SPECTERS OF POVERTY AND SOURCES OF HOPE IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH AND ROHINTON MISTRY

D.PHIL. ENGLISH LITERATURE

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'Specters of Poverty and Sources of Hope in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry'
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This thesis attempts to reformulate the concept of hope represented in, and inflected by, the Indian English novel. This comparative literary study focuses primarily on Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry, whose novels offer myriad examples and resultant effects of a reflexive hope. I argue in light of their work to refigure hope in its varied and multiple articulations: positive and negative, for-life and for-death, dependency, waiting, nostalgia, narcissism. All of these, I suggest, manifest in a nominal-messianic hope that formulates a powerful critique of global capital most advantageously constellated in these Indian English novels. I arrive at this from the early writings of Jawaharlal Nehru and his unshakable belief in socialist progress that informs the productive tension within hope that inform the readings of Ghosh's and Mistry's novels. Concomitant to this thesis on hope is the recalibration of definitions of poverty to the principles of capabilities that allow for the simultaneous discussion of how the state can shape social opportunities for its citizens. This, I argue, is necessary for the flourishing of more nuanced understanding of hope. Moving away from purely quantitative measurements of poverty to more qualitative capabilities pushes the novel to the foreground of these arguments. Just as Nehru explores his own formulations of hope and hopefulness through the poetry of Matthew Arnold, the Indian English novel, here, is best able to enunciate a reflexive hope that is central to the notion of capabilities. This is why poverty studies in India needs the Indian English novel.

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Introduction

At heart materialist in scope, this thesis explores three central preoccupations that influence my approach to postcolonial literature—history, memory and poverty—as they pertain to the novels of Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry. History, here, in one sense signifies the engagement, whether explicit or implicit, with violent colonial experiences that the Indian novelists under discussion represent in their written works. Of course, this 'history' is not limited only to colonialism.[1] The second approach, memory, is closely tied to history, but it is employed in this dissertation in a more discursive and aesthetic mode. It is discursive in the sense of investigating some of the ways that memory is constituted, and how this might shape notions of the past, present, and future. It is aesthetic in its focus on how Mistry and Ghosh *write through* memory in their fiction. 'Writing through' connotes two interpretations: arguably, their novels are written 'by means of' and 'so as to complete' memory. The last broad category, poverty, anchors the critical theory and literary criticism of the dissertation firmly in the materialist tradition of class and capital. These three strands are at the fore as the arguments of the thesis unfold.

In attempting to make sense of the research project, the thematic of hope presented itself as a critical notion with which to link history, memory, and poverty in the Indian English novels. The prominence of hope and importance (that is, its criticality) became increasingly obvious, but as one pulls at the thread of hope as a possible mode of critique, a productive unraveling takes place. The utopian underpinnings of the received meaning of hope undercut its value or purchase as a useful term, at least within a literary-critical discourse. With postmodern theorists like Jean-François Lyotard in mind, hope had become a grand metanarrative *par excellence*. Yet, it is not enough to dismantle this metanarrative into *petit recits* or 'non-utopian' narratives of hope, because the latter is a contradiction. Hope requires utopia. To put it another way, it is the idea, or ideal, of

[1] Fredrick Cooper writes, 'To trace history to imperialism is to give power to a phenomenon that is historically located.' Fredrick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), p. 14.

utopia that makes the practice of hope possible. This aporia—the necessity of utopia and utopia's emptiness as a heuristic term—is at the core of the thesis, and it is through the novels of Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry, as well as the pivotal texts of Jawaharlal Nehru, that the crisis within what it means to hope becomes most apparent. Jawaharlal Nehru's anti-colonial and liberationist work connects the theoretical discussions that inflect the literary readings with their historical antecedent.[2] Bringing together the disparate novelists (Mistry, a Bombay Parsi and Ghosh, a Bengali from Calcutta), materialist critics, and poststructural theorists are, of course, the concepts of hope and poverty. Yet, this thesis only works because of the writing of Jawaharlal Nehru as the nexus and source material for the literary and theoretical arguments. Concomitant with the renewed interest in Jawaharlal Nehru in South Asian Studies and Indian English literary studies, the exegesis of Nehru's historical writing illustrates the seedling and potential for postcolonial hope as a pivotal category for postcolonial critics.

At its most modest, the dissertation interrogates literary representations of hope in Mistry's and Ghosh's texts. For postcolonial Indian writers in English, hope is necessary, yet double-edged. On the one hand, hope evokes the euphoria and promise of independence in both senses: the guarantee *and* potential of promises made for a more just society. On the other, it underlines the cognizance of the sluggish progress toward that promise. Being skeptical of utopian and liberationist commentary of past materialist critics, this dissertation argues for a re-grounding of hope in its multiple enunciations, positive and negative, optimally constellated in the postcolonial novel. Hope is integral in Ghosh's and Mistry's works, and this type of hope is inseparable from the 'post-' in the postcolonial novel. This echoes Kwame Anthony Appiah's notorious question, 'Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?', and it points to the aspirational, semantic, and temporal assumptions that one must inspect. The concepts of utopia and justice are inextricably bound to hope, and they align with the notion of moving

[2] See Elleke Boehmer's chapter 'Revisiting Resistance: Postcolonial Practice and the Antecedents of Theory' in Graham Huggan, ed, *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonials* (forthcoming from Oxford University Press, 2013).

'beyond' colonialism. Historian Fredrick Cooper notes that the 'impetus behind postcolonial theory has been the failure of decolonized states to fulfill an emancipatory project', and in this distress, the critique turns 'toward the emancipatory project itself, now seen as fatally linked to its imperial genealogy'.[3] However, the hyperbole or impossibility of utopia or of being absolutely or radically *post*colonial finds a very literal expression in the Indian English novel.

The exchange of hope is fixed in the texts, but the context of its production, and ultimately its reception, is global. This is the impetus for this study. The increasing focus on the globality of middle-class life in capitalist societies and the resulting formulations of what it means to live that life contrasts starkly with the hope and hopelessness of those outside of this sphere. Yet, the prospect of hope becomes untenable the further one maps this thematic in Ghosh's and Mistry's works. The obvious statement would be that one becomes less hopeful about the possibility of hope, because it finds such an easy and unsettling entanglement with global capitalist logic, where dreams of greater wealth can overshadow present inequity. On the other hand, what is left throughout the attempts to deconstruct, historicize, or merely to present hope literally is its resilience against its annihilation. What always remains—even in the shade of global capital—is prospect itself.

For this reason the dissertation is deeply skeptical of purely utopian conceptions of hope while at the same time registering utopia's 'place' in its practice. Jacques Derrida praises Walter Benjamin along these lines, for his simultaneous commitment to Marxism and to messianic theology.[4] The conception of hope in this dissertation does not engage with theological interpretations for which one could rightly criticize it. Like Derrida's reading of Benjamin, however, this dissertation attempts—through its understanding of hope—to retain the

[3] Cooper, p. 25.
[4] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. by Gil Anidjar (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 259.

convincing and theoretically potent and productive framework of cultural materialism and critical theory with the 'revolutionary' idea of what Benjamin calls 'weak messianism'.[5]

In literary and literal terms one encounters the pervasive use of the word hope. And if one tries to peer telescopically through hope, one finds a nebulous discourse that spans, and extends beyond, religion, philosophy, and psychology. Hope, a seemingly basic human phenomenon, is not so easily explained when read from Indian English texts. This dissertation intends to take the familiar notion of hope and think through it, perhaps, in an unfamiliar way: to constellate the varying meanings, all of which could be said to be historically constructed, and to refract it through the novels of Ghosh and Mistry. Taking a pragmatic, text-based approach, the dissertation does not try to explain hope 'as it really is'. The goal is not to scrape away layers of false or appropriated hope to get at some essence or truth, but rather to point to competing descriptions of hope, which will, in turn, offer the possibility for further inquiry. Hope, then, becomes the critical tool with which to approach the novels in hand, but it also becomes inflected and shaped by them. As David Lloyd reminds us, 'the novel is not simply the product and the reflection of certain social conditions but actively contributes to producing them as the very condition of its own reception.'[6] Hope, too, works in the same way; it is a product of, and a contributor to, its social conditions.

Working through the utopian contradictions above, I posit an alternative structure of hope that applies to most of the future references of the word in this dissertation. In order to recharge the term to once again give it a certain literary-critical power, I conceive of hope as having two parts: nominal hope and messianic hope.[7] I further particularize nominal hope into three non-mutually exclusive categories (though there may be more): the first type is conatic, the

[5] Ibid. Walter Benjamin discusses 'weak messianic power' in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), pp. 253-64. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, too, attempts a similar maneuver (to crudely paraphrase: the intersection of 'Marx and difference') in his groundbreaking work, *Provincializing Europe* (2000).
[6] David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-colonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput, 1993), p. 131.
[7] Nominal, here, denotes the order of magnitude of hope as well as the 'naming' of hope. It implies a stated or expressed hope; a calculable hope.

second is narcissistic, and the third is societal. These three forms of hope can be defined simply as hope for life, hope against life, and possibilities offered by the collective. This last type, societal hope, focuses primarily on hope as offered by, or mediated through, the state.[8] Moreover, the bulk of the thesis is devoted to working from this conception of nominal hope, and how this is essential to Indian English novels. Chapter One of the dissertation elaborates the various hopes posited here, and the ensuing chapters build on this conception.

India, at the time of independence in 1947, provides the historical starting point of the investigation of hope in the Indian English novels discussed. Jawaharlal Nehru's fervent socialism and secularist democratic ethos is the 'originary' event—a foundational hope, often aligned with utopianism, from which the aforementioned authors are writing, and against which they react. Ghosh and Mistry are caught in an example of a postcolonial double bind; they appear invested in the ideological import of a secular, democratic India of which Nehru dreams, but they are skeptical of its outcome and effects given the failure of many of Nehru's socialist programs, and of the state of populism in India as a whole. Working in the 1980s and '90s—at the moment of vast economic liberalization in India—these authors, I argue, recognize the folly of an early optimism or naïve hope, and Nehru's socialist legacy in particular provides the grist of the potential *ressentiment* in their novels. It is this confluence and paradox through which Mistry and Ghosh refer to hope albeit through distinct textual and formal narrative strategies. This reworking of hope is integral to the ethico-political purchase of their novels.

To give an example of how Ghosh and Mistry attempt such hopeful novelistic interventions, Chapter Two examines the ways in which each cites hope via metaphor. In *The Circle of Reason* (1984), Ghosh uses shifting organizational metaphors about hope (as weaving, history, reason) magnified by the protagonist Alu's ambivalent politics in an attempt to unfetter these postcolonial characters from the 'metaphoric—and metaphysical—burden of their

[8] The terminology used above is indebted to formulations from various philosophers and thinkers, chiefly among them Spinoza's idea of *conatus*, Freud's so-called death drive, and Derrida's 'messianic structure'.

condition'.[9] Mistry opts for a more static organizational metaphor in *A Fine Balance* (1994)—Peter Morey notes that the quilt codifies the novel both formally and metaphorically.[10] In a vastly somber and despairing story without many literal pronouncements of hope, the overarching metaphor of Dina, Maneck, Ish and Om's patchwork quilt provides a way out of a hopeless reading in which the characters' suffering must be read not one-dimensionally as a line or progression, but two-dimensionally: their hopes, dreams, defeats, and triumphs become plotted onto the surface of the quilt.

Chapter outline

Prefaced on Nehru's configuration of Indian secular democracy, which bears the weight of colonial and post-Enlightenment rationality, as well as the resultant hopefulness of post-independence India, the first chapter, 'Thinking hope from the South', lays out some of the historical context referred to in subsequent chapters. In his most famous speech, Nehru asks his country to work hard to 'give reality to our dreams', because those 'dreams are for India'.[11] Hope, it would seem, is the ideological center of Nehru's perspective of the nation, and he posits a hope where peace, freedom, prosperity, and catastrophe cannot be 'split into isolated fragments'. However, Nehru's vision of a large, Soviet-style socialist democracy increasingly defers blame for its own failures toward its citizens. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan aptly notes that the Indian state evoked failures of spirit of the people as an 'alibi'. The logic being that the state apparatus could not effect change—that is the people's burden.[12] It is from the legacy of Nehru's disillusionment that Ghosh and Mistry write of hope amidst defeat. Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1938) and *The Discovery of India* (1946) open and close the chapter, respectively. They provide glimpses of the artful and emotional that belie his often Fabian, rationalist depiction emphasized, here, through his admiration of the poetry of Matthew Arnold.

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[9] Brinda Bose, *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives* (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003), p. 53.
[10] Peter Morey, *Rohinton Mistry* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 159.
[11] Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny' speech on midnight of the day of India's independence.
[12] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law, and Citizenship in Postcolonial India* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), pp. 6-7.

The first chapter further adumbrates the nominal-messianic structure of hope and its relevance to the literature of the thesis, beginning with a semantic debate of its definition. The process of hoping can be said to require two parts: desire and expectation, with each of these terms being inspected below as to their appropriateness for hope's usage. The chapter takes a psychoanalytical turn to examine how one instantiates the capacity to hope—primarily from the commentary of Freudian (and Kleinian) psychologist Anna Potamianou and her work on borderline patients in *Hope: A Shield in the Borderline Economy* (1997). Not only should this influence the way one views hope as a cognitive process, but it also approaches hope as simultaneously occupying positive (conatic) and negative (narcissistic) enunciations. This is not a comment on the object of hope as being good or bad, but how the process of hoping can be useful or harmful. Understanding hope's semantic sense and singular practice provides the basis of thinking about how hope can become an interpretive term. Using Ghassan Hage's articulation of the state's role in fostering 'care' and 'worry' among its citizens in *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (2003), the chapter shifts from individual to societal hope for a more materialist investigation of hope's production. Hage draws parallels between Pierre Bourdieu's notion of capitalist 'accumulation' and the act of hoping. Taking into account the definitions and origins of the term and the historical process of this human capacity, a complex matrix begins to form around hope. The resulting tensions create interstices, intensified in the novels of Ghosh and Mistry, that are not only critical of capitalism, but of hope itself. Bridging the metaphysical and material readings of hope are works from Nehru and Arnold, and their respective texts reverberate throughout the dissertation. In a way, they emerge as the literary and historical anchor for hope in the thesis, and Matthew Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna' (1852) acts as a limit case of hope with regard to suicide. The poem opens and illustrates the imbrications of art and hope in the subsequent chapters. As will be seen, Arnold and Nehru work in particularly illuminating ways alongside twentieth-century philosophers like Theodor Adorno, sociologist-anthropologists like Hage and Bruno Latour, and Marxist literary critics; perhaps it is because of the pessimism of

Arnold's poetry and the optimism of Nehru's jailhouse prose that echoes the pessimistic hope of the aforementioned thinkers. The chapter formulates the concept of the nominal-messianic structure of hope mentioned above through Latour's critique of critique and Derrida's notion of 'messianicity'. This formulation hinges on how one conceives of the future. The French word *avenir*, meaning 'to come', implies an unknown future, and while desire and expectation always project forward, the notion of the absolute unknown disrupts a simple definition of hope.

The second chapter, 'Hope and history' takes its title from Seamus Heaney's *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles' Philoctetes* (1990), a close reading of which I use to introduce the thematic: that a history of violence and injustice crystallized through art is a way of engaging with injustice with the intention of minimizing epistemic violence. Building upon the theoretical framework set out in the previous chapter, this section explores the various ways in which the entangled concepts of hope and history in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1996) navigate familiar debates and tensions within politics and art.

Ghosh's first novel lends itself to a reading from this vantage point, and the bulk of the chapter closely inspects the novel's engagement with Enlightenment reason via labor and Louis Pasteur.[13] In particular, the chapter analyzes weaving, socialism, and the postcolonial state (primarily India, but also states in the Middle East) in the novel. And, it reads the novel's notions of 'reason' alongside some constituents, or possible resultants, of hope: waiting, terror, and promise. The chapter focuses sharply on the supposed critique of global capital and independence that the novel offers figured through the search 'for the right metaphor' for the postcolonial migrant to write through the 'burden' of the colonial past.[14] Moreover, one cannot extricate these metaphors from the concept of the nominal-messianic structure of hope and the conflicts of the

[13] Pasteur represents a sort of monolithic Science in both Latour and Ghosh and is an avatar for the interconnected complex of capital, military, biology, and ontology.
[14] G.J.V. Prasad raises the possibility that the novel itself is 'searching', while Bose, as mentioned above, argues that the novel takes on the metaphorical 'burden [of the past]'—a phrase that comes from Nehru's *Discovery of India*. See Chapter Two.

past. The latter, that is the 'burden' of history, is the junction for the arguments of hope as being enabling or disabling—liberating or constraining.

In respect of Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the second chapter investigates the historiography of the 1975 Indian Emergency alongside the act of storytelling and the ethics of 'balance' with regard to hope and despair. The discussion of the novel begins with a debate about realism and the appropriateness of the term as applied to Mistry. The novel's intertextual references to Tolstoy and Balzac belie its complicated categorization as a 'realist' novel. Mistry's subtle subversions to the realist mode—introducing elements of the fantastic, allegorizing epics like the *Ramayana*, etc.—disarm the dismissal of his novel as a de-politicized social realism (as opposed to a more inventive and effective postmodernist novel). The chapter focuses on a reading of Mistry's characters' philosophical engagement with the notion of 'balance' between hope and despair. The etymological link between the two words is significant. *Spe*, the Latin word often translated as 'hope' in English, '*espoir*' in French, '*esperanza*' in Italian, etc., is also the etymological root of 'despair'. In the Latin languages the linkage between hope and despair is obvious, such as *espoir* and *désespoir*. In English, one uses the Anglo-Saxon 'hope'. These types of words (e.g. house, cow, hope) are often seen as basic and simple, less abstract than their Latinate counterparts. Perhaps this lends to the word's unreflexive usage. Nevertheless, the tricky metaphor of balance concludes the chapter's discussion of how it might be possible to creatively imagine both hope and hopelessness. Like Empedocles before him, one of the main characters, Maneck, must navigate the tensions of conatic, narcissistic, societal, and messianic hope.

Though closely related to the previous chapter's discussion of the intersection of hope and history, the concept of memory deserves its own consideration, whether one is talking about a mental or psychic process or the aestheticization of this process in fiction. As the third chapter, 'Hope and memory', unfolds, the examination of how memory may function in the Indian English novels under discussion forcefully calls into question the meanings of hope offered through the texts. In particular, this section argues that the memory of an imagined journey and a

residuum of decline may invoke nostalgia that can be read as a conatic and narcissistic hope in Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (1991). Prolific sociologist/psychologist Ashis Nandy is particularly important in helping to theorize the mythic journey from village to city—followed up in the subsequent chapter. He claims that the journey (from an idealized past to a fluctuating present) is a formidable producer of Indian identities, and that this nostalgia 'reorders' memories, 'reiterates the ethics of everyday life', and 'relocates' the remembered journeys in much the same manner as narcissistic and conatic hope anchors and shields the psyche.[15] In a more metatextual sense in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), memory becomes almost indistinguishable from the form of the novel itself, and as a result, the chapter maintains that this novel struggles with the impossibility of adequately narrating trauma. At certain points, Ghosh's novel posits the potential of imagination over remembrance as a source of the hope that runs up against the 'unnarratable'. Matthew Arnold, again, signals a counterpoint to the novels in question through his retelling of a scene from Firdausi's epic *Shahnameh*, in the narrative poem 'Sohrab and Rustum'. Written in 1853, the poem bridges the debates in this chapter about the function of memory in the epic and the novel. The story of Sohrab and Rustum is an important intertext for Mistry's novel, but Arnold's version raises the shadow of empire that cast a pall over the above works.

Before these readings, however, the third chapter briefly outlines a theoretical framework of memory and its interplay with the nominal-messianic structure of hope. The novels' engagement with memory and hope call into question Marcuse's charge that 'authentic utopia is grounded in recollection'.[16] Ultimately, memory provides a truncated hope; one that is necessary and redeeming, yet incomplete. Returning to the debates in Chapter One about 'the future', the third chapter inspects the yoked notions of time and memory especially as it pertains to the novel

[15] Ashis Nandy, *A Very Popular Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 133.
[16] Or, in Adorno's words, 'Remembrance alone is able to give flesh and blood to the notion of Utopia, without betraying it to empirical life.' Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 192.

and its evolution from the epic.[17] Memory implies notions of the past and present, and the supposed continuity of time as the simultaneous unity and multiplicity through memory is paradoxical. One requires something outside of memory, so to speak, to account for this paradox, and it is from Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* that this thesis begins to speak to this.

Derrida, too, imagines something 'outside' memory, and shifting the focus away from the biophysics of memory to the social practice of archivization, the chapter brings to light the ambitions of the archive and the archivist toward absolute objectivity while at the same time its endeavor to grow for the sake of producing more archive.[18] One might register the aims of the archive with some of those of hope or capitalism and note that the process of archivization is endless. Moreover, one might think of the archive as a collection or construction of the past, but as Derrida points out, it is only interpreted *in the future*. Freudian repetition then becomes inseparable from the future to come, and this further reinforces the notion of the nominal-messianic structure of hope: memory, even when it utilizes the archive, must always call forth forgetting. The future and the past, the nominal and the messianic, cannot be disentangled. From this perspective, the above discussions of memory, archive, and *l'avenir* prove to be crucial for inflecting the reading of the inseparability of hope and memory in Indian English novels.

The discourse surrounding the recent historical and literary turn to the slum is strikingly similar to the glorification and Orientalism that marked peasant histories even before Gandhi's famous intervention. The slum, at least in the popular imagination, too closely resembles past petrified and rustic visions of villagers, and this link is explored in the fourth chapter. Ultimately, the final chapter, 'Hope amid specters of poverty', views poverty through the lens of the urban poor. While the focus of poverty studies has similarly centered on the favela or slum, this has not always been the case. In fact, the bulk of histories, especially from the Subaltern Studies group,

[17] In this respect, Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin's work is central in locating the philosophical debates about memory within the novel.
[18] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Perowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 68.

have tended to focus primarily on peasants or the rural poor. It is not enough, however, to merely try to reclaim or retrace narratives and histories of the urban poor. Ashis Nandy's studies on the village/city dichotomy in India show a striking repetition of the village within the city. The nostalgic 'returns' to the village are an attempt to mitigate the hegemony of the colonial city, but in the same stroke they reinforce the idea of a liberatory cosmopolitanism of urban life. The foundational relationship between city and village (one cannot exist without the other) culminates in reimaginings of the village, or the village as slum, as a specter in order to haunt the city as a possible way out of unjust and oppressive urban social relations *as well as* reinvigorating the idea of progress (a type of messianic hope) that the metropolis offers.

The most glaring aspect of the failure of the fulfillment of Nehru's dream is the prevalence of extreme poverty—destitution in Nandy's words—amid a booming economy and 'blow-out' GDP growth. Poverty is intimately linked with hope, and *vice versa*, but not only in the most obvious sense of the unfulfilled desire to be lifted from the gutters, but in a more fundamental way. If one considers the capacity of an individual to hope and the state's pivotal role in allowing this capacity to flourish, then it becomes clearer how societies, and here I focus mostly on the state, are directly responsible for the conditions that make destitution possible. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's work redefining poverty in terms of capabilities helps illuminate this link and ties notions of societal, conatic, and narcissistic hope with the very definition of what constitutes poverty. At the heart of Sen's argument is the prevalence of income, or lack thereof, as the sole determinant of poverty, and he shows this to be insufficient in the tasks of identifying and aggregating the poor.

Identifying the poor is simple enough: one needs only to create a local standard of necessities like food and shelter and to separate the population into the two resultant groups—this is what is meant by the poverty line.[19] Aggregating, however, requires one to move beyond

[19] At the very start, the definition of poverty used here introduces relativity and arbitrariness—for in some areas other necessities like access to adequate health care, electricity, Internet, and certain personal liberties are included in the basket of minimal needs.

superficial description into the tricky realm of the sociologist or economist's task—creating measurements with which to generalize the category as such.[20] As Sen summarizes, 'Classifying the population into the rich and the poor may serve some purpose in some context, but it is far too undiscriminating to be helpful in analysing starvation, famines, or even poverty.'[21] One might merely claim that entitlements can be, in some sense, calculated as a part of a person's income, but these entitlements grow more complex when discussing exchange entitlements; laws governing trade, property, and labor; guaranteed 'basic' rights; subsidies; charities. Creating a multivariable equation of the myriad, interconnected entitlements that differ from state to state would be almost impossible, if not ultimately flawed. It is from this premise that Sen builds his case for a capabilities approach to aggregating poverty. Yet, one of the limitations of the capabilities approach is its foundation on ideas of extreme autonomy. This presupposition of an intense individualism may overlook the possibilities of dependency. Ashis Nandy argues that one might revise ideas of individualism, which can be jarring if not detrimental to those who have been dependent for generations, with what I call a 'hope of interrelatedness'.

Even so, Sen is not satisfied with his early nuancing of income-based views of poverty. He sees in Martha Nussbaum's notion of human capabilities a more complex and accurate picture of how to formulate a definition of poverty. In a sense, he introduces a purposeful vagueness into his aggregation. One way to address this is to incorporate 'direct methods' of measuring poverty such as narrative accounts of the poor, with institutions such as the World Bank adopting this approach 'collecting the voices' of over 60,000 people in an effort they call *Voices of the Poor*. Of course, the Subaltern Studies group demystified this practice in India and elsewhere decades before the World Bank's initiative. But, indirect and direct methods may still not be enough. The postcolonial novel, I suggest, allows for these narratives of the poor to be explored in multiple

[20] Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 10.
[21] Ibid., p. 156.

ways and brings these stories to a wider audience. As one of the many effects of the novel, it provides a potential sympathetic response from middle-class readers.

To understand the thinking behind poverty research one must look at the genealogy of political economy and note that this practice by and large proceeds from industrial Britain. In an intellectual maneuver somewhat similar to Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, the chapter focuses temporarily on the Victorian embers that I reckon demonstrate the essentialization of studies of poverty in thinkers such as Thomas Malthus and Matthew Arnold. Gertrude Himmelfarb's two-volume history of poverty in industrial Britain provides the historical framework, while Arnold once again bridges the historical and literary—with hope ever in mind—in his poem 'The Scholar-Gipsy' (1853). This genealogy is then figured through certain Indian English fictions from the nineteenth and twentieth century, and if at first the critical engagement with the early Indian English works seems illustrative or *a posteriori*, the intercession of Amartya Sen and Ashis Nandy provide a radically new perception of poverty according to which imaginative narrativistic attempts to represent it, such as those by Mistry and Ghosh, become more than complementary or anecdotal, but necessary and pivotal to such understandings.

The chapter explores, through Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* (2000) and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, whether a writer can creatively reimagine this journey in such a way as to question the psychic status of the village as well as the potentiality of urban life. To put it in the terms of the thesis, what are the possibilities afforded to the novelist that allow him or her to reimagine the nominative-messianic structure of hope inherent in the psychogeographic journey to the metropolis—a journey that is central to the production of South Asian self identification?

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Across the dissertation, as has been sketched, runs an undercurrent of poetry, specifically that of Matthew Arnold. On the surface, it is not obvious that a discussion of the poems of this quintessential Victorian poet belong in a dissertation about contemporary Indian English novels. Yet Matthew Arnold's poetry provides an interesting sub-commentary to hoping in the

postcolonial context. He is Nehru's poet of preference, of course, but his presence is more than ancillary. Arnold confronts his despair amid a more general hopelessness of Victorian society. He writes from within an increasingly callous state bureaucracy (to whom he is employed), and during radical republicanist upheaval in Europe. His commitment to realism, his tenuous belief in the redemptive power of literature, and his cautious refusal to fully invest in revolution all play a role in his inclusion in this dissertation. Yet, to some extent, I do not know why Arnold's poetry invigorates my thoughts on hope, but reading 'Empedocles on Etna', 'Sohrab and Rustum', and 'The Scholar Gipsy' helped to articulate my thoughts and cohere the chapters of the dissertation. His poems are touchstones for each of my approaches to hope. His presence could not be ignored, and, in fact, insisted itself in the thesis. At each critical juncture in the writing of this dissertation I found the poet scholar lurking, and in a way I chase him in the pages that follow.

Hope is vital for postcolonial materialist critics, and it runs underneath the work of the postcolonial critics cited in this dissertation.[22] The thesis makes explicit how and why hope is cited so frequently, yet chronically under-theorized in postcolonial studies in general. More specifically, this discussion of hope speaks to the increased attention paid toward a potential postcolonial literary aesthetics in the field. This is done, here, through the diverse representations of hope by Ghosh and Mistry that are prefaced on Nehruvian hopes and postcolonial promise amid the prevalence of extreme poverty in India. My attempt is not to attack hope or utopianism where it is most vulnerable, but to approach it in its most trenchant and seemingly necessary ways. Likewise, I am not trying to tear down the concept only to construct something new in its place; rather, I wish to formulate from the various ways of hoping that these writers, including Jawaharlal Nehru, have to offer a more reflexive hope that works also as literary critique.

[22] The thesis on hope draws from critics like Dipesh Chakrabarty, Elleke Boehmer, Amartya Sen, Ashis Nandy, Anshuman Mondal, or Deepika Bahri, though each might not necessarily consider themselves 'materialists'.

Thinking Hope from the South

When asked by a reader about the 'hopeful' ending to *The Glass Palace* (2000), and of his hope for Burma itself, Amitav Ghosh responded, 'It's people who've lived in a comfortable society that allow themselves that luxury of blowing everything up at the end. You really can't if you come from a difficult place. […] One can only hope for a gradual change.'[1] The anti-apocalyptic hope that Ghosh alludes to lacks the eschatological emphasis that is prevalent in Western discourses on hope from theologians and theorists.[2] Ghosh distinguishes between a 'difficult' and a 'comfortable' context out of which hope arises, and this engenders a questioning of hope itself. There is a predominantly Western, and Christian, corpus of criticism and exposition on hope, but if hope is always fed through the 'luxurious' concept of utopia and apocalypse, does this necessarily apply to all frames of reference?

Perhaps, as I suggest in what follows, one can differentiate and complicate hope to use the term critically in postcolonial literary discourse. Hope may be considered universal to human existence, but the sociology of hope, to use Henri Desroche's phrase, is decidedly European. It is in part because of this that this thesis attempts to think about hope from a different perspective—investigating its varied postcolonial shapes. This chapter focuses on a few antecedents to Rohinton Mistry and Amitav Ghosh that preface the investigation of hope in their texts in the subsequent chapters. In particular, the resultant formulations of hope from these novelists are read alongside and against Jawaharlal Nehru's *An Autobiography* (1936) and *The Discovery of India* (1946), as well as Matthew Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna' (1852). No doubt, creating distinctions between Western and Eastern or Northern and Southern hope could be a specious undertaking, but it is a valuable postcolonial exercise nonetheless. As the title of the chapter suggests, the legacy of hopeful thinking, especially with regards to a postcolonial

[1] Amitav Ghosh, Interview with James Naughtie, *Bookclub*, BBC Radio 4. Originally aired on 7 December 2008.
[2] For example, Jürgen Moltmann or Ernst Bloch.

situation, needs careful introspection, and the Indian English novel in particular provides a distilled mixture of the many complicated manifestations of hope as practice.

Hope's purchase, as it were, is that it is both singular and ecumenical, and it is here that one finds the various actors to be caught in contradiction that mirrors the idea, increasingly gaining acceptance in Western academe, of the global and local simultaneity of contemporary life within capitalist society. In these later stages of capitalism the perceived ideological hegemony of this view of the system has created a type of hope that verges on the universal—one that proceeds from an Enlightenment genealogy. It is for this reason that this thesis focuses on hope writ small.

Hope is a subject that has been obliquely investigated in literary studies as a whole, and in postcolonial literary studies it is almost wholly absent. In a novel such as Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* or Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, hope seems integral to the thematic, but the hope in the texts is not necessarily equivalent to that theorized by Erich Fromm, Georg Lukács, or Bloch.[3] The novels bring about a way of viewing hope that can mount a muted, yet powerful commentary of the world that is exclusive to the art form, but before that assertion can be leveled, one must investigate hope's beginnings from the theoretical vantage point of this thesis.

Toward Freedom: Jawaharlal Nehru's hope

In the introduction to his autobiography, Mohandas Gandhi recounts a conversation with his friend, Swami Anand, in which the latter expressed doubts about writing a work that was entirely a 'practice of the West'. Gandhi responds (more to his readers than to Anand) that he did not intend to write a 'real autobiography', rather, he would write his 'experiments with truth' and only 'matters of religion'.[4] Jawaharlal Nehru, in turn, does not give such a statement as to the form of his autobiography other than the now familiar self-conscious provisos about creating a

[3] Erich Fromm, *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*, Ernst Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications for a Christian Eschatology*.
[4] Mohandas K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography, or the Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. by Mahadev Desai (New York: Dover, 1983), pp. vii-viii.

personal narrative amid a narrative of a national struggle for independence. However, Nehru is acutely aware of his audience, his politics, and his writing in *An Autobiography*. Rather than trying to absolve himself of vanity and the criticism of Anand's claims of the Western genealogy of autobiography, Nehru establishes a 'national autobiography' that Philip Holden calls a 'paradigmatic narrative'. This sub-genre, he insists, is the 'model' for other national leaders in decolonized nations.[5] Holden notes some of the particularities of such a national autobiography. First, it maps the individual onto the nation, imagining the nation as individual rather than imagining the nation from within the community. Second, Holden argues that the narrative strategy of recollecting the protagonist's life as a *Bildung* toward freedom 'wrest[s] the heritage of the Enlightenment from the grasp of a colonial state'.[6] This is analogous to the nationalist practice of reconstructing a shared past through national epic, heroes, etc. The inherent form of Nehru's text is teleological and progressive while simultaneously critical of the so-called 'Western practice' that gave rise to national autobiography.

In a sense, *An Autobiography* is used in this chapter as a parable about the kind of hope that is in the purview of the thesis. Further, his writing from prison provides a personal conception of hope that is both a source of strength during imprisonment as well as a mystifying affect in a tumultuous epoch. This is supplemented below when he projects his hopeful disposition onto the Indian subcontinent as a whole in his later historiography, *Discovery of India*. To return to Holden's comments about national autobiography, Nehru prefaces his notions of 'progress' in *Discovery* through the narrativistic strategies of life writing. In Nehru's *Autobiography*, the confines of jail compared with the confines of colonial subjugation is the overarching metaphor, and contained in this notion is an underlying, or perhaps girding, message of hopeful liberation.

