regenerated or rejuvenated in modern India, there was someone, as well, whose life was being destroyed.[[66]](#endnote-66)

This returnee author also observes that, while in cities modernisation was less ambivalent than in the countryside where the metropolises like New Delhi and Mumbai were self-confident and brash, in the rural setting, ‘[t]he present carried all the baggage of the past’ as ‘[i]t was hard to disentangle the old from the new, and harder yet to separate the positive from the negative’.[[67]](#endnote-67) Kapur’s own representation reflects this ambivalence: he simultaneously celebrates the burgeoning capitalism of a ‘new India’ which drives opportunity, social liberation, individual fulfilment, and greater material wealth for its people, while mourning the demise of India’s identity and tradition of spirituality and public service. Likewise, Dasgupta despondently observes ‘the conversion of all that was slow, intimate and idiosyncratic into the fast, vast and generic’.[[68]](#endnote-68) Living in the countryside, Kapur also worries about the environmental cost and degradation, largely invisible to those with their focus on the urban and the metropolises: ‘India was burning – and, in a similar way, it was eroding, melting, drying, silting up, suffocating. Across the country, rivers and lakes and glaciers were disappearing, underground aquifers being depleted, air quality declining, beaches being swept away’.[[69]](#endnote-69) In Kapur’s analysis, he seems to regard the Indians, and even Indian culture, as far more resilient to the dangers of globalisation and development than the land itself, particularly in the countryside.

When Kapur himself is caught up in an angry mob when his driver hits two boys on a moped when he finds the police unwilling to protect his safety and that he is at the mercy of anarchy, he writes of Naipaul’s prescience in the work *India: A Million Mutinies Now* in having predicted the flip side of emancipation: the idea that violence, anarchy, distress, cruelty, disturbance, rage, and revolt will accompany India’s redefinition. Notwithstanding the fact that his reaction hinges on classed codes, Kapur concludes that ‘the story of loss and renewal, of ruin and reinvention’ is a quintessentially Indian story; indeed, ‘[t]his duality, this delicate dance between destruction and creativity, between tearing down and building up, was what defined the Indian condition at the start of the twenty-first century’.[[70]](#endnote-70) Similarly, when Dasgupta arrived in Delhi, a decade into post-liberalisation, ‘[t]he old was dying, the new was in preparation’[[71]](#endnote-71) and the scenario on the streets was of a ‘furious tearing down of all that [old] hardware in the pursuit of globalism’.[[72]](#endnote-72) Dasgupta presents a vocal take on ‘modernity’ with regard to urban planning – shaped as urban ideology – uncovering the complexities of Delhi’s postcolonial geography: ‘I turn through the heart of British Delhi, still preserved as the city’s administrative centre and therefore largely unaffected by the tearing-down and rebuilding that has taken over the rest of the city’.[[73]](#endnote-73)

Coexisting with a strategic preservation of the architecture of colonial Delhi, the ‘pursuit of globalism’ – in other words, the neoliberalism of Modi’s corporate India – led to the destruction of large parts of historical Delhi, such as the area of Karol Bagh, often to make way for spaces which are almost indistinguishable from an American shopping mall. Dasgupta notices and rejects this neoliberal contempt for history:

[An advertisement for a shopping mall] shows a man bursting with consumer glee because he has so many different kinds of outfit to try on. The slogan says, ‘Change Keeps Boring Away.’ It takes me a moment to realise what these words mean. Having just driven forty minutes through a much-punctured city, I am led immediately to thoughts of drills. Of the enormous perforations that have opened up in Delhi’s consciousness during this period of transition. But then I realise that the advertisement is talking, neologistically, about *boredom*. In this churning metropolis of instant millionaires and imperial ambition, where people who fifteen years ago had not seen a microwave now drive Lamborghinis – the biggest threat, apparently, is ennui.[[74]](#endnote-74)

In the early years of the 1990s, Manmohan Singh, the new finance minister and a supporter for many years of India’s outward openness and demise of the centrally planned economy that had been in place since independence, announced the beginning of a new stage in Indian history. A new landscape, the result of much drilling and puncturing subsequent to India’s tryst with neoliberal reform introduced in 1991, was emerging.[[75]](#endnote-75) In their conjunctural portrait of the 2010s, Kapur and Dasgupta position the emergence of a ‘new India’ within a broader time spectrum to give it some perspective through temporal contextualisation. It is certainly problematic to assume that the present moment itself is clear-cut, unitary, and self-transparent. Any representation of the present necessarily combines the moment of capturing and knowing that present and the moment of its anachronistic translation into something knowable by the subject on the receiving end. The present of Delhi, as represented by Kapur and Dasgupta, is hence a non-self-evident object of genealogical inquiry. The very timeliness of the social manifestations the authors are attentive to is refracted through the subtleties of interpretation. In Dasgupta’s *Capital*, Delhi emerges as a landscape imbued with and constructed through the perception and experience of the author and his interviewees in ways that do not flawlessly translate into the precise layers of the colonial and postcolonial (or the formerly colonised), or the local and the global. An example of this is Dasgupta’s description of Delhi’s darkness:

At the core of the city’s soul was something dark and fatal. Like all dark things, however, Delhi held a powerful attraction. It promised terrible, forbidden pleasures. (…) [N]ewcomers (…) sensed the violence under the ground and quickly adopted the city’s ways. Delhi’s grip was nauseating and yet secretly delicious: you gave yourself to it, and you did not realise until you spoke to outsiders just how corrupt you had become. (…) Delhi whispered promises, even to the purest souls, of violence and demonic pleasures. *Come to me, all ye who have been fucked,* it told them, *and* *I will show you how you can fuck others*.[[76]](#endnote-76)

At this stalled juncture, Dasgupta depicts feelings of bafflement and disenchantment – emotional exhaustion even – on the part of his interviewees, who had experienced the Delhi of the times before the progressive liberalisation of trade after 1991. So fraught and complex is the new landscape depicted not only in *Capital*, but also in *India Becoming*, which at once has raised some from rags to riches and dispossessed others, that Boehmer and Davis astutely observe how even the very form of expression Dasgupta and Kapur employ to depict this landscape necessarily has to be stretched: ‘His [Dasgupta’s] breathless, sprawling sentences strain at conventional linguistic limits and, as in Kapur, are once again packed full of lists further congested with adjectives. It is as though the capacity of the language has to be stretched in order for readers to make sense of the southern city, in all its impossible fullness’.[[77]](#endnote-77) Boehmer and Davis further point out that Dasgupta’s ‘sentences are animated, elongated, inflated with clauses, spiked with strong adjectives and equally strong contrastive binaries’.[[78]](#endnote-78)

The returnee writers’ expert use of language notwithstanding, the issues of the English language as a medium of expression in the postcolony and of the marketability of literary texts in English remain vexed ones. From the beginning, Indian writers working in English have had a fraught relationship with the master’s tongue: ‘English is the asset enjoyed by the English-speaking upper classes and the lack of it is a handicap suffered by the rest, traditionally known as the masses. It has thus constituted the most visible divide between the ruling classes and the ruled.’[[79]](#endnote-79) As Kapur flags up of Hari, a friend of a friend he meets in Chennai, ‘From a young age, he was determined to be fluent [in English]; he knew that English was his ticket out of Tindivanam.’[[80]](#endnote-80) In the site of struggle that language continues to be for the formerly colonised, returnee celebrity migrant authors are waging different battles from the ‘average’ Indian citizen, writing back to empire and extending the ‘Rushdification’ of English[[81]](#endnote-81) (i.e., the taking ownership of the coloniser’s language, corresponding to a ‘reverse takeover’ of the Empire).[[82]](#endnote-82) As Rushdie phrases it:

(…) those people who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it – assisted by the English language’s enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers.[[83]](#endnote-83)

While Rushdie’s reception and circulation of his works in the 1980s and 90s cannot be uncritically transposed to contemporaneity, given the different engagement of postcolonial thinking, nowadays, with issues such as secularism, freedom of expression, and the aftermaths of 9/11, the English language in India continues to be seen as the language of Western imperialism, part of a centuries-old system of oppression, double edged a marker of elitism while susceptible to accusations of servility and inauthenticity. However, in the context of today’s India it is increasingly regarded as cultural capital, when considered in association with the socio-economic capital with which it can be exchanged. In fact, English in India is such a potent class marker that Dasgupta feels the need to include a clear disclaimer in *Capital*’s ‘Note to the Reader’, flagging up overtly that he has deliberately flattened out the contours of class by standardising the English language:

In a place – and a world – where a person’s intellectual power is judged so much on the basis of their facility with the English language, I have chosen to make all characters in this book speak the same, standard, English so that their widely differing relationships to this language do not themselves become the issue.[[84]](#endnote-84)

Dasgupta reflects upon the cultural capital English had for Indian anglophiles such as his grandfather but which was inextricably bound with subalternity: ‘My grandfather was an anglophile. His most prominent theory of child-rearing was: “They must speak English”. He demanded English at the dinner table and, when away from home, wrote letters in English to his children in an elegant, fussy hand.’[[85]](#endnote-85)

Kapur’s writing also muses on the use of English in India, specifically, on the Americanisation of India, where he equates the shift of aspiration from British English to American English with the shift of aspirations in a neo-liberalised India for economic advancement, not merely social mobility:

Young Indians were learning to speak like Americans, too. They attended accent-training sessions at work. (…) Even television advertisements had changed. I noticed soon after returning that the old polished English accents had given way to angled American voices. The aspirations of Indian consumers had shifted; the old longing for the colonial metropolis had been replaced by the temptations of a new empire.[[86]](#endnote-86)

Postcolonial writers like Dasgupta and Kapur find themselves having to negotiate linguistic landscapes which are clearly uneven, fluid, changeable. As in the case of Rushdie, the self-described precursor of imaginary homelands in IWE, Dasgupta’s and, to a lesser extent, Kapur’s use of the English, language is an example of literary geographies at their most effective, where the imagined terrain is conveyed in an experiential manner, immersing the reader in that ambience, in the immediacy of Delhi, in this particular case. Their intervention into literary geographies serves to flag up the power disparities that are played out in the site of struggle which the English language continues to be.

**Conclusion**

This article’s case study offered a theoretical intervention to the field of literary geographies based on the mediation of imagined places – Delhi and India – in the hybrid nonfiction works by Dasgupta and Kapur. Our focus was on the construction of imagined geographies of the postcolonial of Delhi and India, simultaneously acknowledging the impact of these representations on collective imaginations and also on current (and not-so-current) debates around postcolonial theory. In this sense, what Said terms as the ‘intertwined histories and overlapping territories’[[87]](#endnote-87) – that bind European former colonial metropoles to their outposts, now postcolonial, independent nations – undergird Kapur and Dasgupta’s imagined geographies, as experienced by the collective, that exists within multiple, layered histories and places.

Furthermore, this article argued that these imagined geographies of India are influenced by social class. There is no doubt that Dasgupta and Kapur’s imagined mappings of Delhi and India are functions of the privileged class strata to which these authors belong. Kapur was educated at Harvard University (a BA in Social Anthropology) and Oxford University (a doctorate in Law), and was a columnist for the *International Herald Tribune* and *New York Times*; Dasgupta grew up in Cambridge, studied at Balliol College, Oxford, the Conservatoire Darius Milhaud, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and was appointed visiting lecturer and fellow at Brown University (2014) and Princeton University (2012), respectively. As Rajeswari Sunder Rajan put it, ‘The nation-novel is written from a recognizably ruling class perspective’.[[88]](#endnote-88) Their imagined geographies are inescapably selective appropriations that hinge on classed expectations and access. Nonetheless, Kapur and Dasgupta’s perspectives of India, inevitably filtered through the prisms of social and economic privilege and re-orientalist discourse, provide extremely valuable data from their vantage points as simultaneous insiders and outsiders. These hybrid nonfictions negotiate their authors’ very own translocal identities (indicative of how class is integral to experiencing the ‘global’ city unencumbered by the disparities of neoliberalism) at the same time as they map Delhi’s and India’s changing politics and identities in the 2010s.

The key word here is ‘negotiate’; in Hall’s phrasing, ‘cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a *positioning*’.[[89]](#endnote-89) Kapur and Dasgupta write to *position themselves* within the discursive formations they have encountered and are discovering in ‘new India’, not disavowing the unevenness of ‘Dark India’ nor the ‘dismal energies’[[90]](#endnote-90) that resulted from the unfulfilled promises of ‘India Shining’. This positioning within distinct discourses is, to some extent, unavoidable, as proposed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s poststructuralist explanation of language (and by extension, discourse) understood as a structure in which individual linguistic ‘moments’, such as the hybrid fictions of Kapur and Dasgupta, derive their meaning through their relationship with other moments.[[91]](#endnote-91) Following Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse theory, only by redefining moments can new relationships to a still mostly intact pre-existing structure be created. It is not possible to change more than a relatively small portion of the structure at any given time, even if the structure is arbitrary and holds the potential of being changed at any time, because it is the structure itself which generates meaning, and altering too much at a time would disrupt the creation of meaning, making moments nonsensical.