[5] Holden specifically mentions Kwame Nkrumah, Kenneth Kaunda, Lee Kwan Yew, and Nelson Mandela having taken their cue from Nehru. Philip Holden, 'Other Modernities: National Autobiography and Globalization', *Biography*, 28 (Winter 2005), pp. 89-103, (p. 89).
[6] Ibid., p. 89; 94.

Nehru is constantly looking forward, evoking the future, and trying to imagine what is to come. He comments in *Discovery* that perhaps it is because of the solitude and idleness of prison that thoughts of the future sustain him. 'Even my seemingly action-less life in prison is tacked on somehow,' he says, 'to coming or imagined action, and so it gains for me a certain content without which it would be a vacuum in which existence would become intolerable.'[7] Nehru dwells in this dichotomy: stasis and regeneration. His disagreement with Gandhian philosophy stems from these grounds. Slightly annoyed with Gandhi's quickness to employ hunger strikes, he rebukes Gandhi in his autobiography writing, 'As is usual with him, he refused to look into the future, or lay down any long-distance programme.'[8] However, two events between *Autobiography* and his later historiography influence his perception of this idea of hope: the Bengal Famine of 1943 and the Second World War. At the end of the chapter I revisit the evolution of Nehru's thoughts about hope and the future, but I mention this here to foreshadow a naiveté that Nehru himself later recognizes. Nevertheless, Nehru proposes two avenues for the prospective Indian nation. These potentialities are emblematized by Russia, who 'looked into the future and thought *only* of what is to be' and the other, unnamed countries that 'lay numbed under the dead hand of the past'. These latter countries 'spent their energy preserving the useless relics of a bygone age'.[9] It is apparent that Nehru favors the former, as he notes that Russia 'followed the great Lenin' into the future, but the adverb 'only' in his comment is a subtle reproach. He goes on to say, 'Our national struggle became a stage in the longer journey, and it was as well that repression and suffering were tempering our people for future struggles and forcing them to consider the new ideas that were stirring the world.'[10] One must always keep in mind that Nehru is writing his autobiography for British (and American) audiences while being imprisoned by the British, but even so this is possibly the most optimistic view of colonialism

[7] Jawaharlal Nehru, *Discovery of India* (New York: John Day, 1946), p. 11.
[8] Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London: Bodley Head, 1958), p. 124. The book is also known as *Toward Freedom*.
[9] Ibid., p. 362. The emphasis is mine.
[10] Ibid., p. 363.

that an anti-colonial nationalist could muster. 'We would be the stronger,' he continues, 'and the more disciplined and hardened by the elimination of weaker elements.' His appeal to a cold, pseudo-Darwinism undercuts his previous optimism, and he concludes this with the retrospective bromide, 'time was in our favour'.[11]

While the narrative and form of his national autobiography suggest an emancipatory or perhaps even utopian reading, there are some striking and peculiar instances in *An Autobiography* that seem less about national myth-making, and more about nominal, self-preservative hope. In particular, Nehru often alludes to poetry and drama in his writing, although he casually mentions that 'novels made one feel mentally slack', professing his disinclination toward reading them.[12] In the most distressing moments of his autobiography—ruminating upon his imprisonment and despairing, perhaps, his future and that of the independence movement—Nehru leans on poetry to enunciate what I consider to be a partial example of the narcissistic shield of hope.[13] Congress had just been declared illegal, mass protests had led to mass arrests, and his wife lay ill while Nehru is locked away in Naini Prison. He recalls Matthew Arnold's poem, 'Palladium'.

> Whither were we going? The future was hid from us, and it was as well that it was hidden; even the present was partly covered by a veil, so far as we were concerned. But this we knew: that there was strife and suffering and sacrifice in the present and on the morrow.
>
> > Men will renew the battle in the plain
> > To-morrow; red with blood will Xanthus be;
> > Hector and Ajax will be there again;
> > Helen will come upon the wall to see.
> >
> > Then we shall rust in shade, or shine in strife,
> > And fluctuate 'tween [sic] blind hopes and blind despairs.
> > And fancy that we put forth all our life,
> > And never know how with the soul it fares.[14]

It is interesting that Nehru does not mind that the future lies hidden and the present partly so. Passively, from prison, news of the anti-colonial movement must have been censored, but the

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p. 352.
[13] Further discussion of the narcissistic shield is below.
[14] Nehru, *An Autobiography*, p. 324.

thrust of this passage suggests a deeper notion of an occluded view of the future and present. Nehru evokes a consolatory feeling in the immediate 'strife, suffering, and sacrifice'. He takes solace in the unknown. The hidden future keeps open a future of possibility, and the protagonist, a pragmatic Nehru, relies on the things he can control. The 'imagined action' of sacrifice acts as a salve to the death of inertia. It is in this way that one can read the ensuing quatrains that conclude his remarks. [15]

The poem's title refers to the statue of Athena—known as the Palladium—that protects Troy. It should not go unnoticed that Nehru, here, is using Arnold's poem as his own palladium during his imprisonment. His words pull at Arnold's imagery of 'rusting in the shade', and perhaps Nehru is struggling, behind bars, to 'shine in strife'. The succeeding line, however, is striking: to 'fluctuate 'twixt blind hopes and blind despairs'. With the repetition of 'blind' for both hope and despair, Matthew Arnold's poem strikes a neutral tone. It is unclear whether hope and despair are blinding or are blind to shade or strife. Further, we can never tell, at least according to this stanza, whether either has an effect on the soul (and here, I consider both the 'soul' of the statue and of a human). The ambivalence or uncertainty of the passage resembles Nehru's own: 'Whither were we going?' However, if we look to the final stanza of Arnold's poem, it suggests that the soul itself becomes a palladium:

> Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
> Upon our life a ruling effluence send.
> And when it fails, fight as we will, we die;
> And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.[16]

There is, then, a hopeful chord being struck if there is such a soul sending 'a ruling effluence' upon life. Nehru's reference to strife 'on the morrow' is itself a somewhat hopeful thought in the sense that he is investing in a future—albeit a difficult one. Of course, at this point Nehru is

[15] Matthew Arnold's classicism is quite well documented, but it should also be noted that Jawaharlal Nehru, likewise, admired the Greeks—in their history, philosophy, and poetry. In his later work, *Discovery of India*, he compares ancient India and and ancient Greece saying that even though they may be different, they 'have so much in common that I am led to believe that their background of life was very similar'. Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 89.
[16] Matthew Arnold, 'Palladium', in *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by Kenneth Allott (London: Longmans, 1965), pp. 494-96, (p. 496). All of the subsequent references to Matthew Arnold's poetry refer to this text.

recalling his internment at Naini, and he does know where he will end up: Bareilly and Dehra Dun jails, and then finally back to Naini Prison.

One recalls the imagery of the Palladium at Troy, but Hector, the poem says, was 'far below' and 'saw it [the statue] not'.[17] The poet reminds us what will soon happen to Hector, Ajax, and Achilles. The Xanthus will be 'red with blood'. Hector dons Achilles' armor and rallies a counterattack on the Greek forces. Zeus sees this as hubris, and he then decides Hector's fate. After an exchange of spear attacks, Athena places Achilles' spear back in his hands, and the unarmed Hector flees. Famously, Hector summons the courage to fight Achilles despite his almost assured defeat. Herein lies the irony—the statue of Athena that protects Troy, of which Hector visits in 'moments, ah, too rare', is juxtaposed with Athena's deception that leads to his death. In his final minutes, Hector faces his fate with valor, and his motivation for this will be expanded below. It is not entirely clear whether Nehru finds Hector an honorable example, but it seems evident that Nehru is able to glean some hope, that is, find something hopeful despite his current situation, through the symbolism of the Palladium and the death of Hector as mediated through Matthew Arnold's poetry.

A few pages before the Arnold passage, Nehru quotes *Hamlet*: 'Absent thee from felicity awhile / And for a season draw thy breath in pain'.[18] He omits a pivotal line: 'to tell my story'. Nehru, indeed, is telling his own story, and mentioning Hamlet alongside Hector—whose intrepid fight with Achilles is his desire to die honorably so that his 'great story will be told'—is likely not a coincidence. Again, one reads in these lines the image of current strife—'draw thy breath in pain'—for the sake of the story. Hamlet, in saying these words to a suicidal Horatio, bids him to fight despair if for no other reason than remembrance and record. This, it seems, for Hector, Hamlet, and Nehru is the most hopeful act in their power.

[17] Arnold, 'Palladium', p. 496.
[18] Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 320.

Due to the difficult relationship Nehru has with Gandhi, as mentioned above, the latter quotes Matthew Arnold again. This time, he cites 'Stanzas of the Grand Chartreuse'. Disagreeing with Gandhi's intention to 'fast unto death' for the rights of 'depressed classes', Nehru wonders if the movement had become fragmented and bogged down by short-term interests (as noted above, rather than investing in a 'long-distance programme'). He calls the civil disobedience at this time an 'emotional upheaval' and asks if it is 'sheer revivalism'.[19] He worries that the populace have come to see Gandhi as a Messiah, or a miracle worker, and they have come to wait upon his magic to bring them swaraj.[20] Nehru, drifting further away from Gandhian politics—a politics which he considers more 'purity and sacrifice' than thought—recognizes a nationalist hope verging on stasis.

> Even with my closest associates I felt that an invisible barrier came between us and, unhappy at being unable to overcome it, I shrank back into my shell. The world seemed to envelop them, the old world of past ideologies, hopes and desires. The new world was yet far distant.
>
> > Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> > The other powerless to be born,
> > With nowhere yet to rest his head.[21]

When Nehru uses the phrase 'hopes and desires' with regard to the 'old world of past ideologies' he seemingly references the 'blind hopes' from 'Palladium' and the 'dead hand of the past'. This passage represents one of the most despairing sections of his autobiography. He does not seem to be taking as much solace in the potentialities of an unknown future. He is distraught that 'the new world was yet far distant'. The imagery that Nehru evokes through Arnold—wandering, dead, powerless, nowhere—points to his mental and emotional state of his widening ideological schism with Gandhi, his protracted imprisonment and exclusion, and the resultant feelings of powerlessness. I am not trying to suggest that this passage is without hope; on the contrary,

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[19] Ibid., p. 373.
[20] R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* and Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* both feature this idea of 'waiting' for a messianic Gandhi, and both, in different ways, undermine this practice—perhaps worthy of study apart from this dissertation.
[21] Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 374.

Nehru 'shrank back into [his] shell'—a shell that consists of poetic passages whose bleakness in terms of content is meliorated by their transformation into aesthetic form. Nehru does not preclude the existence of a 'new world', yet when it seems most distant, he must protect himself with a dim hope that he finds in poetry that, for him, opens out into the future. There is a certain practical use of Matthew Arnold's poetry for Nehru in which he shields himself from total despair, defeat, and inaction. While at the same time, like some of Arnold's speakers, he grounds himself *in* the struggle and strife from which that despair arises that points to a yet distant future.

Etymology of hope: Expectation, anticipation, and desire

In *A Philosophical Analysis of Hope*, Jayne Waterworth takes a Socratic approach to carefully consider the act of hoping from inception through completion. Starting with *The Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), she uses definitions of the term and a linguistic analysis to begin her arguments. I, too, find it useful to begin with the *OED* definitions. Hope qua noun is 'desire combined with expectation'.[22] As a transitive verb it is 'to desire with expectation'.[23] In its intransitive sense, it is 'to entertain expectation of something desired'.[24] My first response is to question the desire aspect of the definitions (elaborated below), but Waterworth's inclination is to modify the *OED*'s use of 'expectation'. She feels that the term is too strong for the purposes of hope in that 'to have an expectation an individual must have some *beliefs* about her present circumstances and some conception as to ways in which those circumstances can be *changed*'.[25] Perhaps a minor real world illustration will help illuminate this idea.

If one were to bet one dollar to predict the outcome of the flip of a coin in order to receive a dollar on top of their original wager if one predicts correctly or lose their ante if one guesses incorrectly, one probably estimates having a 50/50 chance of winning. In mathematics,

[22] "hope, n[1]" The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. 1989, OED Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 7 Dec. 2009 <http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50107934>
[23] "hope, v" The Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. 1989, OED Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 7 Dec. 2009 < http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50107936>
[24] Ibid.
[25] Jayne Waterworth, *A Philosophical Analysis of Hope* (Basingstoke: Pallgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 9.

to quantify the reasonability of this wager given the possible outcomes, one calculates the 'expected value'. The equation for my bet would look roughly like:

$$E(X) = -X(0.5) + X(0.5) = 0$$

where X is the original wager (here, X=1). With two possible outcomes of equal probability, one has a fifty percent chance of winning or losing their wager.[26] An expected value, E(X), of zero means one can expect to neither win nor lose money if one plays this game of chance many, many times. This rational and very simplistic illustration can still manage to show the various aspects of an elementary hope. One's initial desire to wager comes from the desire for material gain (or, the fear of losing). The desire itself is probably not enough to impel someone to act; rather, the desire to win must also interact with the 'expected value' of winning. Desire, it seems, is hard to quantify, but expectation is a bit easier to pin down. And as Waterworth might say, to expect the outcome is to understand one's current situation (owner of one dollar) and one's future possibilities (owner of two or zero dollars). Of course, hoping is often far more complicated than flipping a coin.

Expected value, though, might not fully articulate the process of (the second half of) hope as defined by the *OED*. There is a certainty when considering expectation as estimation. Hope, however, encompasses both estimable and inestimable expectation—the latter being almost a contradiction in terms. Thus, Waterworth posits the substitution of 'anticipation' for 'expectation'. For her, to desire with anticipation allows for 'indeterminacy' that would account for a 'range of satisfactory alternatives' to act as fulfillment.[27] Imagine the original wager in the context of a charitable casino event where one's losing becomes giving. 'Winning' in this instance now becomes a little more complicated. How does one quantify the expected value of their conscience when they win or lose?

[26] Bookies call this 'even money'.
[27] Waterworth, p. 10.

Though Waterworth makes a valid point regarding anticipation, I am not convinced that either of the terms is entirely satisfactory for the purpose of hoping. If one regards expectation as *value-neutral* (rational, such as expected value) and hope as *value-positive*, one could say that the desire of a positive outcome (winning the bet) creates a subjective expected value that would satisfy the 'uncertainty' that Waterworth stipulates as constituent of hope. I have difficulty regarding an 'objective' expected value, such as the mathematical example, when hope can only be experienced as a cognitive human activity. That is, expectation is always mediated through experience, and thus becomes something akin to anticipation.

Yet, I would not discard the *OED*'s definition nor would I reject Waterworth's amendment. In fact, Henri Desroche, 30 years prior, briefly considers this same semantic debate in *The Sociology of Hope*. Paraphrasing Lacroix's position, he says:

> There are two levels in expectation: on the one hand a level of *aspiration* or expectation of a *desirable ideal*, desired as this desire invests it in *will*; on the other hand, a *level of anticipation* of *a possible realisation*, as it is circumscribed by *capacities*. One also finds this dialectic of hope between what one *should* do to reply to the *subjective* demands of desires, and what one *can* do to respond to the *objective* frameworks of powers.[28]

Desroche argues that expectation acts as a dialectic between the ideal and the possible, aspiration and anticipation in his terminology. Baked into Desroche's expectation is Waterworth's notion of the uncertainty of hope's object—anticipation of many possible desirable outcomes—as well as utopian dreams and plain, old rational wagers. Interestingly, it is Desroche's last sentence here about 'replying' to subjective desires and 'responding' to objective powers that nicely opens the arguments of this chapter. Later, the chapter examines how one is capable of developing the expectation or anticipation of subjective desires, and how closely this is associated with the capacity to hope. Furthermore, these desires must also confront the society in which they are produced, and it is here where this chapter on hope comes to a crescendo and perhaps can even

[28] Henri Desroche, *The Sociology of Hope*, trans. Carol Martin-Sperry (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 20.

say something toward those 'objective powers'. Just as 'expectation' is tempered and reinforced above, desire must also be scrutinized.

Desire as it pertains to hope has been somewhat universally accepted as something constituent of, if not very closely related to, it. Perhaps, there is no better word to describe the 'movement' of hope. To put it another way, desire is what drives action and what precedes intention—the desire for things to be different than they are now. This leads Ernst Bloch to suggest that hope is the basis of all human intention in his three-volume treatise *The Principle of Hope*. Framed in this way, Freudian libidinous desire and hope seem to be little differentiated, but what exactly does it mean to desire with expectation as opposed to desiring *without* expectation? Can one feasibly desire *something* without creating any space to formulate how that something might be fulfilled? The distinction between hope and desire is not either/or, and it does not prove fruitful to continue slicing away to find some concrete separation. However, the anthropologist Vincent Crapanzano provides an elegant way of distinguishing between the terms. He notes that desire 'presupposes human agency' whereas 'hope depends on some other agency—a god, fate, chance, an other—for its fulfillment'.[29] Desire itself can be the means and the ends, but hope must have that difficult component of expectation/anticipation. To crave rice might be considered a desire, but when one has no rice and little means to procure rice, this desire becomes dependent upon something outside of the self. Surely, desire and hope can coincide, but at that point when fulfillment of desire becomes contingent, it can only be described as hope.

Describing hope as 'passive', as Crapanzano does, embodies this contingent state when desire becomes hope, but it also offers a sight of the other side of the coin: waiting. There is always a moment in hoping that holds the hopeful in stasis, arrested by the desired future which they are powerless to actualize, or desiring a future of which they cannot imagine. In his study of

[29] Vincent Crapanzano, 'Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis', *Cultural Anthropology*, 18 (2003), pp. 3-32, (p. 6).

South African whites at the end of apartheid, Crapanzano notes that 'they hoped for […] a solution—something they could not envisage. They had a hope so indefinite as not to have an identifiable object. As such, they could not turn it into effective desire.'[30] The South African whites that Crapanzano interviewed feared retribution or calamity that never arrived, but they were paralyzed in waiting for a future to come. The worry, here, is that the hope that is a constitutive part of postcolonial literature in general (like Ghosh's faith in 'gradual change') has, in one sense, this anesthetizing effect. Crapanzano's formulation of hope as a type of 'waiting', which complicates the celebratory rhetoric that has dominated critical engagement with the term, finds resonance with a possible understanding or interpretation of the postcolonial—that is, an always suspended expectation of freedom to come. Waterworth's fascination with expectation/anticipation proves prescient when framed as deferral. That which separates hope from desire, it seems, is double edged.

Narcissistic hope and the 'narcissistic shield'

So far, I grappled with what hope means for the person who hopes. The next logical steps are two-fold: to investigate how one might be capable of hoping and what this might mean for that person. The Blochian conception of hope—the intention of mankind toward utopia—is pervasive in texts, both popular and academic, that explore hope as a cognitive process rather than as an abstract philosophical subject of analysis. Most of the books regarding hope in this manner come from sociologists and bioethicists studying the role of physicians providing hope for their patients, especially in cases of terminal illness. However, one very peculiar work arises from this oeuvre, and that is Anna Potamianou's book, which investigates the dual usage of hope by her analysands diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. She reverses the direction of inquiry by focusing on the psychological cathexis—the concentration of energy invested in an idea—of her patients' hope as opposed to the general narrative of the doctor 'instilling' hope in

[30] Crapanzano, p. 18.

the patient. In her words, she wants to demonstrate the 'dynamic and economic value of [a] form of resistance' (i.e. hope) that is both the 'guarantor of distressed narcissism and the shield [against] masochism: for and against life'.[31] Her work, I suggest, is apposite with regards to hope in the postcolonial texts studied here. I must be very explicit in stating that I am not comparing an individual or group that can be described as 'postcolonial' with the category 'borderline', but that Potamianou's insights about the nature of hope in her patients have a much wider application to the investigation of hope in an everyday context. One should think about hope in her formulation as 'for and against life'. Hope is not quite as Bloch frames it. And as Ernesto Laclau says, 'Hope is always related to something that is lacking'.[32] This lack not only impels us to change as Bloch would have it, but can also 'guarantee [a] lack of change, lack of mourning, and the least expenditure of energy'.[33] This harkens back to Desroche's 'dialectic of hope' which is further echoed by Potamianou's 'narcissistic shield'.

If one conceives of hope as a process—that is, the act of hoping—and one that always involves a human individual or collective and a future, then one must look to the capacity to hope as it is historically constructed. The drivers of human action, Eros and Thanatos in Freudian psychoanalytical terms, are here somewhat simplistically reduced to libidinal and destructive desires. The contingent aspect of hope when set alongside desire creates distance between drive and learned process that must be accounted for. Potamianou, relying on H. Boris, points to the child-breast relationship noting that 'hope develops from preconceptions of things and experiences […] for example, the idea that there must be a breast existing for the baby, not only as an object to satisfy the oral desire, but also as the hope of a thing it may have for itself, within itself, or may be offered by external forces'.[34] The differentiation that Crapanzano

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[31] Anna Potamianou, *Hope: A Shield in the Economy of Borderline States*, trans. by Philip Slotkin (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.
[32] Mary Zournazi, *Hope: New Philosophies for Change* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002), p. 127. Paul in his letter to the Romans makes this very same point: 'Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have?' Romans 8:24.
[33] Potamianou, p. 4.
[34] Ibid, p. 59.

suggests above is one that begins shortly after birth. Whatever later becomes the object of hope—that is what replaces the breast—must be comprehended through the historical experiences of desiring and receiving nourishment. If we can conceive of a state where the possibility of the breast is viewed as non-existent, the basis of hope becomes untenable and leads to what Potamianou calls 'the destructive fragmentation of the other and self'.[35] This line of questioning opens into the complex employment of hope for her patients.

Rather than risk fragmentation, hope becomes a 'shield' against the realization of the impossibility of the object of hope—lighting up 'the menacing darkness of the void'.[36] At the same time, this guarding behavior brings about waiting, the lack of action such as those of the white South Africans of Crapanzano's study, in which the realization of non-fulfillment is postponed. Potamianou believes that the displacement of desires purposefully prevents it from happening in the present. This deferral, then, 'protects the subject from disaster and non-satisfaction, while […] indefinitely postponing, and thereby disappointing, the need for satisfaction, because waiting is inherent in the absence of what is desired'.[37] Potamianou places hope on a continuum allowing it to inhabit many senses, and each with harmful and protective results. This is the complexity of 'hopeful waiting', or narcissistic hope. Generally, it is seen as investment in the reality principle; that delayed gratification will allow one to learn from their experiences. But, as previously suggested, waiting also creates paralysis. With regard to her borderline patients:

> Waiting and hope overlap to form a constellation that represents a nucleus of resistance to change […] By becoming the organizer of a kind of waiting which forbids itself to 'act' in the present, and instead cathects what is to come, which is seen as a reunion with an experience of pleasure, albeit transported into the future, hope has thus been infiltrated by repetition.[38]

[35] Ibid., p. 73.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid., p. 59.
[38] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

Note that she considers this a 'kind of waiting' that can translate itself into against-life hope. Yet, one cannot separate the possibilities, and effectiveness, of the two poles of hoping, what I have glossed from Potamianou as the 'narcissistic shield'. To imagine a future in which fulfillment is a potentiality is to create a stable self/other relationship with the external world, but at the same time, this capacity for hope 'is rooted in the experience of a grandiose self, whose productions make themselves felt […] in the organization of narcissism'.[39]

It can be said that hope generally arises during times of tribulation, or at the very least a lack of pleasure and gratification. This may be an obvious statement, but one must contemplate why it is that hope persists in response to, and despite, our current situations. It justifies, if that term can be used here, the shielding aspect of hope. Yet, Potamianou considers this moment the 'activation of omnipotence' in the face of the denial of fulfillment.[40] The objective of hope produced by the 'grandiose self' as a narcissistic impulse prevents the fragmentation of the psyche. It can be difficult to account for the many seemingly contradictory origins and effects, but Potamianou's borderline patients indulge in their deferred narcissistic desire to shore up, or frame, their existence in the face of external reality, or anchoring, at the risk of stasis, something that might be taken away. This whole process, I suggest, is not exclusive to people with borderline personality disorder, though it is perhaps amplified in these cases. If the capacity to hope begins in infancy, we all must submit to the same narcissistic impulses.

Now that the complexities of hope's meanings and enunciations have been discussed, the question remains as to how this can apply in more than an individual sense. Here, in the child-breast relationship, the mother's role in formulating hope should not be overlooked. The mother must monitor as well as respond to the needs of her child; what Potamianou considers the active/passive care (in her intriguing terminology, 'mother of love' and 'mother of hate') through which 'the child […] may be said to learn to take care of itself by internalizing the care lavished

[39] Ibid., p. 4.
[40] Ibid., p. 61.

on it by its mother'.[41] Ghassan Hage latches onto a related notion to posit that hope and fear are products distributed by 'caring' and 'worrying' societies. His attempt to triangulate citizen, state, and multinational capitalism is the basis for the literary engagement of the novels to come.

Societal hope

For hope to become a useful tool for literary inquiry in this thesis, the cognitive process of hoping outlined above must be expanded to the level of the collective. Hope is not exclusive to the domain of the individual. The psychological investigation that Potamianou undertakes here needs to be expanded to the level of society. Ghassan Hage makes this leap convincingly by focusing on the state as a mediator between the pull of global capitalism and the individual. This leap—singular to collective—needs slight elaboration, as it is entirely too easy to cede too much power to 'Capitalism', as if capitalism itself has the capacity to hope or to appropriate hope.[42] The aggregate of all the various ways one accumulates is more generally a person's struggle to accumulate 'being'.[43] Moreover, this being is afforded by societies capable of providing, in Hage's words, a 'surplus of hope', and this surplus 'is the precondition of all forms of hospitality'. Yet, the legacy of colonization has caused a 'vacuum of hope' in now-decolonized countries such as India.[44]

Capitalist logic, then, fits extremely well with the human capacity to hope, because it is capable of managing many of hope's different inflections, as we shall later see. Our investment in the most important collective organization of the current epoch—the nation-state—becomes the pivot between the aforementioned capacity for individuals to hope and capitalist reasoning that

[41] Ibid., p. 98.
[42] Immanuel Wallerstein argues for what he calls 'historical capitalism', as manifesting itself in the tendency to commodify *processes*; that is, production, exchange, distribution, etc. I argue that one can extend this to the process of hoping. Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism with Capitalist Civilization* (London: Verso, 1996), p. 15.
[43] Pierre Bourdieu calls this *illusio*. Capitalist accumulation, as Pierre Bourdieu frames it, can be the accumulation of almost any type of wealth: e.g. knowledge-based, cultural, social, or material. Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (London: Merlin Press, 2003) p. 16.
[44] Ibid., p. 17.

seeks to utilize and exploit that capability. This, however, is complicated by the entanglement of the state with regard to capitalism.[45]

Ghassan Hage focuses on the general transformation from 'I' to 'we' on a national scale. He relies heavily on Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* as well as Benedict Anderson and Frantz Fanon. One of the aims of Chatterjee's work, for example, is to look at the various myths and institutions necessary for the instantiation of Indian national identity. Concomitant to this, Hage posits that national identity itself is *aspirational*, and therefore 'all collective national identities work as a mechanism for the distribution of hope'. If hope is a singular capacity shaped by the material and societal production of an individual, there is a tension between individual and collective that needs also to be reflected in hope. Returning to the European forbearers of hope, Bloch, Fromm, and Desroche, one notes that hope's orientation toward the future can be construed as the basis for all intention. Hage nuances this line of thought by situating this future solely and exclusively within the possibilities of society, because, as he says, 'society is the distributor of social opportunities for self-realization'.[46]

This is why Hage uses the phrase 'societal hope'. As a scholar of social theory, he is keen to bring his arguments under the umbrella of 'society'. Nevertheless, I find it a useful category for further describing nominal hope. Societal hope, in Hage's words, is 'about one's sense of the possibilities that life can offer'. Imagining the interplay between hope and poverty in particular, he comments that societal hope 'is not necessarily related to an income level'. It is not poverty *per se* that negates hope—and this is a small part of the arguments in Chapter Four of this dissertation—but rather 'its enemy is a sense of entrapment, of having nowhere to go'.[47] And if

[45] Akin to Wallerstein, economist Samir Amin points out that in order for capitalism to work, it needs the 'intervention of a collective authority representing capitalism as a whole', and therefore one cannot cleanly separate the two. Samir Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Civilization: The Management of Contemporary Society* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 15. Wallerstein also comments, 'Historical capitalism is, thus, that concrete, time-bounded, space-bounded integrated locus of productive activities within which the endless accumulation of capital has been the economic objective or 'law' that has governed or prevailed in fundamental economic activity.' Another reason I draw upon Amin and Wallerstein is to reassert the grounding of capitalism in the world as to avoid imagining capitalism as omnipotent. *Historical Capitalism*, p. 18.
[46] Hage, p. 13; p. 15.
[47] Ibid., p. 20.

one concedes that society, with an emphasis on the state, is the dominant actor in distributing capabilities and opportunities, then one can imagine it being the dominant distributor of social hope.[48] This bears out in the novels of the thesis. *A Fine Balance*, *The Circle of Reason*, and *The Glass Palace*, to name a few, each focus on what can be called 'untraditional' families caught in the contradictory and unprotected intersection between the state and capitalism.

The aforementioned tension of hope between individual and collective can be expressed in Hage's somewhat woolly expression that the 'desire to confront life and live it, even if it is an intrinsic property of all human beings, cannot be separated from the effect of society on its development'.[49] Concerning this possible 'intrinsic property', Hage use the term conatus to make the argument that each thing seeks to preserve its own being. In this way, one can conceive of 'conatic hope', to use another of Hage's phrases, as the notion that 'hope […] is an ambivalent affect, always laced with fear'. It is a 'combination of desire for and fear of the future in which the desire for the future is more dominant'.[50] In this way, conatic hope is something close to the 'will to live' or 'confront[ing] life and liv[ing] it'. One can see how this dovetails and overlaps with narcissistic hope, but it also speaks to the basic question of hoping in the intransitive sense: a desire for the future in itself.

Conatic hope is not necessarily equal in everyone. The 'intensity' of conatic hope for the individual is relative to the 'material and symbolic social conditions of its activation'.[51] Furthermore, society is entirely capable of extinguishing this conatic hope entirely. The extreme case of suicide points to this.[52] Even so, Raymond Williams registers a very important point in reminding that one should not consider society as 'only the "dead husk" which limits social and individual fulfillment'. Just as capitalism requires an authority, society 'is always also a constitutive process with very powerful pressures which are both expressed in political,

[48] Ibid., p. 23.
[49] Ibid., p. 24.
[50] Conatus, in this usage, was originally coined by Benedict Spinoza. Ibid.
[51] Ibid., p. 25.
[52] Ibid., p. 24.

economic, and cultural formations and, to take the full weight of "constitutive", are internalized and become "individual wills"".[53]

To return to the claim about capitalist appropriation of the process of hoping, Hage synthesizes his general line of reasoning in an earlier essay that would later become the basis for his book.

> First we can argue that capitalism reduces the ethic of joy to an ethic of hope and deferral, and we can criticise this in the name of a long-term political aim, reinstating the ethic of joy. Second, we can also adopt a critical attitude to the ideologies of hope that capitalism encourages, and which reduce hope to dreams of upward social mobility. But, thirdly, we can also adopt a short-term critical perspective. We begin by accepting whatever hope capitalism has to offer, but as a next step we argue that capitalism does not even manage to distribute this kind of truncated hope evenly amongst the population. So not only does it withhold joy, but it actually doesn't even give hope to people in an equal manner. So this distribution of hope becomes the politics of the immediate.[54]

Hage considers joy as the 'experience of a growth from one state of being to a more efficient one *as it is happening*'.[55] So, joy is not found in the fulfillment of hope, but in the act of growing into a 'more efficient state'. In this formulation, joy can be continuous and hope is both a part of and antithetical to joy. I return to the imbrication of joy and hope below, but first I want to unpack Hage's claims of hope as a 'critical attitude' or a 'short-term critical perspective'. How, exactly, does capitalism appropriate hope to become a 'politics of the immediate' when it is, as Crapanzano might put it, between the intermediate and the infinite? Hage could include in his first step of the reduction of joy to desire and deferral, instead of 'hope and deferral'. This might seem like splitting hairs, but it is not hope itself that is appropriated via 'dreams of upward social mobility', rather it is hegemony of the logic of hope—desire and expectation. One can streamline his argument by stating that in capitalist societies, where the accumulation of wealth stands as the ultimate goal (the eschatological referent), hope becomes conflated to endlessly deferred dreams of greater wealth. Not only does it re-inscribe the content of hope, hegemonizing, as it were, what it means to hope, capitalism also creates narratives of people 'making it': the propagation of

[53] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 87.
[54] Mary Zournazi, 'Interview with Ghassan Hage', *Hope: New Philosophies for Change*, p. 152.
[55] Again, Hage borrows from Spinoza. Ibid.

the belief that transcending class positions is not only possible, but natural. Yet, it is in the very instance of this recognition of hoping within the logic of capitalist accumulation, which is unevenly distributed, that allow for one to level a more potent criticism embodied by hoping *outside* capital. If one reads Hage's last sentence another way, he is not necessarily equating hope with the 'politics of the immediate'. Rather, the capitalist version of hope, whether one frames it as conatic or narcissistic, becomes the primary form of action in the present (the immediate politics), and, though ultimately a flawed and corrupted mode of critique, it is the best vantage point from which to argue against capitalism's greatest injustices.

Returning to Hage's proviso with regards to hope and joy: 'If you just concentrate on the question of the distribution of hope you lose sight of the fact that there is a greater ethic in life, the ethic of joy, which is the basis of a far more radical critique of capitalism.'[56] I do not take from this passage a dismissal of the investigation of hope, but a reminder that interrogating and highlighting capitalist inequalities—that is, 'questioning the distribution of hope'—is but one necessary step toward a larger critique of the system as a whole. However, Hage almost seems to be turning against a hopeful critique: 'hope as the deferral of joy becomes a variant of *ressentiment*—a surrender to the logic of deferral, masquerading as a higher ethics used to justify the non-pursuit of joy.'[57] Hage's use of *ressentiment* is similar to Potamianou's narcissism and repetition. To blame, as it were, hope in its late capitalist modes for impeding growth, causing waiting or stasis—hindering joy—is something to be resisted. Noting, as Crapanzano, Potamianou, and Nietzsche do, that hope is always in tension—both for and against life—Hage espouses a 'take-what-hope-we-can-get' attitude while warning about the dangers of missing the forest for the trees. He later revises the dichotomy he constructs and considers how best to reconcile the inability to approach a critique of capital from an 'ethic of joy' when hope is the most useful tool at our disposal. He says,

[56] Ibid., p. 152.
[57] Ibid., p. 171.

> Maybe we shouldn't oppose joy and hope, but think of joy as that particularly positive variant of hope that is 'on the side of life'. […] Maybe, until the revolution, we should aim for the possibility of affirming a joyful hope, a hope that emerges from a refusal of the capitalist logic of deferral, and derives joy from that very refusal.[58]

His turn of phrase, 'until the revolution', ironically verges on the edge of the 'logic of deferral'. But he is correct; utopia, if one could only access it, presents the most radical critique of all. To achieve a 'joyful hope', somehow one must manage to re-channel dreams of utopia into a critique of the system that would endlessly defer those dreams. Moreover, the only joy that can be attained from this act is truncated by hope itself. Hage ultimately concedes to a practical paradox: we are stuck with what we have—a contaminated hope with which we may aim our criticisms toward this contamination.

The section began with Waterworth's fine-tuning of the *OED*'s definition of hope—desire with expectation/anticipation, and using the work of Crapanzano and, more extensively, Anna Potamianou, and has will continue to work through the various interpretations of hope to illuminate the different modes and effects that create this 'narcissistic shield'. Yet, it is in Hage's triad—individual, society, and capital—that one discovers that the capacity to hope, inherent but not equal in all individuals, is mediated through societal realities and possibilities that are in competition as well as collusion with capitalism. The complexities of a plural hope—harmful and protective narcissism or fear of and desire for the future—echo the manner in which hope can be employed against dominant forms of power. Dreams of a better future that can override the inequalities of the present are the bases for its effective critique. This aporia encapsulates the nominal-messianic structure of hope put forward by this thesis. It is a difficult maneuver, indeed, and trying to rejuvenate hope via the Indian English novel from its utopian and celebratory intellectual history that has since been denuded if not disabused brings about a charge that all materialist readings must face. Resorting to hope as a form of struggle or antagonism against power may result in the dangers outlined above: hopeful waiting, endless deferral, *ressentiment*. But

[58] Ibid., p. 171.

when hope is utilized in a reflexive and introspective manner, for and against life, it becomes effective critique. Material change happens on the level of the political, and Ghassan Hage provides a broad framework as to how hope can become a 'politics of the immediate'. In the Indian English novel, I suggest, history and aesthetics interlock, and it is in this 'space', if one can imagine the novel as a discursive interstice, where the framework of hope qua politics is further nuanced. Before expanding upon the structure of nominal and messianic hope, the section to follow strengthens the links between the historical and the aesthetic. Moving to Matthew Arnold's poetry, hope is once again taken to its limit: the case of suicide.

Matthew Arnold's Empedocles

To begin to see how one may approach a literary work with a revised conception of hope, it would do well to read a text that can best be described as hopeless: Matthew Arnold's long narrative poem, 'Empedocles on Etna'. Though Homer is his poetic hero, Arnold chooses to write about the Sophist Empedocles, and as Aristotle notes, the two poets 'have nothing in common but the metre', calling Homer a poet and Empedocles a 'physician rather than a poet'.[59] Yet, Arnold sees in this physician-philosopher-poet a productive dilemma with regard to that ebbing Sea of Faith—the supposed clash of science and religion that permeates Arnold's thought and work, whether poem or prose.

The poem begins on Mount Etna with a discussion between the physician Pausanias and the musician Callicles about the state of their beloved friend, Empedocles, and his desire to commit suicide. Empedocles, it seems, is disillusioned with living in a time when a perceived empirical scientificity has replaced a religious or sacred morality in which the Sophist's rhetoric becomes the most valued ideology. It is divided into two acts, and John Woolford suggests two frameworks. He says, 'The first act is ethical-pedagogical: in his last encounter with a human

[59] Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. by Richard Koss, trans. by S. H. Butcher (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1997), p. 3.

being, Empedocles instructs Pausanias, and through him humanity at large, on how to live a life.'[60] Empedocles' call for a 'moderate bliss' renders the following stanza:

> I say: Fear not! Life still
> Leaves human effort scope.
> But, since life teems with ill,
> Nurse no extravagant hope;
> Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair![61]

Empedocles' long speech to Pausanias is mostly in these quasi-hexameter stanzas, where the first four lines are in trimeter, and the last in hexameter. This is possibly a reference to the Homerian tradition [of hexameter] to which Arnold is particularly beholden. Empedocles begins by telling Pausanias 'Fear not!' which refers to the previous stanza in which men do 'not dare to trust the joys' in life. Contrary to his own despair, he tells his pupil there is a space in the damned world for an un-extravagant hope. Yet, the last line roughly amounting to 'ignorance is bliss' undercuts this. Although, the obverse—knowledge leads to despair—is the origin of Empedocles' woe, as Arnold saw it. In the Yale manuscript, he writes that Empedocles 'see[s] things as they are—the world as it is'.[62] The truth (or 'truth of the truth', as Arnold says) is never explicitly elaborated and can only be pieced together through Empedocles' life lessons.

'The second act,' Woolford continues, 'is ontological-eschatological: alone and on the point of suicide, Empedocles reflects on the constitution of his being and the relation of that to the external universe.'[63]

> And we shall be unsatisfied as now,
> And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
> The ineffable longing for the life of life
> Baffled for ever: and still thought and mind
> Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,[64]

[60] John Woolford, 'Arnold on Empedocles', *Review of English Studies*, 50 (1999), pp. 32-52, (p. 35).
[61] Matthew Arnold, 'Empedocles on Etna', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, pp. 147-94, (p. 172).
[62] Quoted in C. B. Tinker and H. F. Lowry, *The Poetry of Matthew Arnold: A Commentary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 291.
[63] Woolford, p. 35.
[64] Arnold, 'Empedocles', p. 189.

Empedocles contemplates what will happen after he dies—his flesh to earth, his blood to water, his breath to air, his heat to fire; but, the mind, he claims, has no home to return to, and it is in 'thought and mind' that he seems to represent something approaching consciousness. The 'agony of thirst' is a reference to the inherent 'thirst for bliss' born in the heart of every man.[65] But, what does Arnold mean in the 'ineffable longing for the life of life'? Most of Empedocles' soliloquy is in free verse pentameter, and the 'of life' breaks this pattern somewhat unnecessarily. The life of life, it seems, is synonymous with bliss, but the question remains if it is moderate or otherwise. The enjambment might be a clue—'the life of life / Baffled for ever'. Baffled, here, can mean confused or perplexed, but it also means restrained or regulated, and it is in this sense, that I would read it.

> And then we shall unwillingly return
> Back to this meadow of calamity,
> This uncongenial place, this human life;
> And in our individual human state
> Go through the sad probation all again,
> To see if we will poise our life at last,
> To see if we will now at last be true
> To our own only true, deep-buried selves
> Being one with which we are one with the whole world;
> Or whether we will once more fall away
> Into some bondage of the flesh or mind,
> Some slough of sense, or some fantastic maze
> Forg'd by the imperious lonely thinking-power.[66]

Empedocles seems to be foretelling of reincarnation, and it is interesting that S. Nagarajan believes that Arnold had been reading the *Bhagavad Gita* prior to writing this poem. In fact, in a letter to Arthur Hugh Clough 1 March 1849, quoted in Nagarajan, he says, 'I am disappointed the Oriental wisdom, God grant it were mine, pleased you not. To the Greeks, foolishness.'[67] Also noteworthy, his brother, William Arnold—who would later write a few articles in *Fraser's Magazine* about the 'India question'—was setting sail to India on that same day. To come back to

[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., p. 190.
[67] S. Nagarajan, 'Arnold and the *Bhagavad Gita*: A Reinterpretation of *Empedocles on Etna*' *Comparative Literature*, 12 (Autumn, 1960) pp. 335-47. Arnold also ironically alludes to Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians.

the poem, Empedocles speaks of a reluctant return to 'this meadow of calamity', an 'uncongenial place' that one recognizes in Arnold's much more famous poem, 'Dover Beach', as the 'darkling plain'. I find poise—that 'we will poise our life at last'—an intriguing term. It does not seem to be referring to elegance or grace, but its more archaic form: balance or equilibrium, which resonates with the baffled or regulated 'life of life'.

Though the second act of 'Empedocles' appears to be an elaboration of the aforementioned 'Dover Beach', it is assumed to have a much more solemn tone. And as in Arnold's later poem, Empedocles posits that one must be true (which one may recall as one of the reasons for Empedocles' desire to commit suicide), and that the truth—if one believes the *Bhagavad Gita*'s influence on Arnold as Nagarajan does—seems to justify his death. Jawaharlal Nehru comments in *Discovery* that 'if we cannot master life we can at least master death'. He calls this 'a pleasing thought lessening the feeling of helplessness'.[68] If Empedocles understands the 'truth of the truth', then his suicide will be a release from a return to the 'meadow of calamity'. His only hindrance—and that of all humans—is 'imperious lonely thinking-power'. The adjective appears to be 'imperious' and the compound noun, 'lonely thinking-power', that is, the solitary mind. He splits the world into the phenomenological and the epistemological; flesh and mind, sense and fantasy. He claims not to have been a 'slave of sense', but is not so sure if he was ever autonomous from imperious thought. Although, he qualifies this doubt: 'who can say: I have always been free'?[69] In Empedocles' construction, consciousness implies acquiescence to ideology and estrangement from 'our own, only true deep-buried selves'—our soul.[70] He plunges into the crater of Mount Etna not because of some darkness, fear, or delusion, but 'not to die wholly, not to be all enslaved'.[71] Perverting Potamianou's narcissistic shield, Empedocles' finds

[68] Nehru, *Discovery*, p. 12.
[69] Arnold, 'Empedocles', p. 191.
[70] Ibid., p. 190.
[71] Ibid., p. 191.

hope and rebuffs what he feels as being subjugated by 'imperious lonely thinking-power' by committing suicide.

Matthew Arnold famously omitted 'Empedocles on Etna' in the second printing in 1853 of *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*, changing the title to the more succinct *Poems*. In the preface to this 1853 volume, he comments as to why 'Empedocles' does not appear, and one sees the beginnings of the classicism that is to dominate his later works. He makes two pronouncements about poetry: it must add to our knowledge—that is, it must not be vague, faint, or indeterminate, and it must 'inspirit and rejoice the reader'; it must 'convey charm, and infuse delight'. He claims that although 'Empedocles' embodies the former, it is missing the latter. Empedocles' 'suffering finds no vent in action' and his 'continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done.'[72] However, fifteen years later, Arnold reintroduces the poem in his 1867 collection that also includes 'Dover Beach'. Though he retreats from his 1853 preface only slightly, he claims that he included 'Empedocles' at Robert Browning's request.

The received reading of 'Empedocles on Etna' is the poetic expression of Arnold's Victorian anxiety: 'wandering between two worlds' as the oft-quoted phrase suggests, and as Nehru quotes in his *Autobiography*. Callicles, perhaps a Romantic, is allied to the gods and whose songs resonate nature's bliss, while Empedocles is a reluctant proto-Modernist. Using Émile Durkheim's seminal sociological study on suicide, literary critic Linda Ray Pratt claims that Empedocles is a textbook example of 'egoistic' and 'anomic' suicide; an over-determinate individualism and an alienated sense of being, respectively. Durkheim says it more poetically with regard to egoistic/anomic suicides: 'Both types suffer from what has been called the disease of the infinite. […] In one, reflective intelligence is affected and immoderately overnourished; in the other, emotion is over-excited and freed from all restraint.' In a way, the two acts of the poem

[72] Matthe Arnold, *Poems* (1853), p. 2.

can be read in the same manner. Durkheim elaborates, 'In one, thought, by dint of falling back upon itself, has no object left; in the other, passion, no longer recognizing bounds, has no goal left. The former is lost in the infinity of dreams, the second in the infinity of desires.'[73] Pratt reads Empedocles as having this 'disease of the infinite', and his plunge ultimately amounts to an 'unanchored consciousness dropped into its own emptiness'.[74] I think this is a rather severe assessment of 'Empedocles'. Seeing his suicide as disease, which Pratt acknowledges as a Victorian sentiment, too easily dismisses his action. However, she is correct in noting that 'the problem [for Empedocles] lies not in an alienated self and an ebbing Sea of Faith but in the absorption of self in history and the obsolescence of faith in a scientifically defined cosmos.'[75] I suggest that Empedocles is all too modern for both Arnold and his critics. The character, and more specifically his soliloquy, is an embodiment of what Arnold calls poetry's 'interpretative power'. This, of course, is 'not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations with them'.[76] Empedocles' suicide—and the lack of comfort provided by Callicles' song—is a subtle rebuke to this power. Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton, perhaps taking his cue from Empedocles, notes that 'if poetry is really all we have left to console us, as opposed to hope in a new social order or faith that our sins have been forgiven, then we are certainly in dire trouble'.[77]

Through Nehru's national autobiography, Potamianou and Hage's psychological and sociological interpretations, and Matthew Arnold's poetry, this chapter has so far highlighted the inseparable tensions of hope: for and against life, the protective and destructive effects of the

[73] Émile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, ed. by George Simpson, trans by John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (Routledge: London, 2002), p. 250.
[74] Linda Ray Pratt. 'Empedocles, Suicide, and the Order of Things' *Victorian Poetry: Centennial of Matthew Arnold 1822-1888*, 26 (1988), 75-90, (p. 84).
[75] Ibid., p. 85.
[76] Matthew Arnold, 'An Essay on Maurice Guerin', *The Journal of Maurice de Guérin*, ed. by G. S. Trebutien, trans. by Edward Thornton Fisher (New York: Leypoldt & Holt, 1867), p. 2.
[77] Terry Eagleton, 'Sweetness and Light for All: Matthew Arnold and the Search for a common Moral Ground to Replace Religion', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 Jan 2000 (pp. 14-15), p. 14.

narcissistic and conatic, and the degenerative and regenerative rebuke of capitalism. However, a key element of hope is the formulation of what I call the nominal-messianic structure of hope that hinges on the concept of the future.

Le futur, l'avenir

In his essay 'An Attempt at a "Compositionist Manifesto"', Bruno Latour raises the very same questions about utopia that this thesis explores. He tries to 'make explicit', or 'manifest', a 'subtle but radical transformation in the definition of what it means to progress'.[78] In one sense, I could almost reinscribe his arguments in place of my own with regard to hope, in that he says his claims about a new, 'compositionist'-inflected progress are 'not […] a war cry for an avant-garde to move even further and faster ahead, but rather […] a warning […] to stop going further in the same way as before toward the future'.[79] As a sociologist of science, Latour is concerned with the interplay and imbrication of politics and science. Yet, Latour often relies on 'literary' examples to illustrate his points.[80] Where Latour sees a dichotomy between progress and caution, this thesis posits a tension between messianic and nominal hope, but first one must engage with his underlying argument about the role of the contemporary critic.

I return to Bruno Latour in Chapter Two through his seminal work *The Pasteurization of France*, which brings much to bear on Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*, but now I turn to Latour's rejection of critique. He holds little stock in the practice, claiming that it 'relies on a rear world of the beyond, that is, on a transcendence that is no less transcendent for being fully secular'. He talks about the implicit utopianism in 'progressive' arguments—most tellingly in Marxist critiques. Yet, it is not only Marxists that ascribe to this tradition. 'Ironically', the 'Nietzschean fervor of so many iconoclasts' relies on critique to 'debunk, reveal, [and] unveil'. The problem with critique, in Latour's use of the term, is that even with the seemingly positive

[78] Bruno Latour, 'An Attempt at a "Compositionist Manifesto"', *New Literary History*, 41 (2010), 471-90, (p. 473).
[79] Ibid.
[80] Latour opens his monograph, *The Pasteurization of France*, with a discussion of Tolstoy's, *War and Peace*, and in the article referenced here, he begins with James Cameron's *Avitar*.

praxis of unmasking false reality, the 'process of creative destruction' relies on 'a privileged access to the world of reality behind the veils of appearances'—'piercing the veil,' as Nehru might say. Exposing 'truth', which he considers the goal of critique, shares the same 'limits of utopia' in that it is dependent upon the 'certainty of the world beyond this world'. This is the most profound and compelling argument from Latour's 'Attempt', as he asks, 'What is the use of poking holes in delusions, if nothing more true is revealed beneath?'[81]

Above, I claim that hope can be used as a possible if not privileged critique, and this may be read as incongruent with Latour's arguments. I do not go so far as Latour to eschew critique as a just practice, becuase delusions—even ones that mask other delusions—can be materially detrimental to life. A sledgehammer-like critique may be necessary to debunk those delusions. Hope as figured in this dissertation is one such critique—necessary, but ultimately flawed, and ever aware of its incompleteness. Yet, I want to reiterate Latour's objections to theories of progress of which hope has been almost entirely a subset. In agreement with Latour's compositionism, I argue that theories of hope need to confront the possibility that there is 'no world of beyond'.[82] I could be accused, here, of trying to straddle heterogeneous arguments—an investment in hope as a critical tool and the divestment of critique via compositionism. But, what is most important is that compositionists take up the task of compromise, caution, and care, and in doing this Latour argues for multiple expressions of 'the future', and it is here where Latour's work bears heavily on the hope of this thesis:

> The French language, for once richer than English, differentiates '*le futur*' from '*l'avenir*.' In French, I could say that the Moderns had '*un futur*' but never '*un avenir*.' To define the present situation, I have to translate and say that the Moderns always had a future (the odd utopian future of someone fleeing His past in reverse!) but never a chance, until recently that is, to turn to what I could call their *prospect*: the shape of things to come. As it is now clear from the ecological crisis [global climate change], one's future and one's prospect (if one takes on board these two words) bear almost no resemblance to one another.[83]

[81] All quotes in this paragraph are from Latour, 'An Attempt', p. 475.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., p. 486.

I wholeheartedly take on board the linguistic difference that registers both *future* and *prospect*, and this influences my fundamental understanding of hope. A future is always implied when one hopes, but it is only the prospect that gives the present hope meaning—after the fact, or rather, after hope's fulfillment. Latour aligns *le futur* with utopianism and *l'avenir* with 'the shape of things to come'. However, he is not the first to distinguish between the terms. Jacques Derrida makes a similar linguistic movement, but alters the interpretation of the French words in his long essay 'Force of Law', and there is little doubt of the resonance of Derrida in Latour's manifesto. As corollary to the above 'future' and 'prospect', I want to adumbrate the 'future' and the 'to come' and Derrida's and Latour's shared usage of *l'avenir* and how this bears upon hope.[84]

L'avenir, as distinguished from *le futur*, means being completely unable to predict or foresee the arrival of the other. Derrida considers this a messiah-less messianism and might describe it as the absolute future. He elaborates what he means by 'messianicity' in a conversation with John Caputo. Referring to his arguments in *Specters of Marx*, Derrida comments that 'as soon as you address the other, as soon as you are open to the future, as soon as you have a temporal experience of waiting for the future, of waiting for someone to come: that is the opening of experience'.[85] As noted by Crapanzano above, being in a state of contingent waiting is hope. Derrida claims this is a 'universal structure' that is not messianism as such, because the 'Messiah is not some future present'.[86] It is always 'to come', and that messianic structure or messianicity is—and this is worth repeating—the 'opening of experience', and it is the *promise* of the *avenir*.[87] The paradox of Derrida's construction of the messianic future is that the 'opening of

[84] Contained within Derrida's framework is the idea of 'messianicity' mentioned in the introduction. The key term, here, is '*l'avenir*', but to move toward this, I must introduce Derrida's notions of law, justice, and messianism. Akin to Latour, Derrida draws inspiration from Walter Benjamin, and his essays '*Der Kritik zum Gewalt*' and '*Über den Begriff der Geschichte*'. Yet, Derrida's reading of 'Critique of Violence' immediately places the two Frenchmen in opposition.
[85] Derrida in coversation with John Caputo. John Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 22.
[86] Ibid., p. 24.
[87] To reiterate the importance of messiancity and *l'avenir* for deconstructionism (and later, as we shall see, for hope), I quote Caputo's reading of Derrida's messianicity at length:

> The messianic future is an absolute future, the very structure of the to-come that cannot in principle come about, the very openendedness of the present that makes it impossible for the present to draw itself into a

experience' only comes about through the 'temporal experience of waiting'. The originary event, as it might be termed, of nominal hope (waiting for the future to come) recalls, at the same time, the absolute future that 'exposes the contingency of the present', which I argue is *another effect of hope*. In other words, the radical future of the *avenir* may seem incommensurable with the calculable expectation of the future (*le futur*), but the nominal-messianic structure of hope requires both. Yet, one must not confuse messianicity with messianism. If the Messiah were 'to show up in the flesh […] the effect would be to shut down the very structure of time and history, to close off the structure of hope, desire, expectation, promise, in short, the future'.[88] However, there is still a hope for the Messiah to come, which would bring 'justice, peace [and] revolution'.[89] Such utopian dreams one recognizes to be scary, yet life-preserving: a narcissistic/conatic hope, signaled above by Empedocles, that desires the one thing we dread—death. This idea comes up again in Chapter Three with Derrida's reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Here, it serves to illustrate how hope operates as the substructure of the promise within Derrida's 'messianic structure'. He alludes to the Messiah of messianicity as the 'great undeconstructable', and I would extend this to his notion of justice.[90]

The calculable and incalculable futures, *le futur* and *l'avenir*, are founded upon each other, and so it is with nominal and messianic hope. Hope is the only means one has when thinking about what Latour calls prospect and Derrida would call a calculable future. Latour claims that the 'odd utopian future' of Modernism has been a failure at best. To me, this conception of *le futur* appears more like an attempt toward calculation and definition, whereas *l'avenir* as Derrida imagines it, is absolute, incalculable, and utopian only in the sense that its coming would mean

> circle, to close in and gather around itself. The messianic is the structure of the to come that exposes the contingency and deconstructibility of the present, exposing the alterability of what we like to call in English the 'powers that be,' the powers that are present, the prestigious power of the present. The messianic future, the unformable figure of the Messiah in deconstruction, has to do with something absolutely unpresentable and unrepresentable that compromises the prestige of the present, the absolutely undeconstructible that breaks the spell of present constructions. (Caputo, p. 162).

[88] Ibid., p. 163.

[89] Derrida in Caputo, pp. 24-25.

[90] Unfortunately, I do not have space to elaborate on the various meanings of justice, so I must begin *a priori* with Derrida's formulation.

the closing of experience. Nonetheless, prospective hoping—that is, hope that does not drift toward utopia—is the only course of action. Derrida claims, 'There is an *avenir* for justice and there is no justice except to the degree that some event is possible which, as event exceeds calculation, rules, programs, anticipation.'[91] This speaks to the limitation of hope as a *critique*, as well. Like Hage's incompleteness of hoping, Derrida comments that the fundamental limit of hope is that it requires a horizon of expectation.[92] Futuristic or future-dependent hope 'loses the openness, the coming of the other (who comes), without which there is no justice'. He goes on to say, 'Justice remains *to come*, it remains *by coming*, it *has* to come it *is* to-come, the to-come, it deploys the very dimension of events irreducibly to come.'[93] This, perhaps, is the best way to think about utopian desires—that it has to remain a messianic hope, always contingent, always to come, which, in turn, gives meaning to prospective, nominal hope.

The intent of this chapter is not to obscure hope or to make abstruse a concept and practice that everyone does seemingly without effort. But, the elaborate structure of nominal-messianic hope allows for fruitful inspection of the different ways that hope is expressed. It also engages with utopia in a way that many materialist critics seem wary to do. Slavoj Žižek, for example, distances himself from Stalinist versions of utopian projects with tragi-comic pessimism. On the other hand, Terry Eagleton synthesizes his Marxism with his Catholicism. There appears to be a tendency for contemporary materialists either to discard socialist utopianism or to embrace it as an ineluctable position.

Art and materialist utopianism

The ideological connections between the Western materialist critics discussed in this chapter and Indian anti-colonial nationalists are not entirely straightforward, and I am not foolish enough to attempt to try to forge these connections here. But, the links between Nehru in particular and philosophers such as Derrida, Latour, and Benjamin extend beyond an engagement with Marx,

[91] Ibid.
[92] Derrida speaks about both 'regulative and Messianic' horizons of expectations.
[93] Ibid., p. 256.

and that is why this chapter, as well as the thesis as a whole, concerns itself with hope. Whereas the predominantly German-Jewish founders of the Institute for Social Research see twentieth-century fascism as an extension and distortion of Enlightenment thought, Nehru and other anti-colonialists in India (notably, Gandhi) construct similar critiques around colonialism. The thesis constitutes itself through the myriad citations of hope offered by these authors, critics, and theorists, and contends throughout with Amitav Ghosh's assertion from the beginning of the chapter: how does one conceive of hope without the luxury of apocalypse or utopia?

I am certainly not the first to reference the Frankfurt School with regard to postcolonial literatures, or even Indian English novels. Literary critics Deepika Bahri, Aamir Mufti, and Keya Ganguly rely on critical theory in their work. The prevalence of materialism in postcolonial, Indian literary criticism is worthy of note, but it also registers a shift in postcolonial writing and theory, or what John J. Su calls postcolonial studies' 'aesthetic turn'.[94] Concomitant with the renewed attention on aesthetics in postcolonial literature, though perhaps unrelated, is the recent increased focus of Jawaharlal Nehru in South Asian studies. The network of ideas (materialist utopianism and postcolonial studies) read through the triangulated works of Nehru, Mistry, and Ghosh and framed by the concept of nominal-messianic hope encapsulate the movement of this dissertation, and that is why I now turn to the aforementioned critical theorists.

The idea of utopia has been a productive theoretical conundrum for Marxist critics, but a seriously constellated and self-reflexive examination of hope with regard to literature is embodied by first generation Frankfurt School theorists Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Walter Benjamin. Materialist literary critic Raymond Williams also figures in this, because he grounds the discussions of utopia via the novel and the state. Each, in their own way and to varying degrees, cast a wary eye on utopian art in late capitalist societies, yet each recalls a sublime hopefulness. It

[94] The Indian historians Dipesh Chakrabarty and Partha Chatterjee, who figure prominently later in this thesis, as well as the psychologist Ashis Nandy (Chapter 3 and 4) are, likewise, part of this web of materialism, postcolonial studies, history, hope, and poverty. John J. Su, 'Amitav Ghosh and the Aesthetic Turn in Postcolonial Studies' in *Journal of Modern Literature*, 34.3 (2011), 65-86.

is in this manner, perhaps, that Lukács refers to this way of thinking as anti-capitalist romanticism. The paradox, whether framed in terms of politics and aesthetics or theory and praxis, is essentially the same: how does one adequately address, let alone redress, the antagonisms of capitalist practices? Moreover, what role, if any, does literature play in this dilemma? Certainly when looking at literary works such as Nehru's *Autobiography* the question is all the more pressing—the task of speaking against power through artistic form prefaced on teleological progress while confronting the notion that 'progress is catastrophe and utopia is ahistorical'.[95]

As an example of a strand of Marxist engagement with literature and utopia, apart from the brief mention of Ernst Bloch above, one can look to Herbert Marcuse. He sees in 'great art' a utopia that 'is never the simple negation of the reality principle but its transcending preservation (*Aufhebung*) in which past and present cast their shadow on fulfillment'.[96] Great art, of course, is a matter of taste, but the context of his statement is with regard to the familiar Leninist-Trotskyist pronouncements on socialist realism. Marcuse goes on to argue that the autonomy of art—through its estrangement from reality—allows it to create an 'other reality within the established one' that he calls the 'cosmos of hope'.[97] Marcuse maintains, 'A work of art can be called revolutionary if, by virtue of the aesthetic transformation, it represents […] the prevailing unfreedom and the rebelling forces, thus breaking through the mystified (and petrified) social reality, and opening the horizon of change (liberation).'[98] This bold pronouncement of art's supposed function is an example of the utopianism inherent in critique—art must break through 'social reality' and open the space of liberation. Given the

[95] This is Mendieta's reading of Walter Benjamin, and it would be difficult to overlay this by and large to Jawaharlal Nehru, but as this chapter has repeatedly pointed out, the hope that Nehru writes about is much more complex than a march toward the perfection of man. Eduardo Mendieta's introduction to Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God and Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 4.
[96] Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, trans. by Erica Sherover (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 73. Benjamin also uses the term *Aufhebung*, and it can also mean cancellation or repeal as well as preservation—intriguingly, though fittingly, translated by Sherover as 'transcending preservation'.
[97] Ibid., p. 52.
[98] Ibid., p. xi.

discussion of hope and *l'avenir* above, one might rephrase Marcuse's claim. Art that attempts to speak against the powers that be must also strive towards the unspeakable future of its own irrelevance, and that is the arrival of the Messiah. Art 'invokes an image of the end of power, the appearance (*Schein*) of freedom.' Marcuse reiterates that this is only a vague image whose fulfillment—if it is at all possible—resides in some other domain than that of art.[99] It is neither the content nor the form of art that invokes messianic hope, but rather, it is the autonomous space—the aesthetic dimension created by content having become artistic form—that he claims makes the 'categorical imperative: things must change'.[100]

For Theodor Adorno, the paradox of utopia as it concerns works of art is more contradictory. He says, 'One of the crucial antinomies of art today is that it wants to be and must be squarely Utopian, as social reality increasingly impedes Utopia, while at the same time it should not be Utopian so as not to be found guilty of administering comfort and illusion.'[101] Adorno figures art amid this antimony: 'Modern art will not say what has never been and what may yet to come, but it will always wish for it to come about, thus protesting against the ignominy of the immutable (*des Immergleichen*).'[102] He takes his arguments further than claiming that utopia is a pivotal notion in art, but that art is the 'true consciousness of an epoch in which Utopia […] is as real a possibility as total catastrophic destruction'.[103] Prefacing this seemingly tautological argument (if total destruction is a possibility, so must be utopia) is the idea of a type of technological positivism influenced by the horrors of the holocaust and the atomic bomb.[104] Yet, Adorno is still speaking in terms of *possibility* rather than pronouncing 'what may yet to come'. Moreover, he is conscious of the danger of slipping into instrumentalism and warns, 'The

[99] Ibid., p. 46. It is worth mentioning, but perhaps not dwelling upon, the nature of Marcuse's 'aesthetic dimension', which he considers the 'autonomy' of works of art, or that which is outside 'orthodoxy' or the 'totality of the prevailing relations of production'. What makes something aesthetic or capable of being read as having an aesthetic form is its assemblage into a 'self-contained whole'—a poem, play, sculpture, etc. *Aesthetic Dimension*, p. ix.
[100] Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, p. 13.
[101] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 47.
[102] Ibid., p. 32.
[103] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 48. He claims that utopia is possible 'here, now and immediately' given the present 'forces of production'.
[104] I come back to this notion of a technological utopia in the discussion of Walter Benjamin below.

idea of a destination or final end is a covert form of social control.'[105] These caveats and provisos seem, in one sense, slightly hollow, in that Adorno or Marcuse assume them to be true, but nonetheless proceed as if they were not—constantly invoking utopia and in the next thought dismissing it.[106] Marcuse is more straightforward when he says that 'poverty and exploitation were products of economic freedom; time and again, people were liberated all over the globe by their lords and masters, and their new liberty turned out to be submission, not to the rule of law but to the rule of the law of the others'.[107] Marcuse speaks across Enlightenment to indict the history of liberation *in toto*. To his credit, he is one of the few early Frankfurt School critics to attempt to bring contemporary forms of colonialism—notably, the conflict in Vietnam—under his umbrella critique of capitalism, in a more nuanced mode than, say, Marx's comments about India.[108]

The character Uma Dey, in Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Glass Palace*, poses a similar critique in questioning the use of immigrant labor: 'How was it possible to imagine that one could grant freedom by imposing subjugation?' Like Marcuse's 'laws of others', she likens it to 'open[ing] a cage by pushing it inside a bigger cage'[109] She levels this criticism in response to the protagonist Rajkumar's exploitive use of Indian immigrant labor on his Malaysian rubber plantation. Ghosh's imagining of the multifaceted effects of global capitalism is a critical and artful engagement that explores the intersections of entrepreneurialism, labor, migration and exile, and subjugation with powerful effect, and this is explored in subsequent chapters of the dissertation.

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[105] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 357.
[106] One such proviso from Marcuse: 'Still, within the limits of the aesthetic form, art expressed, although in an ambivalent manner, the return of the repressed image of liberation; art was opposition. At the present stage, in the period of total mobilization, even this highly ambivalent opposition seems no longer viable.' The fear of calculation and the 'authority' who tries to control the idea of the incalculable is of equal importance.
Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 145.
[107] Ibid., p. xiii.
[108] Herbert Marcuse in *An Essay on Liberation*. Aijaz Ahmad takes on Marx and the India question in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*.
[109] Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace*, (London: HarperCollins, 2000), p. 189.

Underlying the theorizations of utopia and art by Adorno and Marcuse is a messianic theology signaled by the notion of redemption. The fragments of the historical work of Walter Benjamin highlight this concept.

> The past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption. There is a secret agreement between past generations and the present one. Our coming was expected on earth. Like every generation that has preceded us, we have been endowed with a *weak* Messianic power, a power to which the past has a claim. That claim cannot be settled cheaply. Historical materialists are aware of that.[110]

Like Derrida, I find the concept of a 'weak messianic power' to be alluring when reading hope in the Indian English novel. Benjamin clearly and concisely shows the tension and interplay of the past and the present through a lexicon of hope. One can infer from hope as a 'temporal index' the necessity of viewing hope from the present projecting onto the past. Only with the arrival of the present generation can the hopes of the past be assessed, and in that 'secret agreement' lays weak messianism. Likewise, only with the arrival of future generations can an index of present hopes be redeemed. The shape of this redemption, however, is unknown. Redemption, though, is prefaced on messianism without a Messiah.