An awareness of the discursive limits, of the veiled presuppositions and ambiguities, of Kapur and Dasgupta’s imagined geographies of a ‘new India’ undergird the conclusion that *India Becoming* and *Capital* are also *positioning India globally* relative to what it was, in the process un-glamorising both representations of ‘India Shining’ and ‘Dark India’, and recovering the multiplicity of presences in these conjunctural spaces of a ‘new India’. The multiplicity of representations is particularly key because of the tokenism of minorities formerly colonised in mainstream representations of all natures, including the textual. The imagined geographies of cosmopolitan returnee Indian writers offer an alternative account of the contemporary processes that geographers are seeking to describe and explain.[[92]](#endnote-92) In addition, not only do their imagined geographies impact reality, but also create new worlds and realities as a ‘new India’ primarily exists in representation.

1. Notes

   In *The Stuart Hall Project* (2013), directed by John Akomfrah. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. A.Kapur, *India Becoming: A Portrait of Life in Modern India* (New York: Riverhead, 2012); R.Dasgupta, *Capital: The Eruption of Delhi* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2015 [2014]). The category of ‘nonfictional’ is especially unstable in the cases examined here, a question that merits development but which is beyond the scope of this article. On this subject see A.Wiese, ‘Telling What is True: Truthiness and Fictional Truths in Hybrid (non)Fiction’, *Prose Studies* 37 (1) (2015), pp. 66–82. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. R.Varma, ‘Beyond the Politics of Representation: The Indigenous Subject of New Subaltern Politics’, in A.G.Nilsen and S.Roy, eds., *Reconceptualising Subaltern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. R.Varma, *The Postcolonial City and its Subjects: London, Nairobi, Bombay* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Within the field of cultural geography, the concept of ‘affect’ remains still unfixed and subject to ongoing problematisations. In the context of this article, we are adopting the definition advanced by Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, given its resonance with the idea of encounter, which is key to postcolonial writing: ‘Affect is in many ways synonymous with *force* or *forces of encounter*. (…) At once intimate and impersonal, affect *accumulates* across both relatedness and interruptions in relatedness, becoming a palimpsest of force-encounters traversing the ebbs and swells of intensities that pass between “bodies” (bodies defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect)’; M.Gregg and G.J.Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 2 (emphases in original). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. S.Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, in J.Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), p. 222. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. C.Nelson, P.A.Treichler and L.Grossberg, ‘Cultural Studies: An Introduction’, in L.Grossberg, C.Nelson C and P.A.Treichler, eds., *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 8. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Hall, ‘Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies’, in D.Morley and K.Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996 [1992]), p. 274. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. A.Gupta and J.Ferguson, ‘Beyond “Culture”: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference’, in T.Oakes and P.L.Price, eds., *The Cultural Geography Reader* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 64. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. On the concept of re-orientalism see L.Lau and A.C.Mendes (eds.), *Re-orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics: The Oriental Other Within* (London: Routledge, 2011), and A.C.Mendes and L.Lau, ‘India through re-Orientalist Lenses: Vicarious Indulgence and Vicarious Redemption’, *Interventions* 17 (5) (2015), pp. 706–27. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. P.J.Cloke, P.Crang and M.Goodwin, eds., *Introducing Human Geographies* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. 235. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. M.Brosseau, ‘Geography’s Literature’, *Progress in Human Geography* 18 (3) (1994), p.334. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. P.Hubbard and B.Bartley, *Thinking Geographically. Space, Theory and Contemporary Human Geography* (London: Continuum, 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Brosseau, pp. 333-353. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. J.Silk, ‘Beyond Geography and Literature’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 2 (1984), p. 172. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. A.J.Lamme, ‘Speaking with the same voice: Geographic interpretation and representation of literary resources’ *Geojournal* 38 (1) (1996), pp. 41-48. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. J.P.Sharp, ‘Locating imaginary homelands: Literature, Geography and Salman Rushdie’, *Geojournal* 38 (1) (1996), pp.119-127. In this article, Joanne Sharp uses Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses* to advance the argument that literary sources can offer alternative accounts to academically-created geographies. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. S.J.Squire, ‘Landscapes, places and geographical spaces: Texts of Beatrix Potter as cultural communication’ *Geojournal*, 38 (1) (1996), pp. 75-86. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. M.Ogborn, ‘Mapping Words’, *New Formations* 57 (2005/6), pp. 145-149. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. A.Saunders, ‘Literary Geography: Reforging the Connections’, *Progress in Human Geography* 34 (4), (2010), p. 436. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. S.Hones, ‘Text as it Happens: Literary Geography’, *Geography Compass* 2 (5) (2008), p. 1307. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. S.Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (London: Granta, 1991); V.S.Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (London: Picador, 2002 [1987]); S.Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children* (London: Vintage, 1995 [1981]). In Naipaul’s work, a middle-aged narrator seeks to piece together the fragments of his self, detailing his alienation and displacements from Trinidad to Britain, and finally to his imagined homeland, India. Naipaul re-visited India in 1988, only to discover that it had become ‘alienated’ due to the country’s rapid modernisation, as he later recounts in the travelogue *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (V.S.Naipaul, *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (New York: Viking, 1991 [1990])). Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is a work of semi-autobiographical writing in disguise which presents its own imagined geography of Bombay through fractured perceptions, ‘before memory cracks beyond hope of reassembly’ (Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*, p. 442). Rushdie’s imagined geography is clearly re-orientalist in the sense that it can be read as ‘a taste of the Orient in a western form’ (C.Cundy, *Salman Rushdie* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 42). [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Wiese, ‘Telling What is True’, p. 80. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Wiese, ‘Telling What is True’, p. 67. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Seminal works in this respect are D.Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Malden, MA: Polity, 1994) and A.Amin and N.Thrift, *Cities, Reimaging the Urban* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002). [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
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34. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. G.Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001); S.Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); A.Chakladar, ‘The Postcolonial Bazaar: Marketing/Teaching Indian Literature’, *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 31 (3) (2000), pp. 183–201. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. R.S.Duncan, ‘Reading *Slumdog Millionaire* across Cultures’, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 46 (2) (2011), pp. 311–26; B.Korte, ‘Can the Indigent Speak? Poverty Studies, the Postcolonial and Global Appeal of *Q & A* and *The White Tiger*’, *Connotations* 20 (2–3) (2010/2011), pp. 293–317; L.Lau and A.C.Mendes, ‘Authorities of Representation: Speaking To and Speaking For’, *Connotations* 22 (1) (2012/2013), pp. 137–43. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. A.Adiga, *The White Tiger: A Novel* (New York: Free Press, 2008), *Between the Assassinations* (New York: Free Press, 2009)*, Last Man in Tower* (London: Atlantic, 2012), and *Selection Day* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2017); I.Sinha, *Animal’s People* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2008); K.Nambisan, *The Story That Must Not Be Told* (New Delhi: Penguin-Viking, 2010); K.Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Slum* (London: Granta, 2013). [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. I.Detmers, B.Heidemann, and C.Sandten, ‘Introduction: Tracing the Urban Imaginary in the Postcolonial Metropolis and the “New” Metropolis’, *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 47 (5) (2011), p. 484. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 19. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. The expression is from Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 394, with reference to S.Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Viking, 1989 [1988]). [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. L.Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century* (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II*, p. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. xiv. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. S.Mehta, *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* (London: Review, 2005). [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. For example, A.C.Mendes, ‘Exciting Tales of Exotic Dark India: Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger*’, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 45 (2) (2010), pp. 275–93; R.Goh, ‘Narrating Dark India in *Londonstani* and *The White Tiger*: Sustaining Identity in the Diaspora’, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 46 (2) (2011), pp. 327–44; R.Goh, ‘The Overseas Indian and the Politics of the Body in Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* and Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*’, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 47 (3) (2012), 341–56. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. A number of narratives have recently turned the limelight on the dispossessed workers who toil on accident-prone constructions sites, one of the hallmarks of the ‘Asian Dream’ – migrants from the countryside who sleep on city pavements and occasionally ‘vanish’, or who face abuse as cheap labourers in Western Asia. For example, this dispossession has been evocatively rendered in the Malayalam novel *Goat Days* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012 [2008]), inspired by real-life events, by Bahrain-based Indian writer Benyamin, the novel *Dubai Dreams: The Rough Road to Riches* (London: Crownbird Publishers, 2010), by British author and journalist Shamlal Puri, depicting the lives of a group of Indian taxi drivers in Dubai, and the Hindi film *Liar’s Dice* (2013), directed by Geethu Mohandas. Mohandas’s road movie, which won the award for Best Film at the New York Indian Film Festival in 2014, and was India’s official entry to the Best Foreign Language film at the 2015 Oscars, documents the hidden, disquieting situation of millions of construction workers recruited from poor villages and towns in the north of India to work on sites bereft of safety norms, who go missing, ending up as numbers in government statistics. Mohandas’s narrative is located in Delhi, as is *A Free Man: A True Story of Life and Death in Delhi* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2012), Aman Sethi’s ‘biography’ of Mohammed Ashraf, which also chronicles the ‘mazdoor ki zindagi, or laborer’s life’ in the megalopolis (p. 226), and Mridula Koshy’s *If It Is Sweet* (Chennai: Tranquebar Press, 2009), portraying an underclass of workers in South Delhi against a backdrop of streets teeming with chaos, hardship, and despair. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 208. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 44. [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. Gregg and Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader*, p. 2 (emphases in original). [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 35. [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. P.Mankekar, *Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality, Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), p. 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. S.Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004). [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. Mankekar, *Unsettling India*, p. 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. As Zygmunt Bauman notes about the new technique of power in a context of liquid modernity, ‘[a]ny dense and tight network of social bonds, and particularly a territorially rooted tight network, is an obstacle to be cleared out of the way. Global powers are bent on dismantling such networks for the sake of their continuous and growing fluidity, that principal source of their strength and the warrant of their invincibility. And it is the falling apart, the friability, the brittleness, the transience, the until-further-noticeness of human bonds and networks which allow these powers to do their job in the first place’; *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 14. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 10. [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-62)
63. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-63)
64. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 7. [↑](#endnote-ref-64)
65. Dasgupta, *Capital*, pp. 41–2. [↑](#endnote-ref-65)
66. Kapur, *India Becoming*, pp. 8–9. [↑](#endnote-ref-66)
67. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-67)
68. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 43. [↑](#endnote-ref-68)
69. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 240. [↑](#endnote-ref-69)
70. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 306. [↑](#endnote-ref-70)
71. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 39. [↑](#endnote-ref-71)
72. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p.37. [↑](#endnote-ref-72)
73. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p.24, [↑](#endnote-ref-73)
74. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p.26. [↑](#endnote-ref-74)
75. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-75)
76. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 206, emphasis in original. [↑](#endnote-ref-76)
77. Boehmer and Davies, ‘Literature, Planning and Infrastructure’, p. 396. [↑](#endnote-ref-77)
78. Boehmer and Davies, ‘Literature, Planning and Infrastructure’, p. 407. [↑](#endnote-ref-78)
79. R.S.Rajan, *The Lie of the Land: English Literary Studies in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 15. [↑](#endnote-ref-79)
80. Kapur, *India Becoming*, p. 61. [↑](#endnote-ref-80)
81. C.Catherine, *Salman Rushdie* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 43. [↑](#endnote-ref-81)
82. R.Dube, ‘Salman Rushdie’, in P.S.Chauhan, ed., *Salman Rushdie Interviews: A Sourcebook of His Ideas* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001), p. 12. [↑](#endnote-ref-82)
83. Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p. 70. [↑](#endnote-ref-83)
84. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. xiii. [↑](#endnote-ref-84)
85. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 31. [↑](#endnote-ref-85)
86. Kapur, *India Becoming*, pp. 74-75. [↑](#endnote-ref-86)
87. Chapter one of Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*. [↑](#endnote-ref-87)
88. Rajan, ‘After *Midnight’s Children*: Some Notes on the New Indian Novel in English*’, Social Research* 78 (19) (2011), p. 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-88)
89. Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, p. 226, emphasis in original. [↑](#endnote-ref-89)
90. Dasgupta, *Capital*, p. 43. [↑](#endnote-ref-90)
91. E.Laclau and C.Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985); E.Laclau and C.Mouffe, ‘Post-Marxism without Apologies’ in E.Laclau, New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time (London: Verso, 1990), pp. 97-132. [↑](#endnote-ref-91)
92. Horton and Kraftl, *Cultural Geographies*, p. 139. [↑](#endnote-ref-92)