Benjamin conceives of two types of utopia: the first is the utopia of the body and the second is the utopia of society and technology. Nominal hope of this thesis is likewise distinguishable between individual and societal hopes. Utopias of the first nature—'love and death', Benjamin writes—can only take place when the 'problems of the second nature' are close to resolution. In contemporary capitalist societies where progress is scarcely questioned, a focus on utopias of the body gives way to those of society. Similarly, conatic-narcissistic hope in many cases must be subordinate to societal hope, because it is the state that is the arbiter and distributor of hope.[111] Benjamin sees in the material gains of industrialization and mechanization

[110] Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp. 245-46.

[111] Benjamin references Marquis de Sade and Fourier as examples of hedonist utopias that failed to foment the second type of utopia. One could also include Gandhi in this idea of hedonist utopias, and the resultant collective effects of his brand of nationalism as fomenting a type of social utopia. Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Selected Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott et al. (London: Belknap Press, 1996-2003), III, pp. 134-36 (p. 134).

(while being extremely critical of their deleterious effects) the investment in the possibilities of a technological utopia appropriated by the collective. But this societal belief in progress, which he concedes 'makes revolutionary demands', leaves utopias of the first nature unfulfilled.[112]

Returning to Marcuse's striking but nebulous phrase 'cosmos of hope', the notion of what it means to hope still seems stuck squarely in the ambivalent utopianism above. It is Adorno who sees the contradiction implicit in the use of the word: 'In the end hope, wrested from reality by negating it, is the only form in which truth appears.' He continues, 'Without hope, the idea of truth would be scarcely even thinkable, and it is the cardinal untruth, having recognized existence to be bad, to present it as truth simply because it has been recognized.'[113] His comment is in response to Nietzsche's charge that 'hope is mistaken for truth'. One begins to see how Adorno's construction influences the nominal-messianic structure of hope posited by this thesis. Hope, as it implicitly indicts reality by contemplating a future different from the present, is the guarantor of truth. Though Bruno Latour would not find this inaccessible truth to be useful for compositionism, Derrida would, perhaps, call this truth 'justice'. The second half of the Adorno quote is a little more enigmatic, and the philosopher Eduardo Mendieta re-writes Adorno and Jephcott's clunky sentence: 'Hope, the yearning after the possibility of that which would totally transform the present, renders reality incomplete and inconclusive. Truth is beyond the now.' Mendieta exclusively evokes what I have called messianic hope, which loses a little of the complexity of the nominal-messianic structure of hope. The smallest hope—whether narcissistic or conative—instantly confronts and reveals the contingency of the present. One does not need to yearn for total transformation in order to negate reality. Moreover, the nominal-messianic structure not only lays bare the incompleteness of reality by showing the 'cardinal untruth' of mere recognition of a corrupt present, but it also exposes its own incompleteness as a mode of critique.

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[112] Ibid., p. 135.
[113] Quoted in Habermas, *Religion and Rationality*, p. 4. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), p. 98. First publ. in German in 1951.

Adorno, Marcuse, and Benjamin think through the aporias highlighted in the previous section. Latour and Derrida's respective discussions of utopia, *l'avenir*, messianism, and compositionism are, in a sense, synthesized through these early Frankfurt School theorists, and these, in turn, will be fed through Nehru, Mistry, and Ghosh. Reiterating Latour's image of re-composing the smashed fragments left over by critique and the messianic structure, each—uniquely, and with strikingly different emphases—cite a messianism that does not wait for a Messiah, but rather imagines discontinuous 'fragments of utopia' irrupting into the present. Mendieta calls this a messianism that 'rejects the present and the possibility of meliorative progress', while being 'ambiguously pessimistic and passive, but also wildly expectant and vigilant'.[114] I read this as another illustration of the nominal-messianic structure of hope that resonates with the Indian English novels.

Wending back to the literary works of this chapter, Raymond Williams's excellent reading of Matthew Arnold in *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* closes the current section on materialism, utopia, and art.[115] Williams's critical ingenuity is to use his conception of culture as a mediating term for his discussion about literature and society. His focus situates Arnold's thought with regard to the state's role in society concomitant with that of art complements Hage's societal hope above. Further, it is through Williams that the ideological connections between Matthew Arnold and Jawaharlal Nehru become all the more palpable.

In Williams's view, 'The most interesting point to consider is [Arnold's] recommendation of the State as the agent of general perfection.'[116] Arnold, Williams argues, was not a 'dandy' when it came to the education reform. He was actively involved in trying to fight the 'vicious mechanism of the Revised Code'. Comparing him to Edmund Burke, he comments that Arnold

[114] Mendieta in Habermas, p. 7.
[115] Granted, Williams primarily engages with Arnold's criticism, but his poetry is also within his purview.
[116] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), p. 128.

'imagined the State as the "centre of light and authority", the organ of the "best self".'[117] These now-familiar Arnoldian phrases should raise the red flag of utopianism, and they should also echo the sentiments of Jawaharlal Nehru. Williams continues, 'It is attacked as a slow and timid programme, but those who hold to it are entitled to ask whether any quick and ready alternative for the achievement of Arnold's ends has in fact, in the ninety years since he wrote, manifested itself.'[118] Similarly, Nehru's socialist, planned economies were rightfully attacked as slow—heightened all the more by his rhetoric of bold action and dynamism. The economic liberalization of India's economy in the '90s and the correlated increase in economic growth (as measured by GDP) certainly speaks to something of a manifestation of a 'quick and ready alternative'.[119] Moreover, the issue, as Williams sees it, with imagining the state as 'the centre of light' is that if the 'emphasis on State power is so great, any confusion between that ideal State which is the agent of perfection, and this actual State which embodies particular powers and interests, becomes dangerous and really disabling'.[120] Williams restates Derrida's proviso about the incalculable idea of justice being appropriated by 'perverse calculation'.[121]

Although Williams is sympathetic to Arnold's view of the state as the 'organ of the best self', he is obviously critical of the possibility given his critique of the structures of power and authority within any institution or society at large. Here, Arnold imagines a class of disinterested critics (not unlike himself), and this is, perhaps, what has made him unpalatable to contemporary Marxist literary critics: his disparaging view toward the working classes. I discuss Arnold's problematic engagement with poverty and working-class movements in Chapter Four, but I preface this with Williams's brief gloss of Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. He notes that Arnold's

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[117] Ibid., p. 129. The Revised Code of 1862 reformed public education in England and instituted government-mandated testing that, when passed by the pupil, awarded the school funds for each student. Arnold finds this tedious and questions its efficacy, and he ridicules its overseer, Robert Lowe, in *Culture and Anarchy*.
[118] Ibid., p. 130.
[119] This is not to say the economic neo-liberalization in India set in motion by the Rajiv Gandhi government and brought in full by Prime Minister Rao and his then-finance minister Manmohan Singh is *the* alternative, but merely *an* alternative that some would argue as more beneficial than the Nehruvian state. The discussion about poverty, enterprise, and hope at the end of this dissertation further interrogates this contention.
[120] Ibid., p. 133.
[121] Of course, Williams is writing 30 years before Derrida.

notion of the three classes of nineteenth-century Britain—the Barbarians (capitalist class), Philistines (middle class), and Populace (working class)—are each, in Arnold's thought, unfit to run the state. Quoting from *Culture and Anarchy* Williams says, 'Arnold imagines a "minority" of "aliens" "who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general *humane* spirit, by the love of perfection".'[122] For Arnold, the revolutions of 1848 and the growing workers' movements in England manifest in an anxiety about the Populace—one that is distasteful for a reader influenced by Marxist thought. Williams calls this imaginary in Arnold's work the 'magnified image of the Rough'.[123] Williams, as well as Eagleton and literary critic Tony Pinkney, are exceedingly critical of Arnold's unreflexive position, his appeal to a utopian secular humanism to be overseen by disinterested critics, and his dismissal of the working class as being unfit to rule.

While Arnold strays from a democratic ideal of the state, he highlights the imperfections of democracy, and in place of a 'centre of light' whether divine or proletariat, he imagines benevolent, humane, and incorruptible 'aliens' through whom a perfect state is achieved. To my knowledge, Nehru never stated his philosophy of national governance in this manner, but the actions of Congress and the Indian state, especially toward the latter years of his tenure, suggest a similar disdain, though that may be too strong a word, for the Barbarians and Philistines, but especially the Populace.

'A gradual oozing out of hope'

The chapter began with the notion of a 'gradual change' and now closes with Nehru's pronouncement about the effects of dwelling in a crystallized, idealized past. He calls this worldview a 'kind of art for art's sake without […] passion and [an] urge to action'. Recalling above Nehru's thematic dichotomy in *An Autobiography*, action and inaction, he goes a bit further in *Discovery of India* calling passion and the urge to action (which can possibly be read as desire) the 'very stuff of life'. He sees in their denial a 'gradual oozing out of hope and vitality […] a

[122] Ibid., p. 130.
[123] Ibid., p. 134.

slow merging into nonexistence'.[124] In *Discovery*, Nehru is infatuated with action, destiny, progress, and dynamism, and this focus on action/inaction is intimately tied to one's predisposition and relationship toward the past and future. Noting that he is writing a history of a nation-state that is not yet defined at the time of writing, and a discourse, if one can imagine India as such, that he is actively trying to shape, *Discovery* obviously and explicitly draws from the past. Yet, Nehru still imagines his book in terms of the future. He states, 'I would not be writing for today or tomorrow but for an unknown and possibly distant future.'[125] This is a sentiment from his earlier *Autobiography*—the yet distant new world as signaled by Matthew Arnold's 'Stanzas on the Grand Chartreuse'.

Nehru never mentions any specific nations when he admonishes the 'numbed countries' who look backward as they are pushed into the future by modernization and war—much like Klee's *Angelus Novus*. Yet, one can infer that he imagines pre-independence India to be among them, and he criticizes this numbness saying, 'If Indian civilization went to seed it is because it became static, self-absorbed, and inclined to narcissism.'[126] The context of this statement is twofold: the resistance to state-sponsored mass industrialization and the preservation of the caste system. The 'gradual change' above that Amitav Ghosh posits as tempered hope must also embody a gradual, if not catastrophic, change toward self-destruction. A gradual hope and a gradual oozing out of hope must be spoken in the same breath. Nehru's phrasing, 'inclined to narcissism', also speaks to the previous discussion of the narcissistic shield. Dwelling in the past might be a type of psychic defense, a 'shrinking back into one's shell' that might be a necessary conceit as long as one recognizes its for-death implications. Nevertheless, the Nehru of *Discovery* is much more inclined toward Hegelian synthesis, and he is aware of the dangers of pat

[124] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 8
[125] Ibid., p. 22.
[126] Ibid., p. 517.

dichotomies in his later work.[127] This could possibly be seen as a savvy politician's move toward centrism, but just as likely it is a genuine attempt to rethink his previous earnest optimism.

In *Discovery*, Nehru reflects on his earlier political philosophy 10 years after the publication of *An Autobiography* that his 'approach to life's problems had been more or less scientific with something of the easy optimism of the science of the nineteenth and early twenty century'. This is, perhaps, the dominant perception of Nehru, and below I interrogate the legacy of the 'rational Nehru'. He rebukes the unnuanced hopefulness of his younger days with the idea that 'a kind of vague humanism appealed to [him]'.[128] I would not think it difficult to argue that Nehru maintained a rather vague secular humanism throughout his life, but his inclination—at least in writing—toward spheres outside of nineteenth-century scientificity (e.g. religion, beauty, and art) leads one to believe in his evolving sense of what it means to hope. That is to say, similar to Walter Benjamin's two-fold utopia—the first of the body, the second of technology—a rational, socialist program is no longer the only messianic hope for Nehru. It must now contend with the creeping notion that something outside of scientific discourse may also determine this messianicity. Perhaps these discourses are not independent from each other. A messianic hope, utopia, is part of the foundations of any telos whether it be inflected by, or viewed through the lens of, science, religion, and art. *Discovery*'s inclination toward this productive tension between Enlightenment rationalism and religion and beauty (again, not entirely discrete categories), is a further example of Nehru's attempts to reconcile the paradox of nominal-messianic hope, though he chooses the difficult framework of Hegelianism.

When Nehru comments that 'the future has become vague and shadowy and has lost that clearness of outline which it once possessed in my mind', it seems quite forgetful of his earlier lament about the hidden future and the partly-hidden present.[129] However, he conjures the vivid

[127] He says, 'We have now to lay greater stress on the synthetic aspect and make the whole world our field of study. This emphasis on synthesis is indeed necessary for every nation and individual if it is to grow out of the narrow grooves of thought and action in which most people have lived for so long.' *Discovery*, p. 530.
[128] Nehru, *Discovery*, p. 13.
[129] Ibid.

imagery of the early optimism of the protagonist of *An Autobiography* 'as an arrow flying automatically to the target of [his] choice'. There is something of the *avenir* in his rebuke, and when Nehru asserts that he cannot 'assume the role of a prophet and write about the future', he moves away from a messianic conception of hope. The vagueness of the future does not cause Nehru as much concern as it did in *Autobiography*. The unknown future is not so much 'lost' as it is no longer an anxiety, because it can never be found. Borrowing a metaphor from Tagore, Nehru admits that his 'mind often […] tries to pierce its veil and clothe it in garments of [his] choice'. Again, he recognizes the futility of predetermining the future saying 'these are vain imaginings'. To put it another way, reassuring oneself of a specific future can be a dangerous act, because what is to come, *l'avenir*, 'remains uncertain, unknown, and there is no assurance that it will not betray […] our hopes'.[130]

Numerous passages in *Discovery of India* outline Nehru's theorization of the nature of rationality and spirit that lend to a rather one-sided image of a predominantly rational Nehru. One could point to his definition of the 'modern mind', or the 'good kind of modern mind' as 'practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian. It is governed by a practical idealism for social betterment'.[131] Literary critic Yumna Siddiqi argues that Amitav Ghosh's critique of reason in *The Circle of Reason* is exactly this kind of critique of Nehru. In Balaram's character, one sees reminders of the 'vision of postcolonial development set forth by Nehru […] who attempted to forward a progressive, rational program of social transformation'.[132] Her point is well taken, but her assertion is prefaced on a one-dimensional representation of Nehru, which also does injustice to one of Ghosh's most memorable characters by relegating Balaram primarily to allegory. Nehru, perhaps, can be viewed as the prototypical 'modern mind', but he constantly tempers the cold rationalism that some attribute

[130] Ibid., p. 24.
[131] Nehru, *Discovery of India*, pp. 531-32.
[132] Siddiqi, p. 185.

to his socialist inclinations with an appeal for something that science and reason cannot hegemonize.

This is evident in his tortuous emotional responses to his ideological clashes with Gandhi. But to get a context for Siddiqi's assertion, a passage from *Discovery*, in which he tries to synthesize in a historical materialist manner the rational and the emotional, calls attention to the 'rational Nehru'.

> It is not through sentimentality and emotional approaches that we can understand life, but by a frank and courageous facing of realities. We cannot lose ourselves in aimless and romantic quests unconnected with life's problems, for destiny marches on and does not wait for our leisure. Nor can we concern ourselves with externals only, forgetting the significance of the inner life of man. There has to be a balance, an attempt at harmony between them.[133]

The *a priori* binary of rationality and sentimentality that Nehru constructs is problematic. One can see in the dichotomy a slippage between courage and emotion and question why these must be mutually exclusive. But approaching this text on its own dialectical terms, the metaphor of facing realities corresponds with his forward-looking demeanor. Moreover, that destiny would march on, leaving those in stasis behind, jibes with his forward-looking view and disdain for stasis. The balance of this binary, though, is decidedly weighted toward an unsentimental and emotion-less rationalism, and this passage pays only lip-service to the notion of harmony between the 'inner life of man' and the realities in front of us. It seems when Nehru is at his most dialectical, he is at his most rational. However, the moments when he confronts what might be called his faith in the teleological progress often coincide with his reflections on poetry.

> Perfection is beyond us for it means the end, and we are always journeying, trying to approach something that is ever receding. There is the love of life and the disgust with life, the acceptance of all that life involves and the rejection of much of it. It is difficult to harmonize these contrary tendencies, and sometimes one of them is dominant and sometimes the other. 'Oftentimes,' says Lao Tzu:
>
> Oftentimes, one strips oneself of passion
> In order to see the Secret of Life;

[133] Ibid., p. 535.

> Oftentimes, one regards life with passion
> In order to see its manifold results.[134]

The Lao Tse poem still favors rationalism—the capitalized Secret of Life is seen through passion-less search. Arguably, Arnold's poetry is similarly framed. Yet, in this passage Nehru comes as close as possible to the recognition that utopianism—journeying toward perfection—'means the end', and it is similar to stasis and narcissism, or death. These two concepts, action and inaction, are not only foundationally inseparable (you cannot have one without the other), but they are linked *in* death. For Nehru, the only attempt at 'harmonizing these contradictory tendencies' is through poetry. One could criticize the consequences of Nehru's policies, and point to a rationalism that hindered the efficacy of his struggle for social betterment, but these criticisms must at least register the self-reflexive attempts by Nehru to think through his rationalist positivism with that of the 'inner life'. With a much greater faith in the possibility of socialist ideology, Nehru registers Benjamin's social and organic utopias, mindful, yet critical, of Gandhi's focus on the purification of the body, but with far greater belief in technological transformation. One cannot indict Nehru's Enlightenment rationalism without at least noting this reflexive tension within his thought. It is too easy, and misguided, to blame rationalism for his failures, when he argues against himself:

> For all our powers of reason and understanding and all our accumulated knowledge and experience, we know little enough about life's secrets, and can only guess at its mysterious processes. But we can always admire its beauty and, through art, exercise the god-like function of creation.[135]

Nehru realizes that the Secret of Life is necessarily always secret. Like chasing perfectionism, a rational belief in teleological progress toward perfection is at once irrational, utopian, and impossible to maintain without the intervention of beauty and art. But, he holds in one hand the refusal to deny beauty and art its due and in the other a criticism of the violence of capitalism. He does not view these two preoccupations as contradictory, but rather like Arnold, he sees a

[134] Ibid., pp. 535-36.
[135] Ibid., p. 574.

'weakness of modern civilization that it is progressively going further away from the life-giving elements'. Nehru also articulates how capitalist hope emblematizes this weakness and obscures the demands for justice in the present: 'The competitive and acquisitive characteristics of modern capitalist society, the enthronement of wealth above everything else, the continuous strain and the lack of security for many add to the ill-health of the mind and produce neurotic states.'[136]

Nonetheless, it is true that Nehru is hampered by his belief in progress, and when that progress finally fails him, he is irredeemably wounded. Rohinton Mistry manifests this sentiment in his novel, *Such a Long Journey*. The narrator comments that toward the end of his premiership, 'Chacha Nehru, the unflinching humanist, the great visionary, turned bitter and rancorous.'[137] His earlier positivism leads him to believe, 'As in the world as a whole, so in India, it is a race between the forces of peaceful progress and construction and those of disruption and disaster, with each succeeding disaster on a bigger scale than the previous one.'[138] He does not register that progress and construction, as implemented by socialist and free-market democracies alike, have led to disruption and disaster on a global scale. We are only now beginning to realize the ecological impact of this vision, yet that ecological impact must be weighed against the ameliorating effects of economic progress—namely, the reduction of poverty and the increase of opportunities for all.

When Nehru speaks of the 'burden of the past', critics including me evoke it as a hindrance or liability with such phrases as 'bearing the weight of' or 'responsibility to' the past. The caveat of the past as a burden, however, should not ignore the life-preserving elements of history, and *Discovery of India* exemplifies this. Adorno and Horkheimer argue, 'The task to be accomplished is not the conservation of the past, but the redemption of the hopes of the past.'[139] The nominal-messianic structure of hope in this thesis attempts not to lose sight of this, even

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[136] Nehru, *Discovery*, p. 530.
[137] Rohinton Mistry, *Such a Long Journey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 11.
[138] Nehru, *Discovery*, p. 520.
[139] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979), p. xv.

though it must always examine itself. The idea of redemption exposes the tenuous, yet ever-present link between past and present: hope. The ability for the postcolonial writer to reclaim histories and to tell a story from a different perspective than that of the colonizer is a well-known and widely-accepted maxim of postcolonial literature. The following chapter does nothing to alter or undermine this, but it does raise questions about this 'reclamation'. Namely, the writing of counter-histories, histories from below, or whatever one might call this practice is not only to rebut egregious assumptions made by colonizers that have been taken as fact, but as already discussed, it aims to shape a past to which the present is weakly beholden. One must begin with the hopes of the past, both good and bad, to assess the redemption of these hopes in the present.

Hope and History: Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

This chapter explores the various ways that Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry write through the violent experiences of past and present in two of their historical novels, albeit from different Indian contexts. Because of its apprehensive, yet sympathetic take on Indian socialism (through historical figures like Ranmanohar Lohia and Nehru), I use Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* as a case study, as it were, to interrogate this novel's commentary on Enlightenment reason through its engagement with human labor, the science of Louis Pasteur, Indian socialism, and the postcolonial state. These concepts must be read alongside the metaphors of hope in the novel: e.g. waiting, terror, weaving. The chapter consolidates and tests the in-depth reading of the metaphors of hope in *The Circle of Reason* in its exegesis of Rohinton Mistry's novel, *A Fine Balance*. I argue that the thematic of balance—the dichotomization of hope and despair—does not quite encompass the reflexive hope the novel offers. These two authors of hope, though differing in their metaphorical approaches, stress the role of history. Ghosh, whose prosaic and somewhat politically overt writing style provides much of the theoretical heft of the chapter, but it is perhaps the cinematic writing of Mistry in which the role of the literary truly shines in the reading of hope in India. This dissertation has maintained the historical link between Nehruvian hope and the historical novels of Ghosh and Mistry to emphasize the importance of the Indian English novels, particularly of these two writers' historical fictions, in providing the grounding for, as well as thinking through, nominal-messianic hope.

The few critical accounts of Amitav Ghosh's first novel, *The Circle of Reason* (1984), tend to mention the relative dearth of criticism in reaction to it compared to his later novels like *The Shadow Lines*, *In an Antique Land*, and *Calcutta Chromosome*. Those who do engage with the novel focus, with good reason, on the thematic of rationality, and in particular, Ghosh's destabilization of Western post-Enlightenment thought when it clashes with non-Western social practice. In my

usage here, the 'post-' in post-Enlightenment refers to chronology, and not in some ideological stance as being *beyond* Enlightenment. This immediately places the argument in inhospitable lands—potentially associating itself with the dichotomy of pitting the largely European philosophical movement against Ghosh's attempts to 'de-historicize'. However, I am working within the material of the novel in hand, and historian Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Provincializing Europe* has shown that one can critique the practice of historicization while at the same time operating within that rubric. In his apt analogy, Chakrabarty questions the feasibility of attempting to map the intellectual history of a nation such as France using only non-French sources.[1] The foolishness of such an endeavor is patently obvious—indeed, even invoking the hypothetical situation of the non-French French historiography points to the unthinkability of this sort of research, but he concedes that historicization should not be dismissed entirely. Yet, it took until Chakrabarty's book published in 2000 to analogize this unacceptable practice for similar projects on India.

Ghosh's first novel can be thought, in some ways, as a precursor to Chakrabarty's seminal work, because it is fundamentally concerned with the relationship of Enlightenment reason and scientificity with that of colonial enterprise, and therefore I am dealing with it here. Moreover, it attempts to outline and critique the legacies and remnants of that reason when confronted with exploitation of the poor in contemporary capitalist social practice. Chakrabarty notes that history (which I would extend to include other discourses such as capitalism, politics, and science) is a system of knowledge that is 'firmly embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation-state at every step', and if one intends to argue against these practices, one must have 'recourse to […] secular time and narratives of history and sociology'.[2] Looking backward through colonialism, so to speak, it becomes possible to envisage the corruption of European notions of the 'universality' of reason through perversions of teleological and evolutionary thought and racist

[1] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 35.
[2] Ibid., p. 41, p. 86.

colonial perceptions of non-Europeans. Of course, there never existed a monadic Enlightenment reason, and the European debates that began around the time of Kant's famous essay 'What is the Enlightenment?' continued from Hegel to Foucault and beyond. Within the European and North American academy, this reason is still under constant transformation.[3] Gayatri Spivak's *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* looms large in postcolonial studies, but other critical works such as Pheng Cheah's *Spectral Nationality* continue to cull the sources on reason to chip away the imperiousness of a total or universal reason. Yet, Ghosh's is not a philosophical treatise. It is not caught up in the debates *per se*.

Using Indian independence as the pivot and pivotal moment specifically with respect to Nehru, *The Circle of Reason* could be said to investigate the trajectory of post-Enlightenment reason alongside the unfolding story of the adventures of an orphan named Alu in West Bengal, while reaching into the colonial pasts of India and the Middle East. Organizing the novel into pre- and post-independence as well as stages of reason is itself problematic and emblematic of the type of historicism and reason that Ghosh attempts to subvert, but it is a necessary conceit that will help illuminate the ways in which Ghosh manages the narrative constraints of the novel form. Just as I posit a tripartite temporal structure, Ghosh divides his book into three sections: Satwa: Reason, Rajas: Passion, Tamas: Death. I look now at how reason itself figures in the novel, and how Ghosh reconciles his apparent socialist thought with his critique of colonial rationalism, focusing especially on ideas of labor and labor practices.

Ghosh does not merely expose the hypocrisy and insidiousness of the complicity of reason and capitalism manifesting in colonial and current atrocities but seeks to actively shape how reason may otherwise be conceived when viewed through the narrative of impoverished postcolonial characters. For Ghosh, the notion of the rational European man is immediately put into contention when read from the standpoint of the colony, and the resultant Indian-inflected

[3] Charles Taylor (*Secular Age*, 2000) has contributed recently to this corpus.

rationalism reaches a crescendo during the run-up to Indian independence in historical figures like Jawaharlal Nehru and prominent socialist leader Ranmanhoar Lohia, often emblematized in the novel during analepses of Alu's uncle Balaram's days in the Rationalists Society at Presidency College, Calcutta.[4] Yet, this new reason is too much like the old, and taken to their logical and narrative endpoints, the actualization of this reason almost always ends in violence. Aside from tracing in the novel this critique of a modernity that Nehru might have imagined, there is still a third incarnation or revision to reason, and this version is largely the preoccupation of this chapter. The singularizing of reason becomes difficult to maintain in the text, and likewise the plural—reasons—does not sit comfortably, as will be outlined below. This contention, the irreconcilability of the singular and the plural, is the crux of the novel for literary critics such as Anshuman Mondal and Yumna Siddiqi. To put it broadly, the critics mentioned attempt to reveal a dialectic of modernity/postmodernity in Ghosh's work, pointing to reason as a site of contest, the agon, for the ethical incommensurability of his post/modern philosophy. This is no doubt a part of Ghosh's attempts to tell the story of poor migrant workers in relation to multinational capitalist interests, but there seems to be a further effort to write through this dichotomy. I posit that Ghosh's figurations of hope in the novel, out of which my notion of the nominal-messianic structure of hope grows, proves integral to this reworking of reason. Not necessarily to bridge or synthesize this dialectic, it is a way to modify the telos of liberation—arguably the ultimate aim of Enlightenment reason—to think productively about how social practices might be able to overcome subordination to the forces that seek to dominate the logic that determines the ways and means of living. Yet, first I want to offer an example of how labor in *The Circle of Reason* gives insight to Ghosh's early formulations of socialism and socialist practice in the postcolony.

[4] Mondal notes that Presidency College (once known as Hindoo College, but expanded at the suggestion of Lord Dalhousie) was the seat of nineteenth-century British-influenced education in Bengal, and as such is a particularly apt setting for this dichotomy. See Anshuman Mondal, *Amitav Ghosh* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 54.

As a doctoral student at the University of Oxford, Ghosh spent much of his time doing fieldwork in Northern Egypt—recounted in his novel memoir *In an Antique Land*. About this he says, 'It was during my stay in Egypt that I learnt that even the most mundane forms of labor can embody an entire metaphysic—a discovery that was to have profound influence on my novels *The Circle of Reason* and *The Glass Palace*.'[5] Unpacking this statement, it seems to register a shift in Ghosh's thought toward a Marxist view of the reification of the labor in capitalist systems. At least, the implication that 'even the most mundane forms of labor' can exemplify or contain a way of being in the world. A sense of being of the self/other implies a criticism of the view that is at the heart of the chasm between capitalists and workers: that 'mundane' labor is somehow unable to provide a meaningful existence and is therefore merely a tool in the production of goods. This issue is taken up in *The Circle of Reason* through the main character Alu's apprenticeship as a weaver. His college-educated uncle, Balaram, who is also the headmaster of the local school, removes him from 'formal' education at age 14. At a moment where the narrative slips between Balaram's thoughts and reported speech, the narrator seems to interrupt: 'But why? Why weaving? What could it be *but* weaving?'[6]

> Man at the loom is the finest example of Mechanical man; a creature who makes his own world as no other can, with his mind. The machine is man's curse and his salvation, and no machine has created man as much as the loom. It has created not separate worlds but one, for it has never permitted the division of the world. The loom recognizes no continents and no countries. It has tied the world together with its bloody ironies from the beginning of human time.
>
> It has never permitted the division of reason. (CR 55)

Balaram comes to this conclusion (making Alu a weaver) after reexamining the shape of Alu's skull and claiming that the lump on the crown of his forehead represents the 'Mechanical' organ, which, for Balaram, is considered the highest faculty, the 'seat of Reason' (CR 54). Further measurements and calculations of the looms and tools of the weavers to that of Alu's hands and body prove for Balaram that weaving is Alu's destiny. Balaram's 'ideal' calculations turn out to be

[5] Amitav Ghosh, *The Imam and the Indian* (New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 2002), p. x.
[6] Amitav Ghosh, *The Circle of Reason* (London: Granta, 1986), p. 55. Further citations refer to this publication, and page numbers will be in parantheses after the quote.

true, in the sense that Alu becomes one of the finest weavers in the country, though the pseudoscientific *reasoning* that led him to this decision calls into question the universality of reason itself—as Balaram cites it to be.

In a flashback to his days as a young reporter, Balaram recalls covering Irène and Frédéric Joliot-Curie's visit to Calcutta, and the humiliation of asking a foolish question about the Joliot-Curies being 'accustomed to high altitudes' (CR 16).[7] This minor embarrassment led to the belief that scientists were only motivated by science itself; 'nothing mattered to them—people, sentiments, humanity' (CR 16). That same day he discovers the book *Practical Phrenology*, and in his fervor develops a unifying theory of the human—a new science that connects the 'inside and the outside, the mind and the body, what people do and what people are' (CR 17). The epiphany of phrenology as the culmination, or the reconciliation, of body and mind, of which the man and loom is an industrial symbol, is ironically formulated from the realization that 'there are ideas in science like everything else' (CR 17). In the narrator's later articulation of 'Mechanical man', the narrator takes this one step further—the oneness of body and mind now becomes the unity of man and world. There is a sense of the Marxist anxiety of reification in this metaphor. The young Ghosh, through the omniscient narrator, echoes Lukács's lament at the immediacy of the epic—that the ancient world was once whole—and now the world is different, distanced, reified. Our selves, labors, and the products of our labor have become (or are becoming) abstracted very much as Marx theorizes: alienation, reification, and commodity fetishism. While the narrator's conception posits an inversion of the idea that productive labor is somehow inferior to knowledge labor, the danger is Balaram's failure to realize his own critique of the Joliot-Curies: that the ideation of science opens it up to new and productive thought, but it also opens it to perversion and distortion. Balaram's emotions (as his epiphanies often result from humiliations)

[7] Irène Joliot-Curie visited Calcutta in January, 1950 to inaugurate the opening of the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics. <http://www.saha.ac.in/cs/www/history2.htm> [accessed on 10 May 2011].

calcify the two dominant paradigms of his worldview—Pasteur and phrenology—that present a complex of paradoxical ideologies.

Eight months prior to the discussion between Balaram and his best friend Gopal, from which the above quote is taken, he goes to Gopal distraught about Alu's disinterest in school. To take his mind off his troubles, Gopal takes him to the cinema to watch *Aradhana*, a Bollywood take on the 1946 Hollywood film *To Each His Own*. Balaram's damp eyes and crooked smile irks Gopal leading him to ask how Balaram can 'bear these noisy melodramas' where the dialogue does not resemble reality. Balaram angrily defends the film as rhetoric that is neither real nor unreal; a 'language flexing its muscles'. Balaram then goes on to lambaste Gopal for spending 'too many years reading novels about drawing rooms' that has made his mind 'a dumping ground for the West'. Gopal immediately points out Balaram's hypocrisy—*The Life of Pasteur* and phrenology—to which Balaram passionately proclaims that science and reason do not 'belong to any nation' (CR 53-54). Peeling away the layers of the argument, the first contention plays on the meaning of rhetoric: whether *Aradhana* is bombast as in Gopal's view or eloquence in Balaram's, but Balaram turns the argument into a debate about cultural imperialism. Balaram's staunch defense of science, reason, and history as being nation-less is a failure to recognize the potential of each of these discourses to be hegemonic in much the same way as English literature. A further irony is the subtle nationalism evoked in Balaram's favor of the quintessential Indian popular art form over the typical British one while lauding the transnationality of science—not to mention the fact that *Aradhana* is a remake of a Hollywood film. The block quote above, then, is Balaram's 'answer' (albeit potentially through the narrator's voice, if not Balaram's thoughts) to Gopal's charge of hypocrisy: man and loom is Balaram's amalgam of art, craft, history, and modernity.

The paradox of the promise of Mechanical man as 'curse and salvation' points to Ghosh's preoccupation with post-Enlightenment thought in post-independence India. Ghosh, like Nehru before him, must juggle the materiality of modern life, the liberty and truth-value that he has

invested in post-Enlightenment reason, and the critique of the enormities of colonialism that sprang from the 'rational European man' forged in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Whereas the political writings of Nehru often, though briefly, find this vortex in poetry, Ghosh attempts to encompass this in realist fiction. Postcolonial theory itself is caught in this double bind, and Ghosh's distaste for the label 'postcolonial' is well noted.[8] Paul Sharrad succinctly outlines how

> postcolonial theory has tended to see the nation state as an inheritor of colonial forms of power and complicit with their contemporary expressions in global trade systems. Its literary origins have allowed it to ignore at times the hard realities of political and economic inequality in its search for a theory enabling liberationist cultural activisms. But its own insistence on disciplinary roots in colonial history (and not just apolitical literary aesthetics that hide Western universalist values) reveal that the figurative language of art cannot be separated from the material effects of politics and trade.[9]

Sharrad is optimistic about the work of postcolonial theory, and despite the pitfalls of being labeled or pigeonholed by the term postcolonial, I think Ghosh would agree with the same 'insistence on disciplinary roots in colonial history' in his fictional work. However, Ghosh does not leave this untested: the narrator's demand of a history of the world that must be read through its 'bloody ironies' combined with Balaram's absolute investment in nineteenth-century (pseudo)scientific rationalism shows how difficult it is to parse discrete ethical values and how easily these irreconcilable notions occupy the same space. Ghosh is not gesturing toward the logical paradox of universal reason and difference; he is attempting to hold the postcolonial project itself to its own hermeneutic and to find possibilities of thought within the framework of its contradictions.

The speech about the loom and the narrator's later comments about the inventions of the yarn-stretcher, spinning jenny, and flying shuttle are reminiscent of Marx's arguments about

[8] T. Vijay Kumar, '"Postcolonial" Describes You as Negative: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh', in *Interventions*, 9 (2007), 99-105.
[9] Paul Sharrad, 'Fabricating Community: Local, National and Global in Three Indian Novels' <http://ro.uow.edu.au/artspapers/109> [accessed on 22 April 2011], p. 3.

machinery and labor in *Capital: Part I*.[10] The increasing mechanization of textiles flows up and down the supply chain. Agricultural industrialization followed suit, and thus, a 'revolution of the social process of production', primarily those of communication and transportation—canals, steamships, cables. Marx argues that the concentration of workers and machinery in the imperial cities (e.g. Manchester textile mills) coupled with the far-flung 'colonial markets' resulted in a sprint toward global networks.[11] Yet, it is the narrator who notes that the domination of this trade in India by the English and the Dutch turned Lancashire textiles 'into a garrote' (CR 57) for Indian weavers. Scattered throughout the narrator's address, which borders on homily, are examples of 'bloody ironies'—a grave understatement when evoking the bondage of the Egyptian fellahin, the impoverished Indian weavers, and, of course, the Atlantic slave trade.

Referring back to labor as metaphysic, the weaver as creature in the narrator's version 'makes his own world as no other can, with his mind'. It seems to be an uncharacteristic word choice to stand in for 'Mechanical man', but makes an interesting link via its Latin root: *creat*, which lends itself to create and creator. Further, a creature foreshadows the narrator's later thought of the loom as being one of the pivotal machines in the creation of man. Here, Ghosh via the narrator (filtered, perhaps, through Balaram's thoughts) cites man as a rational, autonomous being. The complex begins to take shape; after the loom has been created in the material sense, its existence produces a rational, Enlightenment human but also a type of human caught within the new revolution of social processes that proceeds from mechanization. In turn, the creature (man and loom) autonomously *fabricates* (with his mind) both the metaphysical and material world. Mechanical man creates ways of thinking and being and ways of relating in colonialism analogous to the narrative that Marx had asserted.

[10] Marx notes that 'spinning by machinery made weaving by machinery a necessity, and both together made the mechanical and chemical revolution that took place in bleaching, printing, and dyeing, imperative.'
Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Vol 1-Part 1*, ed. Friedrich Engels (New York: Cosimo, 2007), p. 419.
[11] Ibid.

One should also remember the role of spinning in the anti-colonial movement in India. In *Hind Swaraj*, Mohandas Gandhi speaks often of his contempt for Western or modern civilization, though he does not elaborate about these broad categories. Anthony Parel, in his introduction to the *Hind Swaraj*, claims that these terms, used interchangeably, denote a 'mode of conduct […] emerg[ing] from the Enlightenment'.[12] Gandhi's insistence on *khadi* as a daily practice through non-machinic labor and boycotting of British goods characterizes resistance to colonial exploitation, but it is also representative of a more pervasive disdain that Gandhi had for modernity, specifically of machinery. *The Circle of Reason*'s Mechanical man of the weaver at the loom does, in a metaphorical sense, evoke an image of simultaneous worlds—the curse and salvation—but given the legacy of 'traditional' weaving in India with Balaram's account of the loom and Marx's illumination of textile production, what is Ghosh trying to say by bringing these disparate, and irreconcilable, histories together?

Once Alu masters the craft of *jamdani* weaving, his instructor, the comical drunkard Shombu Debnath, reminiscent of a Shakespearean fool, declares, 'The world is your challenge now. Look around you and see if your loom can encompass it.' (CR, 80) His eccentricity and wisdom often blur, and his words echo the narrator's creature: the master weaver must move past mechanical reproduction and technique to imagine and create. Alu searches for inspiration in the surrounding town, Lalpukur: 'Bomb-buti', 'Refugee-buti', 'War-buti' but finally settles on 'Politics-buti; nothing more immediate in the world.'[13] (CR 80-81) It is unclear if this statement is coming from the narrator or Alu, but nonetheless, this sentiment for the immediacy of the world in art recalls the previous indivisible salvation. Alu spends days recreating the scene of Bhudeb Roy, the corrupted local big man, riding through the streets of Lalpukur on a caparisoned

[12] M. K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, ed. Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. xviii.
[13] *Jamdani* and *buti* are both Bengali words. The former is the name for the finished cloth and the practice as a whole, the latter denotes the type of design—a diapered pattern (repeated motifs throughout the cloth).

elephant in an attempt to drum up support for his political campaign. Shombu Debnath reacts with vitriol to the cloth:

> Filth, he said, filth; uglier than the man and filthier. He smiled at Alu, not in triumph, but sadly: You can never learn jamdani because jamdani is dead, with the world which made it. Beauty doesn't exist; it is *made* like words or forts, by speakers and listeners, warriors and defenders, weavers and wearers. That world has washed away. Jamdani is only a toy for the wives of contractors and mahajans now. Stop now: no one can make a thing beautiful alone. No one would understand him. Only a madman would try. Stop now, or you'll be nothing but a toymaker, piecing together your politics-butis with these elephants and the filth that rides on them. (CR 81)

The imagery of filth binds the characters Alu, Shombu Debnath, and Balaram. Balaram exhausts his money and resources on antiseptic (for which he used to clean the Lalpukur streets during the refugee crisis), and he laments being 'beaten by filthy money' (CR 83), and during his college days, he launched the ambiguously successful 'Campaign for Clean Clouts' (CR 103). Later in the novel Alu is trapped under the rubble of the Star shopping center where he lay for days thinking about 'dirt and cleanliness' (CR 235). Filth, it seems, stands in for the erosion of the relationship that makes art possible. The progression of filthiness from Shombu Debnath to Alu is likewise telling—filth characterizes corruption, or representations of corruption in valuable objects such as *jamdani* cloth; filth as an adjective for money in juxtaposition with Balaram's efforts to clean the refugee slums in Lalpukur; and, finally, in attempting to strip away all abstraction, money itself is dirt.

Binaries of beauty lie at the heart of Shombu Debnath's criticism. 'Words and forts' only become beautiful intersubjectively, and, for Shombu Debnath, that agreement or contract between weaver and wearer has eroded. One can only imagine *jamdani* becoming a form of beauty *in relation to* not in itself, and since that relation no longer exists, what are left are objects of amusement for merchants' wives. In a way, Shombu Debnath is the un-Pasteurian Balaram. Both believe in a past world, an undivided world, yet while Balaram has the utopian notion that this world is again accessible, Shombu Debnath believes that world is gone, 'washed away'. The artist, however, remains. And here lies whatever hope one can take away from this passage: 'beauty is

[…] *made'*, though it is the inability for the other half of the binary to 'understand' what beauty is. The relationship has become tainted by filth, which is to say by corruption and scarcity. It is no wonder why Alu later wages 'war on money' in an attempt for a more clean, just society. The past world, the world in which *jamdani* was possible, may no longer exist (due to capitalist industrialization and militaristic/colonial intervention), but that does not mean that something else cannot take its place. Sadly, if there is any salvation in beauty, although Shombu Debnath's leaves little faith for this prospect, then it is in the construction of a new way of relating in the world.

It is difficult to digest Balaram and the narrator's visions of a reunited cosmos through man and loom. They seem, like Nehru, stuck in a utopian juncture, and though one may wish it possible, Ghosh does little more than allow its brief moment to flare up and fade away. One may praise Balaram for his idealistic and ethical steadfastness—for his messianic hopefulness; just as one praises Shombu Debnath for his realistic honesty and, though distasteful, his capitulation to the forces that have dictated his life as a weaver. How can one embody all of these intricate, complex, and paradoxical ideas while at the same time reinvoking the intersubjectivity that makes beauty possible? For Ghosh, it is the through writer and reader, who posit a new way of relating, a new reason, a postcolonial reason, or, what I suggest as a more nuanced way hoping.

Hope and history

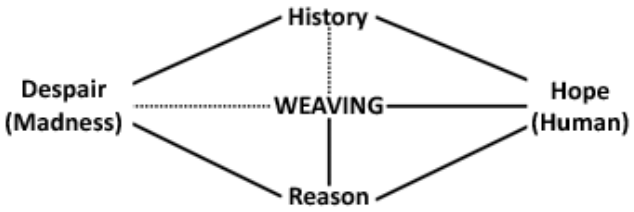
Balaram's justification to Gopal of Alu's apprenticeship takes the form of a brief material history of the world through cloth signaled by the man and loom quote above, and it is the first explicit engagement with concept of hope in the novel. The philological exposition of the origins of cotton takes the reader from Sanskrit to Hebrew, and then from Arabic to English. Ghosh's narrator, through Balaram, weaves a timeline in which history traces the exchange of textiles, both linguistic and material.

> Every scrap of cloth is stained by a bloody past. But it is the only history we have and history is hope as well as despair. And so weaving, too, is hope; a living belief that having once made the world one and blessed it with its diversity it must do so again. Weaving is

> hope because it has no country, no continent. Weaving *is* Reason, which makes the world mad and makes it human. (CR 58)

Critics have picked up the theme of weaving as a handy way of constructing a logical framework for the novel.[14] This trope—the web of connection, the tapestry of history, or the quilt of humanity—is a familiar one for readers of the Indian English novel. To say something toward this theme, there is a type of universalism in terms of cloth that has not changed throughout history, and Ghosh notes that fabric was and still is the weave of interlocking thread. The material practice, though altered by machinery, has not changed on the microscopic level. What has changed through mass manufacturing and profit-driven production is how weaving is viewed; how the wearer relates to the cloth. This coda to the narrator's address referenced in the above section preempts Shombu Debnath's scathing critique of the reification of *jamdani* weaving.

Inspecting more closely the language of the passage, especially the crisscrossing arguments about reason and weaving, reveals a topography of the novel's conception of reason. The quotation is not laden with literary devices. Other than a 'bloody past' (a reiteration of the bloody ironies') and a 'living belief', the extract is without much sensory detail or imagery, and we are left with the repetition of metaphorical analogies: 'history is hope...', 'weaving is hope', 'weaving is Reason', and the implied metaphor of history as scraps of cloth. The stripping away of figures of speech calls attention to the metaphorical logic. History is hope (and despair); weaving is hope; weaving is Reason; Reason is madness and humanity.



Indeed, the entire passage is the metaphorical vehicle, and it is meant to convey that weaving itself is the way that one can structure a narrative of history. However, to consider history as

[14] See Paul Sharrad, 'Fabricating'.

'hope as well as despair' is quite an abstraction, because one is meant to map our conceptual knowledge of hope onto the target domain of history. I am more interested here in what Ghosh is attempting to say about hope. If one recognizes history as fragments of narratives of triumphs and defeats, or scraps of bloody cloth, then it is easy to see them as hopeful or despairing, but equating hope (and despair) with history is intriguing to say the least, especially with regard to the lines that follow it. More to the point, it is hope that is often the target domain of metaphor—given the difficulty of its substance and definition. One can think of common English phrases such as a 'ray of hope' (hope as light to be shone on something) or 'giving hope' to someone (hope as a gift). For Emily Dickinson, '"Hope" is the thing with feathers—'.[15] It makes sense to conceptualize hope as a commodity or possession; it helps us understand the notion in concrete, phenomenological terms. The power of literary metaphor lies in the complication of the metaphorical source that can then add new meanings to the target. To give hope is mere cliché—its metaphoricity is lost. But, Dickinson's formulation comparing hope to an imaginary bird that resides in our soul allows for multiple interpretations. Is the soul a cage that restricts hope's freedom? Instead of fashioning inventive new source domains for hope, Ghosh chooses to compound and stack metaphor upon metaphor in order to achieve a similar distancing and broadening effect. Not only this, he reverses the metaphor itself.

The source and the target domains become switched, weaving, via hope, is a 'living belief' that the world was once 'one' and 'blessed' with 'diversity', and that this can be true again. In the narrative above, hope is not the abstraction that becomes clarified through concrete analogy. Instead, hope is the 'thing' that throws light on weaving, history, and reason. Moreover, weaving, as hope, 'has no country, no continent'. This is a constant refrain from Balaram about weaving, reason, history, or science, and the repetition of this mantra gives it a sort of narrative and logical weight. Taken together it replicates a type of post-Enlightenment rationalism—that a certain kind

[15] Emily Dickinson, '"Hope" is the Thing with Feathers', in *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. by Thomas H. Johnson (New York: Little Brown, 1960), p. 116. Dickinson also writes that 'Hope is a strange invention' and, my favorite of her metaphors, 'Hope is a subtle Glutton'. (p. 597, p. 645).

of 'historical hope' is universal and good, and the placelessness of that hope recalls how easily it can be tethered to the 'universal' logic of global capital. This is not only in light of Ghassan Hage's societal hope within the bounds of capitalism and the arguments in Chapter One, but it echoes Ghosh's sentiment about the ubiquity of capital itself, that 'for the first time in history a single ideal commands something close to absolute hegemony in the world: the notion that human existence must be permanently and irredeemably subordinated to the functioning of the impersonal mechanisms of a global marketplace'.[16] Ghosh leaves a sliver of space in which to work, in that the notion of totality, 'commands something close to complete hegemony'. In his writing, in the novels in particular, Ghosh carefully avoids absolutes. The narrator of *Circle of Reason* intervenes at times to comment upon Balaram, the supposed avatar of the overly-rational Nehru. One such instance: reason, which is said to make us mad as well as human, becomes capital-'R' Reason. The capitalization serves nothing else than as a signal to the reader. However, the madness of 'Reason' plays out in Balaram's obsession with carbolic acid and Bhudeb Roy's paranoia that end in an explosion of violence.

Investing in a history of hope that things were and can be better than they are now is a difficult proposition from the standpoint of an Indian writer acutely aware of the intellectual legacies of Enlightenment thought, extraction and exchange of capital, and colonial domination. Shombu Debnath, in his declaration that the world of *jamdani* is dead, provides a straightforward enough example from the novel of this angst. Although the focal point of the illustration above shows weaving at the center, it is hope, and here I also include its counterpart despair, that is the hinge between history, weaving, and Reason. It is the connection between a nostalgic as well as bloody past, an unjust present, and a possibly better future. For Ghosh, hope is not the overarching metaphor, cause, or end in itself, but rather it is the method he chooses to interpret as well as interrogate historical narratives. This contrasts with some of Ghosh's later historical

[16] Ghosh, 'The Fundamentalist Challenge', in *The Imam and the Indian*, pp. 268-86 (p. 285).

novels (from *The Glass Palace* onward) where the interpretive function of hope is increasingly left behind for a more pointed critique of historicism and capitalism.

Hope itself, however, might be an angry and anxious problematic in a post-Nehruvian India. For Ghosh, writing in the early 1980s, there is a history of stalled growth and unfulfilled promises by the Nehru and Gandhi governments. Ghosh says that Indira Gandhi's defeat in the post-Emergency election of 1977 'was a moment of euphoric hope in India: many believed that a stable party system would evolve, that no one group or personality would ever again dominate the nation's politics as the Congress and the Nehru-Gandhi family had in the past'.[17] I suggest that the complex and uneasy hope that emanates from the novel is Ghosh's attempt to grapple with the knot of the vast economic progress post-Fordist capitalist institutions and a socialist possibility that quickly capitulated to both Congress and capitalism after independence. Reconciling the middle-class boom and increasing GDP growth, literacy rates, or life expectancy after the demise of the Nehruvian planned economy brings about hesitant feelings. This arises, perhaps, from what Yumna Siddiqi calls the 'postcolonial double-bind', that is 'a desire to embrace the modern, but the knowledge that the dialectic of modernity has entailed the subjection of the colonized'.[18] For Ghosh, there is no easy separation of national and transnational capitalist institutions, and his socialist tendencies, if they can be so named, show a belief in the obligation of the state to somehow mitigate the exploitation of laboring citizens, legal and illegal. Yet, Ghosh is immensely critical of the nation-state, and parsing critique of injustice and hope within the interrelations of individual, collective, nation-state, and the 'global marketplace' becomes spurious. Hope itself is critique, but it is immanently corrupted and therefore must be reflexive, tempered, and qualified.

[17] Amitav Ghosh, *Countdown* (Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1999), p. 23.
[18] Yumna Siddiqi, *Anxieties of Empire and the Fiction of Intrigue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 140.

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The chapter subheading 'Hope and history' recalls the famous line in Seamus Heaney's *The Cure of Troy: A Version of Sophocles's Philoctetes* (1990) where Heaney (upon hearing of Nelson Mandela's release from Robben Island, and the 'miraculum', as he calls it, that was to come when Mandela became president) imagines a moment when 'hope and history rhyme'.[19] The simplistic beauty of the imagery belies the complexity of its tenor. The particular stanza will be discussed in further detail below. First, however, I will give an example of Heaney's mixture of politics and poetry in *The Cure at Troy* in order to illuminate the subtle working of hope in my reading of *The Circle of Reason*.

The central point of the play, as Heaney sees it, is Philoctetes's betrayal by Odysseus and whether or not he can overcome his desire for revenge to help the unite the 'polis' and win the Trojan War. It also seems preoccupied with the role that poetry plays in political struggles in general. In the prologue to Heaney's play, the chorus provides a self-reflexive investigation that questions its own medium as well as adumbrating the plot.

> For my part is the chorus, and the chorus
> Is more or less a borderline between
> The you and the me and the it of it.
>
> Between
> The gods' and human beings' sense of things.
> And that's the borderline that poetry
> Operates on too, always in between
> What you would like to happen and what will—
> Whether you like it or not.
>
> Poetry
> Allowed the god to speak. It was the voice
> Of reality and justice […][20]

The chorus consists of three actors each speaking in turn, and the beginning starts with a playful internal rhyme, 'the chorus, and the chorus / Is more or less'. The stanza grows slightly more serious, as the chorus becomes a 'borderline between / the you and the me and the it of it'. The

[19] Elleke Boehmer, *Nelson Mandela: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 80.
[20] Seamus Heaney, *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles's Philoctetes*, (London: Faber, 1990), p. 2.

chorus, as a whole becomes an abstract entity connecting the audience, the speaker, and the story. The verse ending and centering of 'Between' further reinforces this metaphor of spacing and linking. While literally being between the two stanzas, the 'Between' also breaks the quasi-pentameter of the last line of the first stanza and the 'first' line of the second. In this sense, it is 'outside' the poem, yet still connected grammatically to the second stanza's first sentence fragment. Compare this to the third stanza's peculiar emphasis of 'Poetry' that 'allowed the gods to speak...' Here, 'Poetry' forms part of the pentameter of the end of the second stanza, yet it is the first word in the first sentence of the third stanza. It is not quite 'outside' of the poem; poetry is folded both outside and in—simultaneously part of and between. Returning to the second stanza, the middle 'Between' begins a new thought: the 'it' between gods' and humans' 'sense of things'. That last phrase is a frustrating one. Does the chorus mean things as in matter: material, physical objects, that is, the phenomenological? Or, are things ideas, orders, structures of thought, the epistemological? Perhaps the answer is both, but the looseness of the expression 'sense of things' matches the woolly phrase 'more or less', and the repetition of 'between' throughout the three stanzas keeps reminding us of the source domain of the metaphor. Another verse ending and indentation distances and connects this 'between-ness' to the 'it' of poetry.

Here, poetry is 'in between what you would like to happen' and 'what will'. It is not instrumental; however, it is not inconsequential either. It is something akin to hope in this construction. Poetry is the liminal space between desire and fate, or, perhaps, desire and outcome. It is the act of hoping.[21] The prologue is written in pentameter, and compounded by the blank verse it reads almost like prose. The line break at the end of this stanza interrupts the pentameter and calls attention to itself. The 'whether you like it or not' is an ambiguous, yet definitive ending. It is a commentary both on the outcome—what will happen—and on poetry as a whole. The

[21] Heaney comments in his essay 'The Government of the Tongue' that 'poetry holds attention for a space, functions not as distraction but as pure concentration, a focus where our power to concentrate is concentrated back on ourselves,' this, moreover, is placed in the 'rift between what is going to happen and whatever we would wish to happen'. (p. 108) Seamus Heaney, 'The Government of the Tongue, in *The Government of the Tongue: 1986 T. S. Eliot Memorial Lectures and Other Critical Writings* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), pp. 91-108 (p. 108).

stanza's argument seems to suggest that this is how poetry works; you cannot refute it. The chorus's vocalization of the role of poetry is a preface to its later symbolic incarnation as something approaching Philoctetes's conscience.

The last stanza should first be read as foreshadowing. The god, in this case Hercules, literally embodies the chorus leader at the end of the play—the source of the well-known line where 'hope and history rhyme'. The switch to past tense signifies the switch in tenor, and at this moment the prologue also becomes the epilogue. However, one cannot ignore poetry as 'the voice of reality and justice' and as the mode in which a god may speak. Noting, as one must, that the past tense also calls into question the tenability of the metaphor: what poetry *was*.

Though one may be treading dangerously close to attributing intention, the chorus, here, is echoing Heaney's trepidation with the role of politics vis-à-vis art. If one could make a categorical remark about Heaney's body of work, it is a reflexive cautiousness when it comes to politics in his poetry. Beginning with *Wintering Out* (1972) and most emblematic in *North* (1975), Heaney comes into his own with regard to what he feels is his ethical obligation to do justice to those affected by the Troubles and his role as the preeminent poet of Ireland. In trying to discover a way to interpret the political turmoil of the times, Heaney tends to implicate violence into the wider context; employing mythology and history as is the case with *Station Island* or *The Cure at Troy*. Robert Potts, commenting on Heaney's *Electric Light*, claims that the 'drama we perceive is that of his dilemma as a writer, not Northern Ireland. One is encouraged to worry as much about the role of the artist in a political situation as one is about the political situation itself'.[22] One wonders if this truly is the case. In reading 'Requiem for the Croppies' or 'Station Island', one does not imagine the difficulties of the poet in a time of catastrophe,[23] but rather the rhyme, meter, and metaphor—the form and the contemporaneity of the content, even if it is set

[22] Robert Potts, 'The View from Olympia', *The Guardian*, 7 April 2002 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2001/apr/07/poetry.tseliotprizeforpoetry2001> [accessed on 15 May 2011].
[23] Seamus Heaney wrote an article on Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz in the *Irish Times* titled 'Laureate in the Time of Catastrophe'.

in the past. In 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing', the direct references to politics are not to be apologized for—he is writing as a citizen: 'I live here, I live here too'.[24] After greater reflection, yes, the anxiety in Heaney's poems about aestheticizing violence provokes some of the questions raised from Potts's argument, but the poems do not 'encourage' one to weigh Heaney's dilemma with the Troubles of Northern Ireland, nor do they pander to the worried reader. He is a savvy and sympathetic poet, and the predicament is not his 'role', but rather his method. Heaney parallels Ghosh's propensity to look to history in order to engage with contemporary problems. Both, however, express anxiety of *how* this is to be done, not whether it should be done. Heaney and Ghosh, through their respective crafts, focus on the 'in between'—*le future* and *l'avenir*—and, thus, hope is crucial to their work.

In his 1997 essay 'The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi', Amitav Ghosh questions writing amid conflict, and specifically, amid violence. He speaks of a genealogy and sympathy with the views of writers such as V. S. Naipaul who argue that attachment and involvement, though regrettably so, are ultimately not the author's lot. Ghosh says in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination, 'I believed that I, too, was not a joiner, and in Naipaul's pitiless mirror I thought I had seen an aspect of myself rendered visible. Yet as this forlorn little group marched out of the shelter of the compound I did not hesitate for a moment: without a second thought, I joined.'[25] For Heaney, not being immediately faced with rioters on his doorstep, his decision was slightly more difficult, yet, ultimately for him there is an ethical obligation for poetry of protest, and that at times there are 'moments[s] for poetry to strike through social and political concerns'.[26] His phrasing is subtle and powerful as has come to be expected from him. 'Striking through' can be said to explain the action or the momentum of the two authors' works, but I want to carry this further in *The Cure at Troy*.

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[24] Seamus Heaney, 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing', in *North* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976).
[25] Amitav Ghosh, 'The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi', in *The Imam and the Indian*, p. 57.
[26] Heaney quoted in Dennis O'Driscoll, 'Heaney in Public', *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, ed. Bernard O'Donoghue (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 68.

In various accounts of Greek mythology, a snake on the Island of Chryse bites Philoctetes while the Greeks were making their first journey to Troy during the *Trojan War*. The injury causes recurring and excruciating pain, and the wound is said to be festering and malodorous. Agamemnon orders Odysseus to leave Philoctetes stranded on the Island of Lemnos, and Sophocles's play begins 10 years later, when Odysseus and Neoptolemus, Achilles's son, visit him. Philoctetes possesses Hercules' bow and poison arrows, and the captured Trojan seer, Helenus, foretells that Philoctetes must willingly come to Troy before it will fall. Odysseus asks Neoptolemus to deceive Philoctetes, and Neoptolemus begrudgingly accepts. The deceit is successful, and during a fit of pain, Philoctetes hands Hercules' bow to Neoptolemus. Neoptolemus contemplates his role in Odysseus's scheme and realizes that he cannot go through with the deception. Philoctetes becomes enraged and retreats into the resentment of his decade-ago abandonment. As Odysseus flees and Neoptolemus agrees to honor his promise to take Philoctetes home to Thessaly, Hercules appears and confirms Helenus's prophecy to which Philoctetes obeys.

The play ends with Hercules speaking as the leader of the chorus:

> History says, *Don't hope*
> *On this side of the grave.*
> But then, once in a lifetime
> The longed-for tidal wave
> Of justice can rise up,
> And hope and history rhyme.[27]

The sestet begins with an enjambment juxtaposing history with hope, but seemingly draws a line 'on this side of the grave'. The metaphorical vehicle, the 'longed-for tidal wave', will wash this line away. The imperfect rhyme of 'hope' and 'up' forces the gaze and thought upward to the first line of the stanza, reminiscent of a swell. Hope and history do not actually rhyme, in fact, nothing in the stanza rhymes with history. History, perhaps, is here a metonym for the injustice that Philoctetes endured while exiled on Lemnos, but it is also, as its preceding stanza indicates, a

[27] Heaney, p. 77.

history of 'innocent[s] in gaols', dead hunger strikers, and 'police widow[s]'. History is injustice even though in one of the previous stanzas, the chorus says, 'No poem or play or song / Can fully right a wrong'.[28] Recounted in Dennis O'Driscoll's 'Heaney in Public', the poet is quoted as saying, 'I can't think of a case where poems changed the world, but what they do is they change people's understanding of what's going on in the world.'[29] Heaney might be imagining a moment of poetic intervention—that 'borderline between' of poetry—where injustice and justice can be engaged. This is another instance of Heaney taking us to the brink of the political, only to jerk us back to reality. Or, perhaps it is the other way around. Heaney reminds us of the cruelties of the past and present, and though they cannot be completely redressed by art, what we would like to happen and what will happen can possibly be constellated in rhyme.[30] The investment in the idea of 'striking through' via form is what O'Driscoll calls Heaney's uncomfortable position as the public voice of Ireland resulting in a tendency to 'speak in' rather than 'speak out'.[31] Looking again at the 'hope and history' stanza, there is circularity that seems to fold in on itself. It begins with 'History […] hope' and ends with the transposed 'hope and history', and the power and beauty of the verse lies in its manifold repetition and reference to previous imagery. The metaphoric wave, once again, resonates Heaney's stance on poetry amid injustice.

Ghosh, too, speaks toward the vocation of his fiction in times of protest. In the aforementioned essay, he goes on to explain the lingering effects of his march against the anti-Sikh riots on his writing.

> Before I could set down a word, I had to resolve a dilemma, between being a writer and being a citizen. […] I had only obvious subjects: the violence. From the news report, or the latest film or novel, we have come to expect the bloody detail or the elegantly staged

[28] Ibid., p. 77.
[29] O'Driscoll, p. 69.
[30] Heaney has written extensively on this subject, and in his essay 'The Redress of Poetry' he notes how hope (in Václav Havel's use of the term) stands in for redress for poets such as Osip Mandalstam and Czeslaw Milosz. See Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry: Oxford Lectures* (London: Faber and Faber), p. 4. Speaking of the Elizabethan conquest of Ulster Heaney says, 'We want […] them to be released from the entrapment of history. We want the sky to open above them and grant them release from their earthbound fates. And even if we know that such a release is impossible, we still desire conditions where the longed-for and the actual might be allowed to coincide. A condition where borders are there to be crossed rather than to be contested' Seamus Heaney, 'Something to Write Home About' in *Finders Keepers: Selected Prose 1971-2001* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp. 48-58 (p. 56).
[31] O'Driscoll, p. 56.

> conflagration that closes a chapter or effects a climax. But it is worth asking if the very obviousness of this subject arises out of out modern conventions of representations: within the dominant aesthetic of our time […] it is all too easy to present violence as an apocalyptic spectacle, while the resistance to it can as easily figure as mere sentimentality, or worse, as pathetic or absurd.[32]

Violence, ironically, engenders Ghosh's dilemma of writer and citizen. He must weigh the necessity to enunciate what he perceives as injustice—in essence, to join—with his obligation to do as little epistemic violence possible to the victims thereby aggrandizing the perpetrators. He must resolve for himself the act of changing people's understanding by writing across both violence and resistance. This is what he means when speaking about his resoluteness to join, yet the idea of joining, perhaps, should be shifted to conjoining—noting the temporality and difference of the act of 'bringing together'. The postcolonial novel at times should, momentarily, conjoin violence and its 'civilized, willed response'. Could it be that the 'dominant aesthetic of our time' is one of hope—not hope qualified by the nominal-messianic structure, but hope skewed by capitalism? This seems to be the implication of the tendency to satisfy the consumption patterns of people accustomed to 'elegantly staged conflagrations'. Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton register such an 'aestheticization of terror' and the possible complicity of postcolonial writers.[33]

Whether scraps of bloody cloth or betrayal and revenge, the metaphorical histories above present unappealing legacies, and it solicits a valid question: why would one want hope and history to rhyme? *The Circle of Reason*'s narrator mentions that despite the stains of the past, it is the only one we have, and perhaps that alone is worthy of recuperating, and perhaps Ghosh would agree. Heaney is less explicit, and it seems that the best possibility worth pursuing is a history—understood through his metaphor of atrocity—as being ameliorated by a hope for a different present, yet the poem, like Shombu Debnath in *The Circle of Reason*, also suggests that one should not hold their breath for this 'once in a lifetime' event. Colm Tóibín quotes Heaney saying, 'When a poem rhymes, when a form generates itself, when a metre provokes

[32] Ghosh, 'The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi', p. 61.
[33] Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton, eds, *Terror and the Postcolonial* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 12.

consciousness into new postures, it is already on the side of life.'[34] At the risk of sounding jejune, Heaney's words speak back to Potamianou in the previous chapter—the work of art is for-life; a form of hope itself. Heaney, and Ghosh when read in the context of Heaney, collocate history and hope in their works, and whether mediated by poem, play, or novel, they ground their conceptions in entangled and inseparable metaphors, and this helps these authors conjoin or strike through representations of violence. It is in this way that I look at the textual examples of hope in the Amitav Ghosh's texts to understand in what ways he cites it.

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In the opening section of *The Circle of Reason*, Ghosh is predominantly concerned with the legacy of Enlightenment thought in India in both its positive and negative effects. Balaram's and the narrator's ruminations on cloth signal the intersection of the positive and negative—and that of hope and history. Moreover, Balaram's symmetric investment in science and pseudo-science is often read, correctly, as an interrogation of the perceived binary of rational versus irrational, modernity versus tradition. The nineteenth-century Positivism that resulted from the legacy of the Age of Reason brought about both these sciences, and the tragi-comical character Balaram Bose dissolves the specious dichotomy and shows the inseparability and contamination of 'rational', Western scientific discourse with its 'irrational' counterpart. In this sense, Claire Chambers reads his 'attitudes towards science' as a 'hybridizing tendency' that 'unwittingly challenges western scientific discourse'.[35] But given his fate, the absurdity of his obsession with carbolic acid, and his un-scientific (and un-Pasteur-like) devotion to phrenology or criminology, he may also be read as an interrogation of such a 'hybridizing tendency'. Even so, Balaram is still a sympathetic character. The weight of Pasteurianism and the xenophobic genealogy of phrenology appear to be subsumed by his sense of justice and hopefulness.

[34] Colm Tóibín, '*Human Chain* by Seamus Heaney—a Review', *Guardian*, 21 August 2010, p. 6.
[35] Claire Chambers, 'Representations of the Oil Encounter in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 41 (2006), pp. 33-50 (p. 43).

Funeral Pyre for Louis Pasteur

References of Pasteur's cogitations and experiments with the 'infinitely small' pepper the narrative, and they exist as another avatar for post-Enlightenment reason in the novel. In the chronological timeline in the book, which is out of synchronization with the narrative timeline, 20-year-old Balaram receives René Vallery-Radot's *The Life of Pasteur* from his Rationalist Society friend Gopal as the latter graduates. Balaram then gives the book to their friend Dantu (later known as Hem Narain Mathur) who then passes this to his daughter, Dr Uma Verma. At the end of the novel, Dr Verma gives *Pasteur* to Alu, never realizing that Balaram had given that same book to her father over 40 years ago. Neither, however, wants to keep the book, and Alu ends up burning it during Kulfi's funeral. What is so insidious about Pasteur's biography that requires its incineration? In my opinion, the burning of *The Life of Pasteur* can be read in at least two ways: a tidy ending—and a rebuttal—to Eurocentric, rationalist thought, or, and this is the reading I favor, a rebuke to the monadization of rationalism into a single ideal, which is an unproductive, unreflexive hagiographic move that plagues both Indian politics (but not limited to India) and post-Enlightenment scientific thought that substitutes men for multitudes and, therefore, elides the drivers of change in the world.

In his innovative work in the sociology of science *The Pasteurization of France* (1984), Bruno Latour provides the historical and sociological grounding for Pasteurianism. His primary aim, at least in the first part of the book, is to map the bases for Pasteur's findings and the societal ramifications of the entrenchment of Pasteurian science. Stepping back from Pasteur, and speaking of science in general, Latour's arguments rely on two presuppositions. First, he posits that 'to understand simultaneously science and society, we have to describe war and peace in a different way, without ourselves waging another war or believing once again that science offers a miraculous peace of mind' and, second, that 'an idea, even an idea of genius, even an idea that is

to save millions of people, never moves of its own accord'.[36] Scientific concepts, as in any other discourse, 'require a force to fetch it, seize upon it for its own motives, move it, and often to transform it'.[37] Latour is not attempting to debunk or denude Pasteur's work and legacy. On the contrary, he chooses to study Pasteur because of how immediate, beneficial, and 'scientific' his work is. The speed at which his experiments on fermentation, Pasteurization, and immunization are incorporated into the lived experience of European society (below, I investigate the colonial affects as well) attests to an indisputable contribution by 'faithfully' applying the scientific method to practical problems. Latour points out that this immediacy makes Pasteur's work 'free of compromise, tinker, and controversy'.[38]

Latour notes that the 'social context of a science is rarely made up of a context; it is most of the time made up of a *previous* science', and in Pasteur's case it is the hygienist movement, which increasingly became institutionalized through public health works to ameliorate the unsanitary effects of large-scale urbanization.[39] In particular, Latour references Louis-René Villermé and his acolytes applying data from sociological statistical bureaus to investigate links between class and hygiene. This, Latour says, provides the fertile ground for the 'conflict between Health and Wealth' that makes Pasteur's work possible.[40] This perceived conflict is the view that laborers' mortality due to sanitation, disease, etc. started to materially, and monetarily, affect the capitalist class and the growth of the nation (in population and gross domestic product). Preceding, and concurrent to, Pasteurian intervention into hygiene, there was a move toward the 'revival and extension of exploitation (or prosperity, if you prefer)' that 'required a better-educated population and clean, airy, rebuilt cities, with drains, fountains, schools, parks,

[36] Not uncoincidentally, Latour reads Tolstoy's *War and Peace* contra scientific historiography to frame his arguments about the hegemony of scientific thought. Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. by Alan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 6; p. 16.
[37] Ibid., p. 16.
[38] Ibid., p. 8.
[39] Ibid., p. 19.
[40] Latour, *Pasteurization*, p. 16.

gymnasiums, dispensaries, day nurseries'.[41] In trying to unmask the rhetoric of scientific revolution, Latour conceives of a sphere of research, hygienism, gleaned from the pages of the *La Revue Scientifique*, *Annales de l'Institut Pasteur*, and *Concours Médical* from about 1850 to 1920. This sphere existed before Pasteur and carried on after Pasteurian principles became the dominant paradigm. The hygienists, writing in the aforementioned journals, attempt to conflate Pasteur the man to a set of his ideas, and his proven ideas to their own scientific bases. In Latour's words, they are the 'force' who seize a reified Pasteur to give legitimacy to their purpose whereby Pasteur the man is reduced to 'Pasteur' the object of study as in *The Life of Pasteur*.[42]

There are two theoretical movements at work, here. The first is the transformation of Pasteur to 'Pasteur' and then the concomitant appropriation of 'Pasteur' by Pasteur (and his allies). Starting with the former, to legitimize a slow-moving science such as hygienism, whose principles had hardly changed in Europe since Roman times, the impetus to align with the microbiological model posited by Louis Pasteur is not merely an acceptance of a 'truer' truth. It is not obvious that the hygienist movement should shift from the open air to the laboratory, but it is as Latour states:

> In redefining the social link as being made up everywhere of microbes, Pasteurians and hygienists regained the power to be present everywhere. We cannot 'explain' their actions and decisions by 'mere' political motives or interests (which in any case would be very difficult to do.) They do so much more. In the great upheaval of the late nineteenth-century Europe, they redefine what society is made up of, who acts and how, and they become the spokesmen for these new innumerable, indivisible, and dangerous agents.[43]

The real 'scientific revolution' lies in the effort to control how society interacts. Pasteurianism is a manufactured break from the past. Even though old models of miasmatic communication of

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[41] Latour, p. 18.

[42] That is to say, the narrative of our interaction with the microbe is shaped by a community with an ideological angle. For instance, in an absolute sense, the microbe—say, cholera—does not distinguish between classes. And at the very basic defense of life, the interests of the rich and poor align. Latour notes the work of Gibier, who talked of microbrial class warfare in a 'vulgar Marxist' manner, and then Loye and Sternberg, are noted as proponents of the importance of microbacteria without which life would likely be impossible. These are narratives constructed under the umbrella of the unimpeachable 'Pasteur', and regardless of their factual content, the shifting possibilities of Pasteurianism show what Latour means by needing two actors in science—the agent (or the agent's discoverer) and the actor that purports to speak for/to that agent.

[43] Latour, *Pasteurization*, p. 39.

disease were insufficient in fully protecting public health as well as explaining microbiology, it is not necessarily the point that Pasteurian conceptions of the world provide a more clear understanding. These forces—Pasteurians and hygienists—are 'creating *new sources* of power and new sources of legitimacy, which are irreducible to those that hitherto coded the so-called political space'.[44] The concept of life, now understood to be prefaced on the microorganism, defines how human bodies interact with the world and also shape how humans should interact with each other, and the arbiter or spokesman of the microbe, conveniently, becomes the lone genius in the laboratory.

This is what is implied in the latter theoretical movement from 'Pasteur' to Pasteur. The Pasteurians are not passive actors during this time; they specifically engage the hygienists' appropriation of the newly discovered immunological and microbiological practices. They court and incorporate the hygienists into their theoretical fold, and with Pasteur as the acting figurehead, begin to exert the influence on the field. And this is Latour's important point; they shape the new legitimacy that only they control—laboratory-based investigation of the source of life and death.[45] Here we have Pasteur's specific intervention into this transformation, as the orchestrator, in a way, of the strategy outlined above.[46] In sum, Pasteur enlists the hygienists (who had gladly hitched their environmental wagon to his science), and at the same time he subtly rebukes their theoretical models of diseases in order to create a rift between past and present science, what many would call a 'revolution'. This revolution, moreover, takes place exclusively in the scientist's lab, or rather, is perceived to take place in the lab and then projected outward to society. In effect, this reinforces the notion of the Big Man delivering massive change to a rapt public. Vallery-Radot tries to capture this image of his solitary and brilliant father-in-law: 'Pasteur had the power of concentrating his thoughts to such a degree that he often, when absorbed in

[44] Ibid., p. 40.
[45] Ibid., p. 60.
[46] Latour notes the impossibility of separating the scientist from the politician—Pasteur pursued his research and likewise wanted to make that research known. This is his 'genius'; not in the mythological sense, but the genius that can be accomplished by a single man. (p. 71)

one idea, became absolutely unconscious of what took place around him.'[47] In much the same way, *La Revue* and *Annales* mirror *The Life of Pasteur*'s account. Latour shows that this 'strategy' present in Pasteur's hagiography is the real 'genius' of the Pasteurians. Illuminating the dynamics of power in something so sublime as the received history of Pasteur (e.g. pasteurization or little Joseph Meister's cure) shows the inseparability of the political from the scientific.

Using literary examples from Vallery-Radot's biography of Pasteur, I want to explore the metaphorical militarization of medical science given the context of late nineteenth-century France. That is, building upon the ideas of Latour about the energies that charge Pasteurian theory and possibility, one looks to the nationalist thought, commercial implications, and 'war'—paying particularly close attention to colonialism—in *The Life of Pasteur* to see on what grounds Ghosh may be leveling his critique in the novel. These are not necessarily discrete categories, but an inter-networked system of tensions that make Pasteurianism possible and give insight to its societal effects beyond the scientific.[48] I have already shown, through Latour's work, the scientific and sociological context of Pasteurianism, but now the chapter turns to the aforementioned heroization of Pasteur, the commercial interest, and the subtle colonial ramifications underlying *The Life of Pasteur*.

Pasteur's father was a sergeant in Napoleon III's empire, and his son fought in the Franco-Prussian War. Although he was never a soldier, Pasteur, it is recounted, fought a 'famous battle' of the 'struggle over spontaneous regeneration'.[49] It was one of the 'first of his victories' and an example of 'the efforts of a mind' that 'march[ed] forward to establish facts' in the face of his 'adversaries'.[50] The conventions of the modern biography require the creation of a hero much like with Nehru in the first chapter, but it is striking just how militaristic the portrayal of the history of science (or rather, the historiography of the scientist) actually is. Today, one still battles

[47] René Vallery-Radot, *The Life of Pasteur*, trans. by R.L. Devonshire (London: Constable, 1920), p. 413.
[48] Pasteur's son-in-law wrote the 1884 biography (Pasteur died in 1895), so there is a certain celebratory and uncritical point of view in the book
[49] William Osler, 'Introduction', in *The Life of Pasteur*, p. viii.
[50] Osler, p. ix; Vallery-Radot, p. 99.

cancer or takes supplements to aid the body's defenses. This is not exactly a revelation. War metaphors in medicine have been noted by Susan Sontag and Lakoff and Johnson. However, I am not going to focus on metaphors of the body, though much can be said regarding the implicit reduction of the body to the machine, or the body as nation to be protected from invasion. These are fruitful avenues of inquiry, but it is the movement of scientist to field general that intrigues me. As noted above in the burning of *The Life of Pasteur* in *The Circle of Reason*, it is the embodiment of movements into a single actor that seems destined to fail to capture in good faith the history of medical science.

The general connection between health and wealth premises the hygienist movement in nineteenth-century France, but one need not be a crude Marxist to link Pasteurian and capitalist interests. There is an explicit connection between industry and Pasteur through the process now known as pasteurization. Pasteur's work with vintners, brewers, and silk farmers was undertaken at the behest of those industries. This should not subtract from the content of his work, but clarify the outwardly patriotic and commercial sentiments of this science. Vallery-Radot comments on the catalyst for Pasteur's work with fermentation:

> Pasteur's desire was that his country should benefit by his discovery. An Englishman had written to him: 'People are astonished in France that the sale of French wines should not have become more extended here since the Commercial Treaties. The reason is simple enough. At first we eagerly welcomed those wines, but we soon had the sad experience that there was too much loss occasioned by the diseases to which they are subject.'[51]

The propagation of germ theory relied on the scale of its performance; to further the position of the bacteriologists, Pasteur needed a stage for which his research could not be ignored. With his convincing broth experiments to disprove the hypothesis of spontaneous regeneration, Pasteur found an industry to which he could parlay his experiments onto a national scale. Or, in keeping

[51] Vallery-Radot, p. 114. The Englishman is likely referencing the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty passed in 1860 that instituted a 'free trade' agreement between the two countries. Though, the historian E.L. Woodward points out that sales of French wine doubled the year after the treaty was signed, despite this Englishman's 'sad experience'. E.L. Woodward, *The Age of Reform: 1815-1870* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 172-73.

with Latour's critique, Pasteur translates an economic issue (the spoilage of wine) into a laboratory-based one, thus captivating and binding a national industry with his own success.[52]

After his achievements with fermentation, Pasteur was 'convinced' to run for senate in his native Jura, but he lost handily; likely because of his conservative political views. This is often presented as a very trivial moment in Pasteur's hagiography, but I think it is a telling one. Histories of science and biographies of scientists tend not to be constrained by the materialist demands of their non-scientific counterparts. Nevertheless, this political failure led to perhaps Pasteur's most lasting legacy, the anthrax and rabies vaccines that gave rise to the opening of the Institut Pasteur. Tracing the commercial impetus for Pasteurian microbiology leads one down a path from the need for healthy laborers, to the national silk and wine industries, and, finally, to the largest source of wealth for the French empire: the colonies. Fortunately, or not, depending on which side of the surgical mask you are on, the tropical colonies provided the greatest access to novel diseases for the Pasteurian.

It is in the French colonies where Pasteurian science fully realizes its scientific takeover in the complex that entangles the military, capitalism, politics, and biology. Latour quotes Alexander Yersin's article about his research on what is now known as the third pandemic of the bubonic plague (for the Institut Pasteur in Tonkin): 'The great commercial movement between Canton and Hong Kong, on the one hand, and between Hong Kong and Tonkin, on the other […] makes the French government fear that Indochina will be invaded by the epidemic.'[53] This fear is not necessarily one for the local population that bore the brunt of the plague deaths, but the economic damage to the colonies and the potential danger for French troops in the region. In a scene about anthrax and the teak trade in Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*, the character Doh Say comments that 'the cost of an epidemic was such as to make itself felt on the London Stock Exchange.'[54] The link between foreign trade and disease had been known for centuries, and the

[52] Latour, *Pasteurization*, pp. 68-69.
[53] Alexander Yersin quoted in Latour, *Pasteurization*, pp. 94-5.
[54] Ghosh, *Glass Palace*, p. 92.

great expansion of colonies during the second half of the nineteenth century coincided with the scientific emphasis on tropical medicine. Pasteurians sought to place themselves between these competing actors—the military-economic expansion and the microbe. This legacy exists even today with the bulk of the Pasteur Institute offices located in the Tropics, and obviously, primarily in former French colonies such as Algeria, Senegal, Cambodia, Vietnam, French Guyana, and Guadalupe.

Speaking of French colonial expansion in general, Latour cites the Franco-Malagasy War as an instance of the turning point for Pasteurian scientific discourse and military conquest:

> The Hovas formed an alliance with miasma to win a war against those armed with rifles and canon. In order to reverse once more this balance of forces, which had already been reversed once, what had to be done? They had to use modern bacteriology. By crushing the microbes of parasites in the laboratory, they eliminated the power of the Hovas' allies and therefore gave the canon and rifles back their superiority, since those who used them would no longer die.[55]

Latour uses the common French terminology 'Hova' in place of the more widely accepted 'Merina' to denote the ethnic group in control of Madagascar at the time. Hova, however, is a particular Merina caste/class meaning something along the lines of the masses. Even so, in the Second Expedition of the war (1895), only 25 Zouaves died in battle. Most of the casualties happened during the long march from the port town of Mahajanga inland to the capital, Antananarivo, where disease claimed almost a third of the total force.[56] True, the French won the war and annexed Madagascar for the next 60 years, making Latour's account a little conflated.

Historian Philip Curtin notes that the Imerina state had only tenuous control of Madagascar, due in part to diplomatic meddling by the British and French, and would have been able to put up little defense against the heavily-armed French military. The French casualties suggest that the Franco-Malagasy War was not truly the reversal of balance as Latour sees it. It is actually an outlier in terms of disease-related deaths for foreign expeditions. During the Tonkin invasion a decade prior, French soldier deaths from disease rose from six percent to 10 percent

[55] Latour, *Pasteurization*, p. 115.
[56] It is worth mentioning that there is an Institut Pasteur branch now located in Antananarivo.

(from 1884-1887).[57] This compares to a peacetime disease death rate of about one to four percent (generally declining from 1860-1890).[58] Comparing this to the almost 30 percent mortality rate in Madagascar, it seems that Pasteurian principles are notably *absent* or without effect. Curtin posits the former.

Curtin's research complicates, or rather, nuances, the grandiosity of Pasteurian power as Latour (and I) have implied, but I have tried to be careful in avoiding causal relationships between colonization and microbiology. Interestingly, most of the diseases in the Franco-Malagasy War resulted from sanitation and hygiene issues (e.g. Typhoid, Malaria, Yellow Fever). Parasitic diseases, of which Pasteurians of the time had little knowledge, were the primary killer. Furthermore, Curtin notes that the largest drop in the death rates for soldiers in the Tropics occurred between the 1840s and the 1860s, well before Pasteur had made his interventions into bacteriology.[59] It is not as if Pasteurians were simply responding to disease-related costs of French military expansion, when, in fact, most of that work had been done by the old hygienists. However, what one sees is an attendant rise in the stakes of both military occupation and Pasteurian microbiology, and though the new information to combat microbes did not necessarily restore men to their cannons as Latour states, it did '[make] Africa [and South Asia] cheaper to administer'.[60]

Returning to Yersin in Tonkin (what is now northern Vietnam), *The Life of Pasteur* comments on his achievements in isolating the plague-causing agent and then to create its vaccine:

> M. Yersin, now a physician in the colonies, communicated to the *Annals of the Pasteur Institute* the discovery of the plague bacillus. He had been desired to go to China in order

[57] Philip Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 238-9.
[58] Ibid., p. 229.
[59] Ibid., p. ix.
[60] Ibid., p. 230.

> to study the nature of the scourge, its conditions of propagation, and the most efficient means of preventing it from attacking the French possessions.[61]

Having already successfully invaded their colonies in South Asia and Africa, the general rise in public health through hygienist works and vaccinations in France made the public increasingly weary of foreign deaths among French soldiers. The human cost, seemingly small compared to a half-century earlier, now exceeded the material costs of colonial occupation. The telling phrase in *Pasteur*, though, is 'attacking French possessions', and this could be regarded as colonial shorthand, but I think it is more indicative of the magnitude of French self-interest with regards to combating illness. Pandemics, indeed, impact the bottom line, and combined with the fear of international transmission, there is very strong impetus for the microbiologist to take control.[62]

The Franco-Malagasy War and Yersin's research did not so much prompt an intersection of military and science, but rather a major shift in the focus of the Institut Pasteur. One of Yersin's colleagues in Vietnam, Albert Calmette, who founded and headed the first foreign branch of the Institut Pasteur in Saigon (later, he would found another branch in Algiers), would become one of the foremost proselytizers of the colonial-scientific project. In Calmette's article 'The Scientific Mission of the Insitut Pasteur and the Colonial Expansion of France', he claims that the microbiologists have an imperative to protect 'the colonies, their native collaborators, and their domestic animals against their most fearsome, because invisible, enemies'.[63] Under Calmette's vision, the Institut Pasteur turned into a global public health initiative whose explicit mission, after the immediate threat of rebellion became insignificant, was to further extend the material, physical, and intellectual bounds of the colonial *mission civilisatrice*. To understand

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[61] Vallery-Radot, p. 457. Along these lines, Latour notes the punning within Yersin's account of the easy slippage between the Pasteurian work with bacterial colonies and France's colonial enterprise in *Pasteurization*, p. XX.
[62] The outbreak of the plague in China and Tonkin spread mostly throughout Asia, but made its way fairly quickly to Africa, Europe, and America. This is yet another reason for European concern with regards to the growing invisible threat from the colonies. See Albert Calmette, 'The Plague at Oporto', in *The North American Review*, Vol. 171 (1900), pp. 104-11.
[63] Albert Calmette, 'The Scientific Mission of the Institut Pasteur and the Colonial Expansion of France' quoted in Latour, *Pasteurization*, p. 141.

Pasteur's role in colonial history is to recognize the 'politicomilitary role' of the Pasteurian biologist in South Asia.[64]

Does this shed light on the implications of burning *The Life of Pasteur* in Ghosh's novel? At the end of *The Circle of Reason*, Dr Verma speaks of her father as being 'afraid of the power of science and those books', and then she tells Alu that it is because of Vallery-Radot's biography that she became a microbiologist. Her father had charged her with keeping Pasteur's heritage 'alive' (CR 395). 'Almost angrily' she forces Alu to take her book. From Latour and others above a hefty amount of baggage is implied when referencing the hagiography of Pasteur, especially in the South Asian, Middle Eastern, or North African context. It is not just a stand-in for the pinnacle of European intellectual and scientific hubris in the colonies, rather it is a lasting heritage of colonial attitude and hegemony (of thought) that verges on the unquestioned; it is taken for granted as almost universal. Vallery-Radot's book circulates in the text on two levels. It inhabits the novel chronologically from the 'very beginning' in Balaram's college days to Kulfi's funeral at the end, and it travels from Lalpukur to al-Ghazira and reappears in Algeria. Even though its literal prominence in the text is slight, its metaphorical presence is great. The burning of the biography is not only a metaphorical rebuke to post-Enlightenment thought, but also a signification of the potential violence of something as innocuous as the great genius from Jura.

Weaving Pasteur into the novel is another example of the complicated double movement of the novel's critique. A passing statement in a report by Jyoti Das remarks how Balaram's *idée fixe* with carbolic acid, no doubt influenced by Pasteur, 'saved thousands of lives', however it also inadvertently killed those closest to Alu (CR 83). As with weaving and history, the references to Pasteur are yet another wrinkle in the constellation of hope in the artwork. Ghosh's novel attempts to situate itself in much the same manner as Chakrabarty claims of Subaltern studies, that is, at the theoretic juncture 'where we give up neither Marx nor "difference"'. Paradoxically,

[64] Latour, p. 142.

Chakrabarty goes on to posit that the only way to disrupt the unity of [the time horizon of capital] is to speak of resistance from within that conception of time.[65] This thematic is taken up in the next chapter.

The postcolonial state, socialism, and ambivalence

Focusing on the various ways of structuring society and the ways in which we organize living among other people, *The Circle of Reason* has much to say. Most of it is unpropitious. It is difficult to think of any ideology or institution that fares well in the novel. The Indian police force is portrayed as inept and nepotistic, the local governments (particularly al-Ghazira and Lalpukur) are corrupt or despotic. Post-Enlightenment reason and capitalism are much maligned. The engagement with socialism in the novel, which is discussed in greater detail below, is both ridiculed and championed. The only 'institution' that reaches the end with any semblance of integrity is family, though this is not without its complications. Ghosh has been explicit in his reasons for writing about family, contra Jameson's argument in 'Nationalism and Third World Literature'. The family, he ultimately concludes, is a way of *not* writing about the nation. Rather, in his novels there is a literal and non-allegorical family that deserves a certain prominence. As Hage says, it is through the family and 'family life' that one experiences 'one's first collective imaginary'; the first 'we', so to speak.[66] *The Circle of Reason* is somewhat peculiar in this instance, as Alu is an orphan, and many of the familial roles and ties are not created organically—that is, genetically—but through various affiliations, dependencies, and affective attachments. Moreover, family for Ghosh is the primary provider of care and welfare for the characters of his story. And in this way, the tenuous allegorical relationship with reading the state as family or vice-versa, of which Ghosh is self-conscious, interrogates the postcolonial state's support, or lack thereof, for lower classes. Zindi's house in al-Ghazira is allegorical, perhaps, of a shadow state made of North African and South Asian immigrants amid an oil economy, but her desperate struggle to maintain her

[65] Chakrabarty, p. 95.
[66] Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, p. 98.

household is less an alternative way of living communally and more a defense against the aforementioned exploitative collusion of state and capitalism. To put it another way, the extended family in al-Ghazira with Zindi as matriarch is not (or, is not *merely*) the counterpart to nation-based citizenship or organization. Its very existence, and its destruction at the hands of the state, is a commentary on the insidiousness and inseparability of the oil trade, the autocratic state, and the colonial ties that made the violence against the poor people of the Ras possible.

Echoing the previous discussions of Ghassan Hage and the state as the carer for its citizenry, or rather as the distributor of hope through which a caring citizenry is fostered, Ghosh takes aim at postcolonial states in Asia in an interview with T. Vijay Kumar. Ghosh says,

> All those services—for welfare, for health, for everything—that are delivered by the nation, classically by the nation state, are [in fact] delivered by the family, including something that the nation state actually claims to deliver but cannot […], which is […] an emotional satisfaction. But in India all of that comes from the family.[67]

Emotional satisfaction, that is, the fulfillment of emotional expectations, is supposed to be addressed by state institutions. The promised-but-absent state services that Ghosh mentions can be rethought as Hage's 'caring society'; one that essentially 'generates hope among its citizens and induces them to care for it'.[68] Care (and, here, this notion implies care of/for/about both oneself and others) is the cohesive concept of 'affective attachment' in Hage's words or 'emotional satisfaction' in Ghosh's. And the societal importance of the family in India, as the primary—if not only—stopgap in terms of care points to the juxtaposition of the caring society's objectives and those of global capital. Hage reasons, 'The growth of the economy, the expansion of firms and rising profit margins no longer go hand in hand with the state's commitment to the distribution of hope.'[69] In a way, the state has been relieved of its responsibility to engender material and emotional satisfaction among its citizens. The responsibility is now deferred to the individual; aspirations of the wealth that will lead to satisfaction are the prerogative of the autonomous

[67] T. Vijay Kumar, p. 103.
[68] Hage, p. 3.
[69] Ibid., p. 18.

citizen. In practice, though, these dreams rarely come to be, and satisfaction is partly achieved through the care of the family. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan addresses this in her book about postcolonial India's contradictory positions on women's rights in *The Scandal of the State*. She says, 'The reformist position expects that the state will provide care and security to those in need of them and attacks its failure to do so adequately.' Yet, it is not just that the state provides inadequate care. 'The institution,' she says, 'is also a place of confinement and hence of control.' The government simultaneously wants to 'divest itself more and more of the actual responsibility of providing institutional services' while refusing to 'surrender or dilute the authority of its custodial powers'. The many compelling case studies in Sunder Rajan's work highlight the specific targets of these custodial powers as women and juveniles.[70] Again, family is the primary source of that excess of hospitality that makes societal hope possible, but in many cases it functions with little help from a state-supported caretaker, or, at worst, in spite of state institutions.

Hage and Ghosh, in their own ways, pose the questions of how, exactly, the nation state encourages and develops hopeful citizens, and how, specifically, the intervention of global capitalist logic affects this. In *The Circle of Reason*, the state seems to have at least two functions: to maintain its own bureaucratic existence and to prevent any reasonable destabilization of the existing class structure. The leader of the Socialist Party in the '40s and '50s, Rammanohar Lohia, speaks directly to this issue of the ideological problems of the Indian state after Independence. In *Marx, Gandhi and Socialism*, he says,

> Starting from the cooperative commonwealth, they [the Congress Party] are back again to it, but have in the process taken their stride over the concepts of a classless and casteless society, of state without isms, and of the welfare state. This whimsicality could perhaps have endeared, if there were a fixed meaning behind any of the concepts experimented with. The welfare state has indeed acquired a meaning in the Western world, but that is so irrelevant to India as to turn it into a hoax. India and all Asia have still to produce very vastly with a state whose policies and outlook are aimed at such a production before they can take up the distributive functions of the welfare state, and that is a long time yet to come.[71]

[70] Sunder Rajan, p. 86.
[71] Rammanohar Lohia, *Marx, Gandhi, and Socialism*, 2nd ed. (Hyderabad : Rammanohar Lohia Samata Vidyalaya Nyasa, 1978), p. 292.

Lohia is extremely critical of both the Communist and Congress Parties, and often aligned them, somewhat interchangeably with capitalist Atlantic state ideologies and the USSR. The above criticism is voiced before the Bandung Conference in 1955, and perhaps Lohia's call for pan-Asianist movement that is pluralist in ideology (Lohia, of course, favored *satyagraha* and Gandhism, as well as a certain Marxist tradition) influenced Jawaharlal Nehru's push for a Non-Alignment movement. However, while Nehru and Lohia seem to agree on matters of peaceful foreign policy, domestic production is the point of contention. Nehru's first two five-year plans (1951-1961) focus heavily on large-scale agricultural, energy, and industrial production, so it is difficult for him to attack the Congress Party on this point, but the more valid condemnation is the promise of the welfare state with little means to support this promise. Alleviating poverty and decreasing social injustice through extremely long-term plans, as the last 60 years of Indian history have shown, have done little to engender the state supports that Ghosh talks about above. Increased infrastructural spending is likely to boost gross domestic product, but Lohia sees hypocrisy in promising a welfare state (and a casteless society) through Gandhian rhetoric, while deferring the prospect of national welfare into a distant future. The Nehru government, in his mind, is toying with hope.

Today's five year plans are much more comprehensive, such as goals for public health, education, social welfare, technology, and the environment.[72] That is not to say that there are not major flaws in the current political and economic liberalism that treats poverty and unemployment as structural. But, the dramatic increases in GDP should facilitate dramatic decreases of destitution. However, this is only partly the case and will be discussed in much greater length in Chapter Four. For Ghosh, the paradox of sustained levels of extreme poverty despite slow to moderate GDP growth and a decreasing level of inequality during Nehru's leadership puzzlingly contrasts with the state of the Indian liberalized economy today. In the

[72] The most recent plan, the 'Eleventh Five Year Plan', is available to the public by the Planning Commission of the Government of India. <http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/11thf.htm> [accessed 10 December 2011].

novel, this anxiety about poverty and social justice appears most prominently through its engagement with socialism, but the myriad historical legacies above, with a particular attention paid to post-Enlightenment genealogies, often are perceived as political ambivalence—manifest, perhaps, most acutely in Alu Bose.

Critics of Ghosh have called out this mode in his work. Anshuman Mondal considers ambivalence the organizing political concept of Ghosh's writing.[73] The three reactions to this, Mondal maintains, are to accuse Ghosh of being postmodernist, humanist, or neither. He convincingly asserts that 'Ghosh's attempt to choose *both* the political registers of modernity—humanism, secularism […]—*and* those registers that resist or contest them—subaltern, postmodernism—signals a commitment to the "ethical" dilemmas involved whenever one encounters the Other'.[74] Mondal says that this is possibly the only way in which a novelist can register the 'doubleness' of writing in/from a postcolonial context. It is not a way in which Ghosh elides politics, but a way in which he questions the uncontested ideology of political binaries. In, 'Police and Postcolonial Rationality in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*', Siddiqi also notes the 'ambivalences of postcolonial modernity' in Ghosh's first novel. However, in her monograph, *Anxieties of Empire and the Fiction of Intrigue*, she changes 'ambivalences' to 'ambiguities'. I, too, have some reservations about using the term 'ambivalent' to describe Ghosh's politics or mode of writing, though I have used the term before. Ambivalence implies having a mixed or contradictory view on something, and possibly this is the case for Ghosh with Enlightenment reason. Ambiguity, likewise, as linguistic uncertainty, or an inexactness of meaning, does not quite fit. It can also mean a failure to commit or choose a side.I believe that in Ghosh's novels he does 'choose sides', and any ambivalence or ambiguity in his writing is an aesthetic choice; an exemplification of his critically introspective humanism.

[73] The thematic of ambivalence runs throughout his readings of Ghosh's novels in *Amitav Ghosh* (2008).
[74] Mondal, p. 173.

Extending Alu's ambivalence, or the thematic ambivalence of the novel as a whole, to the author or *vice versa* is, perhaps, too strong a movement. The high doses of critique administered against institutions such as the state and of ideologies like post-Enlightenment rationalism or science are not an outright renunciation nor are they necessarily emblematic of a politics of ambivalence or ambiguity. The prefix ambi-, whose Latin origin means 'on both sides', may be the root of the issue. The either, all, or none option that critics apply to the politics of Ghosh's writing still seems crude. Can one be 60 percent secular humanist and 40 percent postmodernist? If we can consider politics as the act of choosing, even when there are moments of indecision, a choice not to act is made. The novel as a whole, indeed, tests the limits of choosing—often when faced with rationality and irrationality, the novel threads both, paradoxically, in attempt to show that cause and effect, reason and non-reason are not mutually exclusive, at least in practice. If this is the ambivalence that Siddiqi and Mondal register, then they must also note the strong undercurrent of pragmatism throughout the novel—particularly from characters such as Balaram, Zindi, and Dr Verma. However, Alu presents a different problem.

The most striking characteristic of this unlikely hero is his ambivalence and reticence. Almost every loved one in Alu's life dies, and it does not occur to him to refute the accusation that he is a terrorist. Alu is representative of the difficulty of political action in a world, to use Keya Ganguly's phrase, where 'we are all positioned by the logic of global capital'.[75] Siddiqi writes, 'Alu's very opaqueness as a character, his unknowability, can be seen as yet another way in which Ghosh marks the limit of Enlightenment reason and its guarantee of epistemological transparency.'[76] Jeevanbhai recounts Alu's pivotal question to the Ras: 'Which is the battleground which travels on every man and every woman, silently preparing them for defeat, turning one against the other, helping them destroy themselves?' (CR 281) 'His [Alu's] voice was only the question; the answers were their own,' the narrator comments (CR 279). Jeevanbhai recounts all

[75] Keya Ganguly, 'Something like a Snake: Pedagogy and Postcolonial Literature' in *College Literature*, 19/20 (1993), 185-90, (p. 188).
[76] Siddiqi, *Anxieties*, p. 192.

of this to investigators Jyoti Das and Jai Lal. Alu is shown to be the one who posits the 'question', and it is up to the multitude to answer. The reincarnation of Balaram's obsession is now reason without militancy. The distancing of the narrative—Jeevanbhai recounting to Das framed in the past (as noted above)—matches Alu's general opacity as noted by Siddiqi. Alu is never the focalizer of the narrative, but the attempt to pin him to ambivalence, does not take into account his decision to return home, the curing of his maladies, the burning of *The Life of Pasteur*. Throughout the chapter, I tried to posit the various ways in which Ghosh conceives of hope in the novel. As ambivalence does not seem to fit, exactly, with the readings that the novel offers, and I adamantly posit a reflexive hope that attempts to constellate its nominal-messianic structure. However, there is one 'ambivalence' that needs further explanation, and that is the role of socialism in *The Circle of Reason*.

The socialist ideology extending from Balaram's account of man and loom finds resonance in Alu's accident at the Star in al-Ghazira. During the building of the shopping center, which was meant to cater to the newly-wealthy and middle-class citizens of the oil-rich state, it collapses, leaving Alu trapped underneath the rubble. He is saved from being crushed by the support of two Singer sewing machines. After his rescue, Alu transforms the immigrant enclave of the Ras into a cashless, socialist community, and to commemorate the rising fortunes of the community, al-Ghazira's immigrants decide to march to the Star. The authorities, yet again, take the march to the Star as a terrorist act. The narrative of the Ras's shopping trip begins as farce—Isma'il, Hajj Fahmy's son, refuses to go, because the 'germs are out today', and the members carry shovels and crowbars to salvage items from the fallen building lending to the perception of a vengeful mob. Yet in the most pertinent way, the al-Ghazira state reads the Ras's threat correctly, and responds in the most effective manner in its power—with violence. There are at least two concurrent interpretations of this: that proletariat power is still curbed by state and capitalist interests and that power is still placed and violence is still effective. The second is a comment on Alu's version of practical reason. One cannot stem disaster by negating Balaram's obsession with

militancy with ambivalence. In fact, you could say Alu's movement was *less effective* than Balaram's. At least Balaram's manic need to purchase carbolic acid and make the town clean had a substantial impact on the health of the town.

The second textual engagement with socialism occurs at the end of the novel in the antagonistic debate between Dr Verma and Dr Mishra. The latter is a staunch socialist who sermonizes in an over-intellectualized populist manner, while failing to outwardly recognize the hypocrisy of his socialism and his upper-class status. Dr Verma caustically pins down the callous, perhaps realist, Dr. Mishra comparing him to his father, Dr Murali Charan Mishra, who had 'a degree from the London School of Economics in his pocket, the Indian Masses on his lips and a Scottish pipe in his mouth' for 'that was the kind of Socialist he was' (CR 376). Dr Verma's critique goes further, when Dr Mishra makes snide comments about *sati* and Untouchables, an exasperated Dr Verma shouts him down:

> Do you remember how you talked about technology and the Scientific Temper and building a new rational world by destroying the superstitions of the peasants? And then, when we said surely there was more to socialism than just that, that in the villages we talked of socialism as hope, do you remember how you laughed? […] And, after all that, where were you when the crunch came? Who fell over themselves in their hurry to join the Congress in 1947 so that they wouldn't have to waste any time in getting their fingers into all that newly independent money? […] Who sabotaged Lohia? […] We've seen you wallowing in filth with the Congress while High Theory drips from your mouths; we've heard you spouting the Misery of the Masses while your fingers dig into their pockets. (CR 380)

The key historical figure here is Rammanohar Lohia the side-lined anti-colonial socialist who ended up being the scourge of the Indian communists, the mainstream socialists, and, most notably, Jawaharlal Nehru and Congress.[77] It is worth mentioning this Lohiaite socialism, because of the critique of reason characterized by Lohia's views on Marxism, big men, big machines, and his construction of 'Asian' or Eastern socialism. That Asian socialism, and I will use some license to label it Indian socialism, is of course genealogically tied to European worker movements and Marxist thought, however, he conceives of a socialism that is not mimetic of, or in relation to, its

[77] During one of Dr Verma's memories, Dantu is recounded as having 'one final surge of energy in the fifties when Ram Manohar Lohia kindled the last spark of hope in the socialists' (CR 377-78).

European cognate, but a socialism wholly specific to the pan-Indian context, and this is primarily through his formulations of caste as 'immobile class'.[78]

Dr Verma's admonishment of the Mishras takes its cue from Lohia's criticism of Congress above—an exploitive, hypocritical mixture of populism and Marxism, or Gandhism and communism. Verma's political tirade is an intriguing moment of the earlier arguments about politics and aesthetics, or history and hope. One must be mindful of Dr Verma's privileged positioning in the novel—a glorified status unreached by any other character, as P. K. Dutta points out. But, her stream of accusations, rhetorical questions, and polemics do not merely function as authorial voice. The passage above encapsulates so many of the tensions of the novel gathered in this chapter—Pasteur, reason, socialism, history, poverty, and filth. On its own, it might be sententious, but one must read Verma's outrage as part of the longer trajectory of the novel—it is the novel's thematic climax, as it were. She slips into the first person during this dialogue—'in the villages we talked of socialism as hope'—and accuses Dr Mishra of misdeeds—'do you remember how you laughed?' Dr Verma and Dr Mishra, of course, were not there for the events that she is speaking about, but rather she is speaking as Hem Narain Mathur to Murali Charan Mishra. One has to read this with the failed socialist project in the Ras in mind, and this is, perhaps, where Ghosh introduces some ambiguity. Though one would find it difficult, given the importance placed on Dr Verma's view of socialism in India (against the very cynical, intellectualized 'socialism' of Dr Mishra) and the real tragedy of the al-Ghazira incident (state-sanctioned violence against the poor, not the socialist movement itself), to argue for an amibvalence, authorial or otherwise, to socialism as a means toward equitable justice. Ambivalence is not necessarily a third-way politics that overdetermines Ghosh's writing, but a register in which some of his characters speak, in line with the broader aims of the novel, to

[78] Lohia is not an uncontroversial figure; in fact, his historical legacy seems to be built (at least through the lens of certain historians) on controversy. He is often portrayed rightly or wrongly depending on your political motivations, as antagonizing two dominant figures of post-independence politics—Nehru and Jayaprakash Narayan. Other media-covered rows between figures like George Fernandes, Indira Gandhi, and Asoka Mehta color his legacy as socialist pugilist.

emphasize an interrogation of the 'doubleness' or 'double-bind' that Mondal and Siddiqi, respectively, consider the impetus for postcolonial narratives.

Waiting and terror

Zindi-at-Tiffaha, who is known by many names: Fatheyya, Zindi the Apple, Zindi the storyteller, Zindi-didi, *beyt* Zindi (the house of Zindi), is an excellent example of hopeful waiting similar to that of the white South Africans discussed in the previous chapter. She sees herself as the matriarch of her house, and the house is a slippery metonym that often means 'family', as when Hajj Fahmy tells Zindi with regards to Alu's tragedy: 'my house wept' (CR 228). The house/family is complicated when we learn that Zindi's livelihood is staked to her custodial care of the members of the house—she collects a cut of their earnings. When she invites Alu on the deck of the *Mariamma* to join her 'boarding house', she takes offense to his silence. She defends herself saying, 'It is not a business; it's my family, my aila, my own house.' (CR 181) The Arabic transliteration, aila, is un-italicized, unlike the many other Hindi, Arabic, and Bengali words. It is sandwiched between family and house, and we are left to infer its meaning as such. Later in the novel, she revises her definition as well as her position while speaking with Rakesh, 'Here I am with a house full of people. I make a good enough living off them […] While everything is all right outside, things seem fine in the house. […] But let something happen outside, and that's the end. […] It doesn't matter to you; you can go home. Where can I go?' (CR 213) Zindi verbalizes the precarious nature of her role as a minor rentier. Her position well below the elite and just above the underclass exposes the contingent nature of her own well-being. Here, the house is primarily a building, and it is differentiated from the 'home' to which her boarders can return should something happen.

Waiting, or as we have seen, fear of acting, must be accounted for in *The Circle of Reason*'s overall statement about hope. When Jeevanbhai thwarts Zindi's plan to buy his shop from under him, she tries to seduce the old man. When he stops her, he asks her what terrible thing has happened to her, and she replies,

> Terrible? What could a word like 'terrible' mean for someone who had to spend each day watching her own house slipping out of her hands, watching it turn against her, defying nature, like a horse turning on its rider? What did 'terrible' mean for someone who had to watch the very people she had sheltered, her own children, picking the world apart, hunting for chaos and calling from the rooftops for their own destruction? What is terrible? Is it terrible to find yourself afloat on a whirlpool of madness, to see the currents raging around you, and to be powerless to do anything but wait helplessly for the last wave? (CR 299-300)

The cascading rhetorical questions lend a pleading, pitiful mood to Zindi's perceived helplessness. The repetition of the semantics of 'terror' descends into the whirlpool of her metaphor. What *is* terrible? While the list of unfortunate events is, indeed, answers to her questions, the constant interrogation leads to a questioning of her outlook. Zindi seems to be echoing Shombu Debnath's fatalistic point of view, and above a reference to her desire to 'cheat the future' resonates a sort of passive, waiting aspect of her hope that her house might avoid chaos and madness. She finally comments that terror is not only 'broken bones and pain'; 'being a spectator is terror enough' (CR 300). This for-death hope, like Shombu Debnath's abnegation, is again distasteful for the optimistic reader but proves to be pragmatically right. The march on the Star ends in terror and violence, and her pessimistic foresight manages at least to save Kulfi, Alu, Karthamma's baby, and herself. It is difficult not to place a moral judgment on Zindi's attempts to cheat the future as a passive mode of being in the world, which very easily can be conflated to inaction or *tamas*. One must recall the possibilities of hoping—the varying capacities to hope in the postcolony—especially among those without the means to resist the sort of violence waged against the Ras. The conatic hope in moments such as the march on the Star can be an instance of 'hunting for chaos'—it is the intersection of conatic and narcissistic hope. Yet, this scene marks a shift in Zindi's view toward the future. Her pessimism does not end up paralyzing her or causing her to 'wait helplessly for the last wave'. Her stance against courting destruction in the name of progress brings her to action by rescuing those she could and taking them away from al-Ghazira. After the incident with Jeevanbhai Patel, Zindi reconciles her ideas of the past and the future, and she denies Jeevanbhai's request that she bring Alu to the Indian authorities saying,

'Whatever happens in the future, in the past they all ate my bread and salt.' (CR 304) And when it is hinted to Zindi that the 'regime' that controls al-Ghazira plans to use violent force to stop the crowd of the Ras, she in turn attempts to stop it, and it is Hajj Fahmy and Alu's inaction that leads to the massacre at the Star.

Compared to Zindi's tension of waiting and action, conatus and narcissism, for- and against-life hope, Dr Verma's pragmatism is less immediate, though perhaps somewhat more authorial. During one of her memories of her father, she recalls Dantu 'stooping over his bookcase, smiling, saying in his firm, gentle way: Stop worrying about it; it won't work. It's pointless. Can't you see—the issue is political?' (CR 355) Dantu's smile is described as melancholy, not mocking, but his defeatist attitude is one that lingers with Dr Verma, and one she tries to overcome. Speaking to Alu about her father's obsession with books, she says,

> He would look at the world whirling around him and he would look at his books, and when they told him different stories, like a man caught between quarrelling friends, he wouldn't know which side to take. But in the end, even though it meant shutting himself away, the books won. They ruled over him: for him that bookcase had all the order the world lacked. I used to think it was love, but I know better now. He was afraid; afraid of the power of science and those books of his; afraid that if he disowned them they would destroy him. (CR 395)

For Hem Narain Mathur, the world 'whirls' just like Zindi trying to stay afloat on a 'whirlpool of madness'. However, Dantu remains trapped by indecision. The failures of the Rationalists, the Kisan Sabha, or the socialists weigh on him, and the tenuous balance of conatic and narcissistic hope, mirrored by Dantu's inability to take sides, proves difficult. He 'grew old before his time, torn between certainty and history.' (CR 377) Numbed by the dead hand of the past, Dantu's obscurity—despite our sympathy—offers a foil to the reflexive, multi-faceted hope that the novel offers.

In contradiction to Zindi's 'powerless waiting', Balaram's disastrous political activism, and Alu's equally disastrous political inactivism, Dr Verma's stance is to 'make do'. 'The times are like that,' she says to Dr Mishra, 'Nothing's whole any more. If we wait for everything to be right again, we'll wait for ever while the world falls apart. The only hope is to make do with what we've

got.' (CR 416-7) This realist, pragmatist perspective is once again complicated by its context—Kulfi's Hindu funeral. The juxtaposition of the sacred and the profane highlights the complexity of Dr Verma's 'making do' as a pragmatic motto. Further, her point of view is privileged by its placement near the end of the novel. It reads somewhat as a synthesis of Balaram, Zindi, and Alu, or, at least, the reader is informed by their misfortunes as a result of their ideologies before arriving at Dr Verma's opinion. However, to return to P. K. Dutta's critique of Dr Verma's 'authorial' position, he notes:

> True, the novel leaves Mrs. Verma behind. But the fact remains that she is not questioned at all. By centering the last section on a clear-cut confrontation between Dr. Mishra, the cynical nationalist, and Mrs. Verma, the organic innovator, Ghosh seems to deliberately schematize the structure, so that Mrs. Verma is glorified at the expense of her rival. It is not then, as if Mrs. Verma's life is simply one of the many possibilities offered in the novel. It has a larger significance, one that is made to hold hopes of regeneration.[79]

Dutta picks up on the 'un-ambivalent' Ghosh, and while he looks at Verma's character as subverting the novel's tendency to hold many varying ways of living in constellation, her characterization and placement within the novel lends to his point. All novels must end in a literal sense, and the 'resolution', if there can be said to be one, of the *The Circle of Reason* leans heavily on the final pages. I would hesitate, though, to read Dr Verma as 'hope for regeneration', because she truly is a disruptive character in the thrust of the novel. To place Dr Verma toward the end point of possibilities as a transnational, cosmopolitan Indian does not quite fit the novel's thematic arguments. However, she is not unquestioned. I would suggest that her memories of her father interrogate and inflect her 'possibilities'. Moreover, it is through meeting Alu that she is able to formulate and practice this 'regenerative' hope. Like many themes in the novel, one cannot fully cede any particular point of view. The different readings of waiting and hope (as well as migration or socialism) as experienced or interpreted by the characters of the novel as a whole must be held simultaneously in our scope. The two characters, Zindi and Dr Verma, provide a pragmatic glimpse of nominal hope. The former's fear of stasis is born from her life on the

[79] P. K. Dutta, 'Review of Amitav Ghosh's The Circle of Reason', Social Scientist, 14 (1986), pp. 62-8 (p. 67).

margins, the latter's make-do attitude arises from her middle-class upbringing. These representations form parts of the foundation of nominal-messianic structure of hope in this thesis.

'Hope is the beginning'

The enigmatic statement quoted above is the final sentence of Ghosh's book, and pulling out the textual examples of conatic, narcissistic, and societal hope, as I have done in this chapter, highlights a tendency in the novel to rethink what it means to hope. However, the novel does not escape what can be seen as a more 'traditional' reading of the term: hope as the negative of despair or fear; the strengthening belief that things might be better than they are now. It is possible to consider the novel's motives for positing hope as political, and a positive politics at that, but given the arguments above, it is the context, especially of this final sentence, that brings about the question: what is hope doing here? G. J. V. Prasad posits that for '[Ghosh] as for Alu, […] *The Circle of Reason* ends with a new beginning—the renewed search for contexts and personal readings. And the novel itself (as artefact) holds out hope for the success of these aesthetic quests.'[80] I, too, would prefer a reading of hope in the novel similar to Prasad's, but there is something that prevents such an optimistic reading. The critique of Nehru, the incommensurable illustrations of rationality and spirit, the lamentable tone of socialism, and the violence of the state in backing multinational capitalist interests complicate hope for 'a new beginning' as stated. If one follows Prasad's logic that the hopefulness in the novel is a reassertion of new contexts, intertexts, and particularity on an aesthetic level, then the radicalism of this hope is somewhat blunted. It would seem to present an unreflexive hope that could be applied to all literatures that reach beyond cliché and convention: a hope so general as to lose its point—not its reason for existence, but its scathing critique of that which is denying hope's fulfillment. Hope, I want to suggest for Ghosh, is placed, named, and leveled against processes of capitalism and the resultant

[80] G. J. V. Prasad, 'Re-Writing the World: *The Circle of Reason* as the Beginning of the Quest' in *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Brinda Bose (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003), p. 197.

acts of violence and displacements that characters such as Alu, Zindi, Jyoti Das, and Dr Verma must navigate.

Extended metaphors are abundant in this novel, and various literary critiques including mine have attempted to pin these down. Weaving, above, is the point of entry for this essay, but Kavita Daiya makes the claim that the 'circle' is a 'metaphor for the neo-colonial situation created out of global capital that strongly echoes colonialism' and as such the novel 'critiques and reveals the failure of nationalism and globalization to reach its promise'.[81] I agree with Daiya that a critique of global capitalism emanates from the novel, both in form and in content as I have tried to show, but I would include two comments. First, a situation described as 'neo-colonialism' certainly would *at least* echo colonialism, but in some ways describing the present as 'neo-colonial' glosses a much longer history of global capital and the resultant exploitation and domination, whether manifesting in colonialism or neo-colonialism, that must be seen as more than the source domain of the circle metaphor in the novel. Second, and this builds on the first point, the novel does not only 'critique and reveal the failure' of certain emancipatory projects. *The Circle of Reason* holds the 'failure' and 'promise' of postcolonialism in its purview. The shifting metaphors in the novel—e.g. weaving, circles and circuits, migration, the germ—present a destabilized and destabilizing mode, somewhat analogous to Mondal's reading of ambivalence, that examine the aforementioned cognates of hope (e.g. failure or promise), utopian projects (nationalism or globalism), as well as hope itself. This is why the postcolonial novel has so much to say about the nominal-messianic structure of hope. Along these lines, Brinda Bose alludes to an untethering of self and metaphor in the novel, positing that

> the burden of India's colonial past appears to weigh heavily on a migrant postcolonial generation […] Ghosh seems to be constantly in search of that elusive epiphanic moment in which individuals may come to terms with their histories, thereby releasing themselves from the metaphoric—and metaphysical—burden of their condition.'[82]

[81] Kavita Daiya, '"No home but in memory": Migrant Bodies and Belongings, Globalization and Nationalism in *The Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*' in *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Brinda Bose (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003), p. 47.
[82] Brinda Bose, p. 53.

Indeed, as G. J. V. Prasad sums up quite nicely, 'the principal quest in the novel seems to be one for the right metaphor' to understand and constitute the world.[83] This is the register of ambivalence that Mondal and Siddiqi pick up—the plurality of organizational metaphors in the novel are not necessarily manifestations of a politics or aesthetics of ambivalence, but a mode through which to narrate the nominal-messianic structure of hope.

Rather than choosing a single metaphorical reading of the text, I have tried to present the metaphors in parallel. Above, weaving and then Louis Pasteur provided points of entry for the novel with hope being the broader hermeneutic, and to this I would like to add the migration of birds. Toward the end of the narrative Alu, Zindi, Kulfi, and Boss the infant—who has been solely under Zindi's care after Karthamma's death—travel to Algeria as they try to escape Jyoti Das where they meet Dr Verma the microbiologist. Dr Verma is trying to stage the Rabindranath Tagore play *Chitrangada* with an all-Indian cast, and to the group's surprise, Jyoti Das is already staying at the Verma household. Kulfi, pretending to be Alu's wife, is asked to play the role of Chitrangada opposite Jyoti's Arjuna. An intense romantic connection between the two results in a heart attack. After Kulfi's makeshift funeral, where furniture and rotten ghee is used for fuel and carbolic acid replaces the water of the Ganges, Alu burns the *Life of Pasteur*. The book's circuitous route from Balaram to Alu brings about an end to the chase, with Jyoti Das deciding to live with his uncle in Düsseldorf, and Alu, Zindi, and Boss heading to the ambiguously termed 'home'.[84] Jyoti Das asks to travel with the group:

> He looked past them at the great silent dunes and suddenly he saw a sky alive with Cory's shearwaters and honey buzzards, white storks and steppe eagles, Montague's harriers and sparrowhawks circling on the thermals; all of them funnelled, like clouds driven to a mountain pass, into that point where only one narrow strip of water lies between Europe and Africa, like a drawn sword.
>
> My God! he said. The whole sky will be migrating over Tangier now. He saw Zindi's face cloud over with suspicion, so then he said: I'm migrating myself. (CR 421)

[83] G. J. V. Prasad, p. 59.

[84] The novel mentions that the boat will stop at Port Said (Egypt) and Bombay, so, presumably, Zindi and Boss are headed to the former while Alu the latter.

Jyoti Das's preoccupation with birds throughout the novel colors the extended metaphor of flight and migration in the above passage—notice how much of the figurative language and parts of speech revolve around the sky. First, there is the anthropomorphism of the 'silent dunes' contrasted with the dead metaphor of the sky being 'alive'. The similes for the migrating birds 'circling on the thermals': 'funnelled, like clouds driven to a mountain pass' and 'like a drawn sword'. The birds' movement, ultimately south, is immediately in a circular motion, but also a vertical movement is implied. Jyoti Das's final metonymy—'the whole sky' standing in for the list of birds—is quickly followed by the idiomatic 'cloud over'. Zindi's suspicion becomes meteorological, and in this case, the tiredness of the idiom is redeemed by the repetition of sky imagery throughout the passage.

The most peculiar part of the quote, though, is the simile of the drawn sword. The macroscopic view of migration north to south (it is autumn in the northern hemisphere) would have the hilt of the sword in the hands of the Iberian peninsula and the tip pointing directly at Morocco. The metaphor does not quite encompass the longer history of Islamic Spain, but it certainly gestures toward the continued history of circulation among the people and fowl of North Africa and Europe *as well as* the more recent history of colonial domination and, in the present day, of some of colonialism's after-effects: impeded migration and economic dependency and subjugation. Those four words, 'like a drawn sword,' starkly contrast with the surrounding metaphors and tone of the events described. It is Ghosh's reminder of the experience of migration for the underclasses, especially those from ex-colonies. Dr Verma, Jyoti Das, and Alu and Zindi travel in different circles, so to speak, where the determining factor of their mobility is class. Jyoti Das's semi-legal migration to Europe is described as 'beautiful' and it leaves him 'at peace' (CR 423), and his travels from India to al-Ghazira (and finally to Algeria) is called a 'foreign trip' via airliners and hotels (CR 165). Zindi and Alu's journeys, on the other hand, have been laborious, tragic, and surreptitious.

The hopefulness of the migrations is clear. In the penultimate scene, Jyoti Das is looking back at Tangier from the ferry to Algeciras. When he could still see the Avenue d'Espagne from the ferry, he is 'luminous, radiant'. But as he enters the bay near Algeciras, he turns around to see the migrating birds, and the migration becomes a 'mocking grey smudge hanging on the horizon'. The drawn sword now 'point[s] to continents of defeat—defeat at home, defeat in the world—and he shut his eyes, for he had looked on it for too many years and he could not bear to look on it any longer' (CR 423). Meanwhile, on the shore the baby, Boss, looks 'toward the Atlantic'. In the distance there is nothing but 'sleepy, crawling oil tankers', and so they wait to go home (CR 423). Each of the organizing metaphors can be closely linked to each of the main characters: as previously mentioned, migration with Jyoti Das, science and pseudoscience (or the paradox of purity) with Balaram, weaving and Alu, Pasteur and Verma. All are valid ways to 'read' the novel. But taken together and read through Amitav Ghosh's constant grounding in history, that is also historical materialist in nature, the metaphors become crystalline, and the constellated strategies, if they can be called such, map a way of hoping reflexively, and that is how the disasters and defeat that characterize Alu, Zindi, or Balaram's experiences may be read as 'hope for a new beginning' (CR 423). Ghosh lends this closing sentiment to what seem to be his most favored characters: Dr Verma and Hem Narain Mathur. Remembering Dantu's final words, Uma Verma recalls her father, while pressing her hand against his bookcase, saying, 'My love, make my failures the beginnings of your hopes.' (CR 378) In this manner, the repetition of the cyclical nature of the metaphors of the novel connects each possible reading: the rhythm of family, the migration of birds, the back and forth of the weaver's shuttle, and the dialectic of rationalism and irrationalism. Failures and beginnings, especially, inform the complex framework of hope that the novel offers.

Realism and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Prefacing the previous chapter's debates surrounding materialist aesthetics, Georg Lukács's defends Socialist Realism in literature as the instrumental means of fomenting socialist revolution. For him, this event is the *raison d'être* of art. He praises writers like Honoré de Balzac for his

commitment to represent reality without the unnecessary abstractions of Modernism. Lukács sees Modernists as anti-realists whose appropriation and innovation of form obscure its purpose. In contrast, Marcuse situates the revolutionary potential, or rather, messianic hope, not in the novel's 'faithful' representation of history, but in the act of transforming historical content into aesthetic form. For him, the innovation or inventiveness of this transformation is the *only* capacity in which art can possibly attempt to narrate transcendence from the 'totality of the prevailing relations of […] production'.[85] Art affirms and re-presents reality via aesthetic form to indict this reality and imagine a shadowy outline of the way beyond.

It is through this lens that I read Mistry's choice of epigraph for *A Fine Balance* from Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*:

> And after you have read this story of great misfortunes, you will no doubt dine well, blaming the author for your own insensitivity, accusing him of wild exaggeration and flights of fancy. But rest assured: this tragedy is not a fiction. All is true.[86]

Mistry introduces his novel with the words of Lukács's prototypical realist, but to claim that 'all is true' is not simply ironic. From the Marcusean perspective, the world 'really is as it appears in the work of art'; the Indian English novel cannot fully escape its colonial relations within capitalist societies.[87] While Mistry's intertextual allusions and realism echo Dickens and Balzac, critics trying to situate him squarely in this tradition, in opposition to a post-structuralist avant-garde or magical realism (e.g. Rushdie or García Márquez), backhandedly depoliticize his works. The implicit assumption of reading Mistry *against* Rushdie is to perceive Mistry's realist novel, in Laura Moss's words, 'in the prevalent view—both popular and academic—that, for whatever reason, realism and resistance do not converge.'[88] In a way, critics that position Mistry vis-à-vis Rushdie are reacting against Lukács's strict criteria of realist revolutionary art in a move toward a

[85] Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, p. ix.
[86] Epigraph from Rohinton Mistry, *A Fine Balance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996).
[87] Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*, p. xii.
[88] Laura Moss, 'Can Rohinton Mistry's Realism Rescue the Novel?' in *Postcolonizing the Commonwealth: Studies in Literature and Culture*, ed. Rowland Smith (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2000) pp. 157-65 (p. 158).

valorization of postmodernist skepticism for its own sake. This ignores that though Lukács would deplore Rushdie's postmodern maneuvers, he would praise his penchant for descriptive and representative detail.[89] Setting up the binary of realism and (post)modernism is itself a conceit. Fredric Jameson sees the 'constitutive feature of the Balzacian narrative appartus' as 'something more fundamental than either authorial omniscience or authorial intervention'. He argues that it 'may be designated as libidinal investment or authorial wish-fulfillment'. One may be tempted to read this as authorial hope 'in which the working distinction between biographical subject, Implied Author, reader, and characters is virtually effaced'.[90] Even so, to pigeonhole Mistry into a calcified, nineteenth-century realist mode would ignore the multiple contexts—historical, cultural, and textual—out of which he is writing.

Mistry's novels recall a tradition of *La Comédie Humaine* with their historical setting, intricate detail, and focus on private lives of the working class. But as nineteenth-century realism looms, so too do T.S. Eliot—referenced in the epigraph of *Such a Long Journey*—and Yeats—frequently quoted by Vasantrao Valmik in *A Fine Balance*. Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*[91] and Tagore's *Gitanjali*[92] influence his works alongside the epics *Qissa-i Sanjan*[93] and *Ramayana*.[94] And if one considers Mistry Dickensian, one must acknowledge reverberations of Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie* or *The Village*. Placing Mistry's novels outside or inside any particular mode of literary form cannot hold. A close reading of his works shows an unstable realism, forays into magical realist elements (elaborated below), Modern echoes, and 'pre-modern' contexts.

Although, a concern with reality in art is central to Lukács, Adorno, and Marcuse, but it is the manner in which 'reality' is represented that differentiates these theorists. For Marcuse and

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[89] Lukács makes this very argument with regards to Kafka in Georg Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* trans. by John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1963), pp. 77-78.
[90] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 155.
[91] An excerpt from the novel is in the epigraph in *Family Matters*. And like *Anna Karenina*, Mistry's *A Fine Balance* begins with a death in a train station and ends with the suicide of a main character by a similar locomotive fate.
[92] An excerpt forms part of the epigraph in *Such a Long Journey*.
[93] Also part of *Such a Long Journey*'s epigraph.
[94] Characters like Peerbhoy Panwalla in *Such a Long Journey* and Vasantrao Valmik in *A Fine Balance* conjure the image of the epic poet-storytellers of the *Ramayana*.

Adorno, it is the very act of recreating what is 'true' in the aesthetic domain that can subvert reality. While one recalls that for Adorno truth is prefaced by hope, yet it still demands reflexivity—art 'challenging its own essence'. He makes no prescriptions as to how this must be achieved, whether it is realist, expressionist, or otherwise.[95] In contrast, Marcuse attempts to bring Lukács's Materialist debate toward Adornian aesthetics by reclaiming 'love and hate, joy and sorrow, hope and despair' from the 'domain of psychology', because for 'every human [these emotions and events] constitute reality'.[96] Marcuse unpacks and makes accessible Adorno's complex dialectic, curbing Adorno's occasional over-valorization of 'high art' and reinvigorating Lukács's call for radical praxis. And when Marcuse argues that it is the liberatory function of art to use realism to accuse reality, he distills the tension within art as resistance. Art is of and not of its mode of production, and its 'success' amounts to the efficacy with which it relates individual experience to domination—implicating the characters within the wider networks of power and exploitation, minor and major—that portray not a cause and effect of the powerful and powerless, but nuanced and relational strands of power between actors of various socio-political classes. In *A Fine Balance* this is done via the complex economic relations between the main characters whose recourse against the brutality of caste, class, and political oppression is to forge emotional bonds. In doing this, I suggest below, the novel opens a 'horizon of change'—the simultaneous expression of individual and collective hopes alongside that of liberation.[97] The novel, as this thesis has maintained, is the privileged space in which to represent this contradiction, but it is the Indian English novel—even more so—that focuses this nominal-messianic hope back onto itself.

Criticism of Mistry with respect to his 'realistic', even stereotypical portrayal of suffering is conspicuous, and one finds a hint of artifice in his characterizations of the 'Village by a River'. As Nilufer Bharucha notes, 'his rural, lower-caste characters and his urban beggars and conmen

[95] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 2.
[96] Marcuse, pp. 5-6.
[97] Marcuse, p. xi.

come across as cardboard figures—an urban, westernized Indian's construct of the Dalit classes.'[98] And with regard to Mistry's treatment of governmental misrule and Dalit post-Independence gains, 'he has deliberately ignored the role of leaders like Morarji Desai and Jai Prakash Narayan who fought Emergency heroically.'[99]

Starting with the former, the criticism revolves around Mistry's representation of Dalits in terms of a mimesis that borders on fetishism. For the purposes of this thesis, the point is made with the caveat that all representation comes with political baggage, but taking this reasoning too far leads to a dogmatic view that the power to represent then becomes the power to terrorize or 'dominate'.[100] Bharucha also implicitly questions Mistry's ability to represent the subaltern given Mistry's status as an Indian in the West, but this is a specious line of argument, as Neil Lazarus warns, 'the proposition that intellectuals cannot talk about "the masses" without guiltily romanticizing and/or implicitly disparaging them strikes me as being empirically indefensible.'[101] There always exists the danger of essentializing when one speaks of the Populace, like Matthew Arnold, or the masses, as Nehru does. Mistry does not ignore this point, and his first novel's commentary on Nehru's vague humanism, discussed in the next chapter, speaks to this. Moreover, 'to confuse the novel's particular rendition of human suffering with the representatively aggregate condition of the postcolony is to fall prey to the oldest of colonial fallacies, one that Memmi refers to as "the mark of the plural".'[102]

The bleakness in *A Fine Balance* is not a representation of persistent suffering in India, but rather plural and distinct narratives of characters within a matrix of domination at different moments in the history of postcolonial India. Critical engagement in the text can sometimes revolve around the constructed community of disparate castes and classes and the enduring

[98] Nilufer Bharucha, *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces* (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2003), p. 167.
[99] Jaydipsinh Dodiya, *Parsi English Novel* (New Dehli: Sarup and Sons, 2006), p. 58.
[100] Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 114-15.
[101] Ibid., p. 102.
[102] Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 127.

'human spirit in an inhuman state', but the inevitable outcome of the makeshift community is unjust—a purblind and dependent Dina Dalal, a castrated Omprakash, Ishvar becoming an amputee, and Maneck's suicide.[103] An optimistic reading obscures the political implications of the characters' fates. Omprakash's father, Narayan, is murdered for his caste violations, violence toward Muslims and Sikhs bookend the narrative, and those who transgress most seem to suffer least, yet each of these characters and consequences represent points in a vast, interconnected textual relationship that provides a way out of a hopeless, fatalist interpretation. Looking over Dina's patchwork quilt made from the scraps of Au Revoir Exports piecework, Ishvar muses:

> 'See this [pointing to a cambric square]? Our house was destroyed by the government, the day we started on this cloth. Makes me feel sad whenever I look at it.'
> 'Get me the scissors,' she joked. 'I'll cut it out and throw it away.'
> 'No no, Dinabai, let it be, it looks very nice there.' His fingers stroked the cambric texture, recapturing the time. 'Calling one piece sad is meaningless. See, it is connected to a happy piece—sleeping on the verandah.' […]
> He stepped back, pleased with himself as though he had elucidated an intricate theory. 'So that's the rule to remember, the whole quilt is much more important than any single square.'[104]

Each square becomes a finite point in time 'recaptured' by fingers, words, and eyes. This passage is as much a comment on hope and despair as it is about the process of storytelling. However, Mistry does not let the reader leave anything unquestioned, as Omprakash jokingly retorts, 'But is it philosophy or fakeology?'[105] The patchwork-quilt-as-life metaphor resonates throughout the novel as both narrative and network. It is a way beyond a hopeless or hopeful reading—it is both. As Adorno puts it, 'suffering, not positivity, is the humane content of art.'[106] And to focus on Beggarmaster, Shankar, and Monkey-man, as Bharucha does, as exclusively a 'westernized Indian's construct' is to disregard the manner in which these characters are employed.

For example, the murderous Rajaram turned faux-*sannyasin* Bal Baba is not merely a 'cardboard conman' but a satirical intervention vis-à-vis realist formalism—another tweak to a strictly

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[103] Quote taken from the dust jacket of *A Fine Balance*.
[104] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 480.
[105] Ibid., p. 480.
[106] Adorno, p. 369.

Balzacian or historical reading. The ruptures and eddies in the narrative are vital moments where a self-awareness of the problems inherent in representation are indicated. Reading a realist novel as a mere reflection of reality is shown to be dangerous, and to return to Marcuse, Mistry's brand of realism is an attempt to move away from the reality it critiques. There are other instances that point to the uncanny and the satirical that suggest that not only can one not read Mistry's novels as history, but that the mode in which they appropriate social realism and the novel form *in toto* amounts to an active resistance, a writing against the grain, on Mistry's part. Mistry comments in an interview with Mary Mazzacco that 'people have gotten used to reading more minimalist stuff, so when they read something like [*A Fine Balance*], with this level of detail, they assume it must be nonfiction'.[107] Mistry, as signaled through the Balzac epigraph, wants the reader to internalize bleakness and suffering, while not losing sight of 'how easily we get trained by the conventions of our time'.[108] This investigation of suffering and optimism will play out later in the section on hope and despair.

As for Rohinton Mistry's disregard of political resistance within the Emergency, he does, in fact, mention Jayaprakash Narayan twice in the novel.[109] However, to have the central characters in the novel addressing the ills of the nation through explicitly political action would be untrue to the context and parameters of the characters' lives. This is not a book about J. P. Narayan, Morarji Desai, or Indira Gandhi. Getting too involved with historical fact (Mistry does not mention Indira or Sanjay Gandhi by name) obscures the allegorical import. For Marcuse, 'the more immediately political the work of art, the more it reduces the power of estrangement and the radical, transcendent goals of change.'[110] To put it another way, the more one attempts to shape and calculate the *avenir*, the further one recedes from the representation of nominal-messianic hope, and the less successful the work of literature. This is not to say that a novel

[107] Mary Mazzacco, 'Rohinton Mistry Became an Author Almost by Chance' (Walnut Creek, CA: *Contra Costa Times*, 1997) <http://www.lubbockonline.com/news/062697/rohinton.htm> [accessed 20 February 2009].
[108] Ibid.
[109] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 65 and p. 243.
[110] Marcuse, p. xiii.

cannot be political, and it is not contradictory to Marcuse's assertion to say that *A Fine Balance* is steeped in political domination. The novel is not devoid of representations of explicit, and sometimes successful, political resistance. Omprikash's father, able to escape caste constraints by becoming a tailor, defies political injustice by 'making his own mark' in the polling booth, and the brief appearance of Avinash—the Student Union president of Maneck's college—provides an activist voice against the terrors of the Emergency. The impetus of the novel is not political, but in Mistry's words, 'if you give your characters a political consciousness, it is inevitable that they will sit and talk about what is happening in the city, what is appearing in the newspapers.' To say this novel is 'steeped' in politics is to imagine the novel as a cup of tea; the Emergency begins as a 'government tamasha' (colloquial Hindi for spectacle or commotion) and slowly becomes imbricated in the characters' lives and fates to where politics and everyday life become infused.[111] More than that, this novel is not a step-by-step prescription for social justice; it is, as above, a plural, multi-faceted investigation via the individual (the cambric square) and communal (the patchwork quilt) experience.

The primary thrust of the above section is to unsettle the axiomatic use of realism to describe Mistry's texts. However, it also involves another strategy of representing the complex tensions of the nominal-messianic structures of hope for the characters in the novel. This hope, in its positive and negative connotations, set closely to a reading of suffering, decline, and defeat in the novel simultaneously shows the promise of this critique as well as its limitations. Rohinton Mistry's appropriation of a Balzacian social realist form is a mode of resistance to an economic and political domination that is elucidated—made *real*—by the re-imagined space that comes through the figuration inherent in the novel. *A Fine Balance* provides a key index to foment the genres of historical novel and Indian English novel, the conatic, narcissistic, and societal hopes

[111] The term, *tamasha*, has a more idiomatic usage; more to the effect that it is 'much ado about nothing'. Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 5.

for the characters, the ever-present messianic hope of the postcolonial 'behind' its critique, and the suffering and failure that checks that hope.

The 1975 Indian State of Emergency

The novel is set amid the backdrop of the Emergency, and this historic failure of democracy is the undercurrent for the politics surrounding the characters. P. N. Dhar, Indira Gandhi's principal secretary, writes that 'Indira Gandhi inherited […] a country humbled by China and harassed by Pakistan [and] an economy wrecked by drought and [the] threat of famine'. The strain of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the Bangladeshi refugee crisis, severe droughts in Maharashtra in 1970-73, Congress's defeat in Gujarat, the India Railways strike, and J.P. Narayan's call for *satyagraha* in Bihar erupt into a national crisis when the Allahabad High Court hands down a conviction that annulled Indira Gandhi's 1971 election. The civil unrest, as well as the need to protect and consolidate her own political power, provokes the Prime Minister, under article 352 of the Indian Constitution, to declare a state of emergency. In Indira Gandhi's words this is 'not an abrogation of democracy but an effort to safeguard it'.[112] The ensuing crackdown on political opposition, union leaders, students, and civic agitators leads to massive arrests—notably J.P. Narayan and Morarji Desai. By dissolving opposition governments, Indira Gandhi consolidates her power and subsequently abolishes the freedom of speech and expression, assembly, and movement. The primary criticism of the Emergency, aside from the suspension of democracy, is the uneven bias of its ill effects. Heavy Sikh opposition in Punjab leads to arrests disproportionate to their numbers. The 'beautification program' headed by Indira's son, Sanjay Gandhi, displaces many urban poor—exemplified by the Turkman Gate incident where police fired upon predominantly Muslim citizens protesting the demolition of their homes. And finally, the so-called family planning initiative directed by Sanjay pursues coerced and forced sterilization, primarily of the least fortunate.[113]

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[112] Indira Gandhi, 'Emergency and After: Some Vital Answers' (New Delhi: Pauls Press, 1975), p. 5.
[113] The final chapters of Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* also deal explicitly with this comparing the sterilizations with the 'sperectomies', the draining of hope, of the Midnight's Children.

The irony of Indira's justification for Emergency—saving democracy—uses familiar rhetoric. Gandhi stated, 'We want to use this opportunity to create an atmosphere of self-discipline amongst our people. No country can advance without discipline. So either the people must do it themselves, or Government has to do it.'[114] In an autocratic twist to Nehru's 'failure of spirit', Indira manages to derail Indian democracy and unravel any hope for the 'worthy goals' by disregarding its other half: 'worthy means'. With no hint of sarcasm, Indira Gandhi evokes the words of her father: 'In our world-view all turbulence ends in order, all conflict ends in resolution, all travail ends in tranquility. And man emerges and lives on for larger purposes. That is our *unceasing quest*.'[115]

Balance of hope and despair

Spanning Independence, Partition, Emergency, and Indira Gandhi's assassination, *A Fine Balance* has four main protagonists following three trajectories. Dina Dalal is a Parsi widow who has chosen to make a living on her own in the city by the sea; Maneck Kohlah, a Parsi student from the Himalayan countryside attending college and paying guest of Dina; and Omprakash and Ishvar Darji, Chamar caste Dalits turned literate tailors. When Dina's eyesight begins to fail, she seeks contract work sewing Western-style, ready-made dresses for export. Dina hires Om and Ishvar to perform piecework, but they are instantly suspicious of each other due to Dina's broker status between worker and exporter. The caste and class differences create a cultural tension that runs parallel to the two-way economic need between Dina and the tailors. Maneck soon befriends Ishvar and Om to Dina's displeasure, and tolerance slowly begins to emerge. The onset of the egregious acts of the Emergency, as the tailors' home is destroyed by the city's 'beautification scheme', disrupts this arrangement. Dina's reluctance to befriend the tailors recedes as they are forced by economic necessity (both hers and theirs) to live together in her flat. She convinces her

[114] Indira Gandhi, p. 6.
[115] The emphasis is mine, and as Nehru says in his 'Tryst with Destiny' speech, 'At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures.' Indira Gandhi, p. 40.

landlord that they are a 'family', but it is soon found out that she is running a business in the apartment against the tenancy rules. They enlist the help of Beggarmaster—the disturbingly principled crime boss who 'cares' for the local beggars—in a pay for protection scheme. This provides respite in a lifelong string of defeats for Dina, Ishvar, Om, and Maneck. However, this is not to last, as Beggarmaster is murdered, Ishvar and Omprakash receive forced sterilizations, Maneck leaves for Dubai, and Dina is forced to move in with her repressive brother. Years later, immediately after the assassination of the prime minister, Maneck returns to the City by the Sea to find Dina almost completely blind and dependent, while Ishvar and Om turned into beggars. He commits suicide in front of a train, echoing the events of the novel's prologue.

Prefaced on the discussion of Nehruvian utopia discussed in the previous chapter, Mistry's novel hinges on the metaphor of its title, the balance between hope and despair. It begins as a dialectics of balance between despair at the failure of the state to truly liberate its citizenry and a blind hope for utopia. Interestingly, it comes through the synthesis of liberal, socialist idealism and Gandhism. During a scene where the successful collective action to reform and improve the living conditions in Maneck's college projects outward to national movements during the Emergency:

> The mood was euphoric. The students fervently believed their examples would inspire universities across the country to undertake radical reforms, which would complement the grass-roots movement of Jay Prakash Narayan that was rousing the nation with a call to return to Gandhian principles. The changes would invigorate all of society, transform it from a corrupt, moribund creature into a healthy organism that would, with its heritage of a rich and ancient civilization, and the wisdom of the Vedas and Upanishads, awaken the world and lead the way towards enlightenment for all humanity.[116]

This is not a pride-before-the-fall scenario; it is an exaggerated celebration of minor success. Its tone becomes sardonic when read alongside history. The jubilation of the students for the termination of a disreputable caterer becomes an allusion to the student swell of support for J. P. Narayan against the Emergency. And after the fall of the Congress government, the 'tattered

[116] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, 241.

hopes of the nation', as Rushdie snipes, are placed in the hands of 'that ancient dotard' who 'daily took a glass of "his own water"'.[117] The short, ineffectual Narayan government and the chauvinism of the BJP and RSS that is to rise to power in 1980s and '90s imply an ironic reading of Mistry's passage.

Compare this ersatz hope with the measured words of Vasantrao Valmik during a dialogue with Maneck. Explicitly, and perhaps clumsily, referencing the notion of balance that is the supposed 'point' of the novel, he says:

> 'You see, you cannot draw lines and compartments, and refuse to budge beyond them. Sometimes you have to use your failures as stepping-stones to success. You have to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair.' He paused, considering what he had just said. 'Yes,' he repeated. 'In the end, it's all a question of balance.'[118]

Valmik—lawyer; proofreader; sloganeer; then assistant to the murderer-turned-guru, Rajaram—presents a seemingly profound statement of life, but how much trust can we place in his aphorism? Much truth can be found in his Yeats-quoting pontifications, but Valmik's ambivalent position of the nature of life in India and privileged status somewhat belie his sage advice. Peter Morey asserts that Valmik embodies the 'malaise of an India weighed down by cynicism and opportunism'.[119] This certainly seems the case given Valmik's vocations. His early abandonment of the law to become a proofreader for the *Times of India* follows a trajectory of political activism to political passivism, public to private. His decades as the 'absolute best' proofreader came to the suspicious end of constant crying. He insists it is not from 'reading the sorry state of the nation', but rather an allergic reaction to ink.[120] His next career, conjuring slogans for jingoistic politicians, leaves him with an inability to speak—ironically coinciding with the onset of Emergency. He is ultimately a storyteller, and in this sense personifies the narrative of the nation—his name is derived from the poet and first author of the *Ramayana*, Valmiki. He seems to be the pragmatic, authorial voice, but his call for balance is not so straightforward when he becomes Bal Baba's

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[117] Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (London: Vintage, 2006), p. 561.
[118] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, pp. 228-29.
[119] Peter Morey, *Fictions of India: Narrative and Power* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 176.
[120] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 229.

(née Rajaram) mail-order prophet proxy, 'creating fiction after fiction'.[121] The irony of this statement, and, earlier, when Maneck mistakes Valmik's gesture toward his heart as a gesture toward his pens, is possibly a comment on the craft of writing itself. While espousing to Maneck that storytelling brings about redemption, he reaches for his heart to later claim that fiction will allay people's 'sad realities', but Maneck confuses this heartfelt sentiment with Valmik's penchant for fondling his pens, his 'little darlings'.[122] In that Valmik's 'ailments [are] figuratively linked to national decline',[123] he manages to carve out what he considers a balanced life able to resist the 'ever-changing world'.[124] Valmik tries to avoid unrealistic hoping, preferring a passive hope that things will even out. In a way, he is the pragmatic opposite of Potamianou's borderline patients. Refusing to hope for things that may never come about eliminates the possibility for disappointment and unfulfillment. This logic, however, takes the notion of practicing a measured, nominal hope masks the malevolence behind the metaphor of balance.

It is difficult to read his rational, 'balanced', apathetic, and exploitive actions as the authorial voice. Theodor Adorno recognizes the insidiousness of asking people to 'maintain[ ] a balance' in contexts such as Valmik's when 'suffering, evil, and death are to be accepted, not to be changed'.[125] Valmik's philosophy seems stoic, verging on fatalist. Returning to the block quotation above, he pauses, 'considering what he had just said', which is an invitation for the reader to also consider this appeal for balance, that is, to reconsider the position of Valmik, his interlocutor (the middle-class student, Maneck), and the distribution of 'hope' and 'despair' of which he speaks. Later in the novel he is shown to have a political leaning, claiming 'we poor mortals have to accept that bygone events are beyond our clutch, while the Prime Minister performs juggling acts

[121] Ibid., p. 594.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Peter Morey, *Rohinton Mistry*, p. 123.
[124] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 594.
[125] Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 53.

with the past.'[126] Again, the elision of justice in his musings borders on abnegation. However, he calls for a balancing of hope and despair as such or, rather, curbing hope and hopelessness in relation to successes and failures. Valmik's reaction to the failure of democracy during the Emergency by questioning hope fits into Mistry's examination of the decline of Nehruvian utopia. Taken abstractly, Valmik's words are a call for a skepticism of unchecked hope—'refusing to budge' from a vision of utopia is equated with disparaging one's fate in the face of failure. But, when faced with the inequities of everyday life this logic is questioned.

Later in the novel, after the landlord's goondas destroy the inside of Dina Dalal's apartment, beginning the end of the 'family', Maneck revisits Valmik's words:

> Did life treat everyone so wantonly, ripping the good things to pieces while letting bad things fester and grow like fungus on refrigerated food? Vasantrao Valmik the proofreader would say it was all part of living, that the secret to survival was to balance hope and despair, to embrace change. But embrace misery and destruction? No.[127]

This passage presents the first, and only, analytical engagement with Valmik's philosophy within the novel. Maneck is not denying the appeal for balance; he is noting that embracing the change that Valmik purports is devoid of the power relations that constitute this 'change' ('life treat[ing] everyone so wantonly'). Hope and despair are sometimes abstractions and reactions to justice and injustice and cannot be cleft from the forces that engender them. Nehru's blind hope for equality through Soviet-style socialist development left him to ignore 'obvious' failures of justice in the practical sense. A complete hopelessness, manifested in Maneck's suicide, is one such response to injustice that neglects the reality for change. Valmik is not entirely unaware of the uneven distribution mentioning societal decay 'from the top down', and in reaction to Dina's case to keep her flat, he goes so far as to say 'there is always hope'.[128] What Maneck is struggling with is Valmik's incomplete conception of survival. What complicates Maneck's position is that he is not the just and compassionate foil to Valmik's 'objective' and calculating way of life. Maneck's

[126] Valmik is alluding to Indira Gandhi's retroactive Constitutional amendment, which, in essence, annulled her guilt in the Allahabad High Court decision. Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 553.
[127] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 432.
[128] Ibid., p. 553.

internal conflict is his rejection of Valmik's charge that living amidst wanton cruelty is the *way things are*. This ethical stance is in opposition to his inability—and to some extent his disinterest—in combating the plight of those most vulnerable. Maneck's soliloquy is, in Susan Sontag's words, 'sympathy' that 'proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence'.[129] The 'family' ultimately dissolves under the oppression of the Emergency, and Maneck chooses an anonymous death over life amid suffering.[130] His death could be read as an inability to internalize Valmik's passive charge that things do change, and letting go the active, categorical imperative that things *must* change.

The disasters that face Omprakash and Ishvar at the hands of government oppression are merely stories heard at tea at Vishram Vegetarian Hotel. Avinash's fight, first against the tiny abuses heaped upon the workers and students in the university, then against the wider miscarriages of justice during the Emergency, is reduced to an inconvenience and interruption to Avinash and Maneck's friendship. Maneck, like us—the readers of the novel, is embroiled within the grief of the poor, implicated in the networks of power that perpetuate the system, yet detached because *they* are not *us*. Maneck's and our inability to connect empathy with actual, material improvement in the lives of others is the fundamental question in the synthesis of unrealistic hope and abnegation to despair.

Mistry's novel, in a dialectical manner, carefully navigates conceptions of hope in the investigation of the notion of 'balance'. In the novel, suffering allegorizes political domination, and to react as Maneck does by committing suicide is to deny a future, the ultimate act of extinguished hope. But this is not where the novel ends. Omprakash with Ishvar in tow meet Dina at her brother's house. She feeds them, and they chat. It is a semblance of the previous 'family' sans Maneck. Her final act is to return the dishes Om and Ishvar used to the sideboard so that later her bigoted brother and sister-in-law can use them. It is a small act of defiance that may

[129] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), p. 102.
[130] Another way one could read his suicide, eight years after the primary events of the novel, is in response to his failure to intervene in the lives and fates of Dina, Ishvar, and Omprikash (along with his mother and father and his friend Avinash), but this is a much more speculative reading than the one I have chosen.

be read alongside the novel's comment about hope. In the novel, government oppression, caste prejudice, and religious chauvinism and violence are left bare. For the characters, hoping amid this context of injustice is shown to be a complicated act, positive and negative, passive and active, within and despite a reality of suffering that dwells in the tenuous link of nominal and messianic hope.

Conclusion

The chapter began by noting Dipesh Chakrabarty's account of the role and residue of history in the construction of postcolonial categories, and his insights are convincing and apposite to both Ghosh and Mistry's novels. Chakrabarty writes,

> In Marxist and social-science historiography […] the possibilities one fights for are seen as emerging out of the conflicts of history. They are not completely external to it, but they are not completely determined by it, either. In this framework, the undecidable question of how much power the past possesses could produce an extreme degree of ambivalence in the modern individual. For in this mode of thinking, the past could appear to be both an enabling resource and a disabling constraint.[131]

Chakrabarty, with brilliant concision, outlines the palpable tension of the 'burden of the past' that emblematizes Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India*. This tension seeps through the narratives of *The Circle of Reason* and *A Fine Balance*, expressed in the novels' various textual strategies and often read as ambivalence or balance. The possibilities one fights for—one's calculable hopes prefaced on the possibilities offered by society—emerge *partly* from history's 'bloody past', but the future to come shatters this temporal index. As Benjamin notes, the past holds only partial claim to the weak messianic power of the present for redemption, and imbued in the nominal-messianic structure of hope emanating from the novels under discussion is this enabling and disabling constraint. The undecidability that Chakrabarty characterizes leads to more than 'an extreme degree of ambivalence'—instead, fear, anxiety, stasis, resignation, conatus, motivation—one's wildest dreams as well as complete catastrophe. But the claims of the past, Benjamin reminds us, 'cannot be settled cheaply'.

[131] Chakrabarty, p. 245.

Writing specifically about subaltern histories, Chakrabarty comments that they are 'constructed within a particular kind of historicized memory'. This memory recalls and indicts 'history itself as an imperious code' concomitant with colonization and intimately tied to the European Enlightenment.[132] The postcolonial engagement with hope through the imbrication of history and memory explored in this dissertation is similarly framed, in that it remembers the postcolonial promise of liberation that has led to new forms of domination. Achille Mbembe notes the 'distances' and 'connections […] between memory as a sociocultural phenomenon and history as epistemology are complex, and the intersections between historical and mnemonic discourses are manifest'.[133] In light of Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy, the Indian English novel, such as the two by Ghosh and Mistry discussed above, has much to say about this construct. The novels' complexity wrests from the 'irrevocable brute facts of empirical history'. Although Fredric Jameson refers to the novel as a whole to 'manage' those brute facts and to 'open up a space in which they are no longer quite so irreparable, no longer quite so definitive', I argue that it is the reflexive engagement with history, memory, and hope uniquely constellated in the triangulated writing of Nehru, Ghosh, and Mistry that provides this privileged space.[134] Writing through memory in the novel, as will be seen, forces one to reexamine how the various renderings of hope in the texts. Whether it is through nostalgia or attempts to pick apart individual, collective, and archival memory, the novel is intimately tied to the twin categories of memory and hope.

[132] Ibid., p. 93.
[133] Achille Mbembe, 'The Colony; Its Guilty Secret and Its Accursed Share', in *Terror and the Postcolony*, pp. 27-54, (p. 27).
[134] Jameson, p. 164.

Hope and Memory: Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

This chapter approaches hope in the Indian English novels under consideration through the lens of memory. Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* raises important questions about how nostalgia, as an inflection of memory, mirrors the for-life and for-death elements of conatic and narcissistic hope. Ashis Nandy writes of the powerful nostalgia of the journey in the Indian imagination—this is further compounded by the mythology of the Parsi migration from Persia to India that influences the text, as well as Jawaharlal Nehru's evocation of the 'much longer journey' toward freedom and equality after the 'national struggle'.[1] Matthew Arnold's poetic sub-commentary on the reflexive hope in the purview of the thesis is continued with a pivotal narrative poem, 'Sohrab and Rustum: An Episode', which has an important intertextual link with Mistry through the tenth-century Persian poet Firdausi. The poem, which signals a shift from the hopelessness of 'Empedocles' to a recognition of the softer, though uncertain, hopefulness of the power of language and poetry, fits between, as it were, the despair of his earlier work and the pessimistic hope crystallized in 'The Scholar-Gipsy'.[2] Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* heavily influences this dissertation's understanding of the possibilities and impossibilities of memory as a mode of adequately narrating traumatic events. The narrative is almost exclusively told through the narrator's memories, layered and interwoven with the memories from the narrator's family—often retold by the narrator—as well as communal and historical memories and accounts from the archive. All of this points to the inseparability of memory and hope in the Indian English novel, and the abridged hope that memory offers.

These close readings will draw from a varied theoretical framework, prefaced in Chapter One, but expanded through the critical writings of Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin. The

[1] Nehru, *Autobiography*, p. 363.
[2] The latter poem is discussed at great length in the next chapter.

critics' rich work on time in the epic and the novel move the arguments of the chapter swiftly through Henri Bergson's and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's struggles to conceptualize memory. A discussion of the archive via Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* pulls the key concepts—time, memory, past, and future—back to the preoccupations with the hope in the thesis. These theoretical arguments are then consolidated and put to work in the readings of hope and memory in Mistry's and Ghosh's fiction.

In his well-known essay, 'The Storyteller', Walter Benjamin takes up Georg Lukács's argument that the novel is the 'only art form that includes time as its constituent principle'.[3] Benjamin quotes at length from *The Theory of the Novel* (1916), and it is helpful to reproduce an extended excerpt of Lukács's text.

> Thus it is that time becomes the carrier for the sublime epic poetry of the novel: it has become inexorably existent and no one can any longer swim against the unmistakable direction of its current nor regulate its unforeseeable course with the dams of *a priori* concepts. Yet a feeling of resignation persists: all this had to come from somewhere, must be going somewhere; even if the direction betrays no meaning, it is a direction none the less. From this feeling of resignation mixed with courage there spring experiences of time which are authentically epic because they give rise to action and stem from action: the experiences of hope and memory; experiences of time which are victories over time: a synoptic vision of time as solidified unity *anti rem* and its synoptic comprehension *post rem*. *In re*, there can be no simple, happy experience of this form or of the times which have produced it. Experiences of this kind can only be subjective and reflexive; nevertheless there is always in them the form-giving sense of *comprehending a meaning*; they are experiences in which we come as near as we can, in a world forsaken by God, to the essence of things.[4]

Lukács's pivotal sentence in the quote above is the source of the title of the chapter, and the epic, as Lukács and Benjamin conceive of it, is the point of departure for the figuration of memory as viewed alongside hope via the Indian-English novel. Benjamin's arguments that follow from Lukács depend on three premises, which are, of course, arguable, though not within the horizon

[3] Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov', *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1973), pp. 83-107 (XIV). Lukács's original quote from *Theory of the Novel*: 'That is why only the novel, the literary form of the transcendent homelessness of the idea, includes real time—Bergson's *durée*—among its constitutive principles.'

[4] Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel: A Historico-philosophical Essay on the Forms of Great Epic Literature*, trans. by Anna Bostock (London: Merlin, 1971), pp. 123-24; (first publ. Berlin: P. Cassirer, 1920). Benjamin quotes from the same section of Lukács's book.

of this dissertation. The first is that the epic is the form in which the comprehension of meaning comes closest to the 'essence of things'. The second is that the epic is no longer accessible as the form or mode of communication 'in a world forsaken by God'. And finally, the novel, as the dominant form in contemporary literary discourse, approaches this 'epic essence' primarily through 'experiences of hope and memory'. Even if one allows arguments to unfold from this theoretical grounding, the questions revolve around three imbricated concepts that need further explanation: epic, time, and memory. Adumbrating Lukács and Benjamin's notions of the epic with regard to 'experiences of memory'—I shall set aside hope, for now—opens into the subsequent discussion of time, which, in turn, inflect the perception of memory, or rather, the perception of the concept of memory toward the future.

For Lukács, and Benjamin might agree, the epic does not incorporate time at its core as an art form.[5] There is a quality of the epic that creates a meaning so close to the 'essence of things' that it does away with time. This is not to say that the epic is without time: Lukács gives the example of the ten-year war in the *Iliad*. However, he considers this a type of duration, different from Bergson's *durée*, that does not necessarily affect the 'destinies' of epic characters. It merely adds 'greatness' to the journey or undertaking, or it heightens a 'tension' in the story. In contrast, the disunion of meaning and life inherent in the novel form is due to its 'inexorably existent' temporality. That is to say, his famous notion of the 'transcendental homelessness' of the novel is its inability to reach an essence of meaning, or of life, because the inevitability of 'fading and dying'—the end-point of the organic—irrupts the 'life-immanence of meaning'.[6] Lukács might be begging the question in his formulation here, but he is inching toward what is to become one of the most productive Freudian theories: the death drive. Published four years before *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Lukács prefigures the death drive as emblematic of the novel's

[5] Lukács and Benjamin, no doubt, take their cue from Aristotle's *Poetics*. In contrast to tragedy, which generally 'involves itself with a single revolution of the sun', Aristotle states, 'the Epic action has no limits of time'. Aristotle, p. 10.
[6] All of the quotes are in Lukács, p. 121-23.

'struggle against the power of time'.[7] Writing 20 years after the publication of *Theory*, Walter Benjamin recovers Lukács's formulation in the wake of Freudian psychoanalysis.

Benjamin imagines the novel as a satellite orbiting Lukács's 'meaning of life'. Like the 'moral of the story', the novel gravitates toward this meaning, yet the novel can only express its failure to access this immanent meaning through its form. Since the novel 'emerge[d] from the womb of the epic', it retains modes of epic experiences that reference Lukács's 'strong' meaning, e.g. memory.[8] As Benjamin says, 'Memory is the epic faculty *par excellence*.'[9] Memory, however, takes different shapes in the novel and the story. Triangulating the three forms, Benjamin says of the invocations to the Muse in Homeric epics:

> What announces itself in these passages is the perpetuating remembrance of the novelist as contrasted with the short-lived reminiscences of the storyteller. The first is dedicated to *one* hero, *one* odyssey, *one* battle; the second, to *many* diffuse occurrences. It is, in other words, *remembrance* which, as the Muse-derived element of the novel, is added to reminiscence, the corresponding element of the story, the unity of their origin in memory having disappeared with the decline of the epic.[10]

Epic writing would require a 'comprehensive memory'—remembrance *and* reminiscence. The novel has a particularly strong access to the former and the story to the latter. To further illustrate this point, the 'diffuse occurrences' of the story and its lack of 'explanations' allow the listener (and likewise the reader, if the story is written) to 'assimilate' the story into their own experiences, and thus to be able reproduce the story for someone else at some point later. And even when the story-telling ends, one may ask of all stories, 'and then?' Yet, as Benjamin notes, 'the novelist […] cannot hope to take the smallest step beyond that limit at which he invites the reader to a divinatory realization of the meaning of life by writing "Finis."'[11] The reader of the novel 'devours' and 'destroys' its content. Benjamin compares the 'and then' of the plot to the draft that feeds the flame, vitalizing the action. He reinvigorates Lukács's 'constituent principle' of time of

[7] Lukács, p. 122.
[8] Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', p. 97.
[9] Ibid., p. 96.
[10] Ibid., p. 97.
[11] Ibid., p. 99.

the novel by creating meaning through the novel's most obvious marker of its temporality: its ending. The novel signals to the reader that he or she will bear witness to the character's death, whether it is in the text or at the turn of the last page. It is this aspect of the novel distinct from the epic or story in the sense that one comprehends *a* meaning, or as Benjamin might say, derives a meaning, by being reminded of his or her own mortality. 'The novel is significant […] not because it presents someone else's fate to us', but rather, Benjamin continues, it is 'because this stranger's fate by virtue of the flame which consumes it yields us the warmth which we never draw from our own fate'.[12] Of course, this skirts the issue of the function or importance of memory and remembrance in the novel, which will be taken up below. However, it is crucial to understand how one might begin to differentiate the work of memory in the novel by situating it among other related art forms. This chapter returns in detail to the intriguing notion of hope *and* memory below, but as previously signaled, the concept of time as it relates to memory in the novel needs further elaboration.

Time and memory: Bergson and Merleau-Ponty

This section only briefly illustrates Henri Bergson's *durée*, because it is both well known and more fully discussed elsewhere.[13] In *The Creative Mind*, Bergson proposes as a possible analogy to the idea of time as a 'quantitave multiplicity', that is duration (*la durée*) as the image of two reels of tape like a movie projector—one reel, the past, winds up, while the other, the future, unwinds.[14] From this image, one can picture how Bergson suggests heterogeneous yet continuous moments flowing in the direction of the future.

One might see how this analogous image extends to memory. Bergson might view the overlapping celluloid tape of the 'past' reel as scenes or snapshots of a person's discrete experiences. Images 'before' are, in a way, superimposed on the present, though not unaltered by the overlaid

[12] Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', p. 100.
[13] See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, *Cinema 1*, *Cinema 2*
[14] Bergson's original image is that of two spools, but I have here adapted the image of a reel-to-reel projector to suit my purposes.

experiences between the past moment and the now. It should be noted that this process, what Bergson calls 'pure' memory, persists on an unconscious level.[15] Duration, then, allows for the continuous flow of experiences through time, but it also provides a structure for thinking about how the past accumulates behind the present and the process of 'contemplation' (perceiving the present with regard to the past). To put it another way, the abstract concept of memory as a past is unified, mixed, and continuous, but the process of remembering parses this unity into a multiplicity. The coda to Arnold's 'Sohrab and Rustum', for example, traces the path of the Oxus River from the mountains to the sea, and this can be seen as an illustration for abstract 'flow of time' that Bergson formulates. Although, this formulations is complicated by the nostalgia in Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and the formal experimentation with memory in Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*, as will be shown. After locating singular experiences in this multiplicity, to be able to contextualize the perception of the present and to proceed to the 'now' of action, one needs to generalize these images in order to bear on the present stimuli. In this way, memory is not only the storehouse of the past to provide meanings in the present, but also a way of anticipating the future. Yet, the act of contemplation (making discrete the continuous and making continuous the discrete) happens *virtually*.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty is critical of this interpretation of the unity of time. For him, indistinguishable moments of time (virtually distinguished via contemplation) collapses the past, present, and future, 'denying time altogether'.[16] In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, he tries to re-imagine the paradox of temporal unity and multiplicity without the notion of continuity. He concedes that perceiving a point in time necessarily requires a 'before and after', and it requires the perceiver to be, in a sense, outside these concepts to 'synthesize' the relationship between the past, present, and future. Yet, this synthesis can never be complete, for that, he argues, would signal the

[15] He contrasts this with 'habit-memory' that requires physical repetition—e.g. walking, chewing—that occurs, perhaps counter-intuitively, on a conscious level of bodily perception.
[16] Merleau-Ponty was influenced largely by Husserl and Heidegger, but also by Bergson.
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 488.

'negation of time'.[17] He argues that 'time presupposes a view of time'—that the procession of changes happens before the eyes of the perceiver.[18]

The point to take away from Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to time is that the past does not accumulate behind the present like the first reel in Bergson's apparatus. Moreover, the present does not project into the future through anticipation from contemplation of past experiences. Rather, the future is a 'brooding presence moving to meet [us], like a storm on the horizon'.[19] The diminished possibility of anticipating the future is, in principle, detrimental to the concept of hope and a point where I depart from Merleau-Ponty—although the concept of *l'avenir* and its relation to hope takes into account Merleau-Ponty's image of the future-storm to come. However, he does imagine what he calls 'lines of intentionality' with which one 'trace[s] out in advance at least the style of what is to come'. This concession comes with the proviso that 'we are always on the watch, perhaps to the day of our death, for the appearance of *something else*'.[20] To project into the future, that is to anticipate or to have a nominal hope, is a perception not of the future, but an awareness of one's anticipation in the present.

This holds true for memory, that it is not want constitutes the past—what makes it real—rather, it is awareness *in the present* of the act of perceiving the past. The philosopher Komarine Romdenh-Romluc sums up this paradox of basing awareness of the past and future on memories and anticipations, respectively, which requires that 'the subject needs some way of recognising that, although they appear to be of things that are present, those things are really absent'. And here is the crux: 'to recognise this,' she writes, 'the subject must already have a sense of the past and future. They must already experience time.'[21] Merleau-Ponty requires something *outside* of memory and anticipation to account for the conception of the past and projection into the future, and here is where Derrida's work on the concept of the archive may prove useful in thinking about memory

[17] Ibid., p. 482.
[18] Ibid., p. 477.
[19] Ibid., p. 478.
[20] Ibid., p. 483.
[21] Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, *Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 228.

and the past through the construct of archives. The paradox of objective time and perceived time is not necessarily at stake in this thesis, but rather how memory and hope are linked through time as the 'constituent principle of the novel'.

The archive: Derrida and Freud

Jacques Derrida posits two etymologies, or rather, tentative definitions of 'archive'. The first is a derivation of *arche*, which is Greek for something like 'origin', and Derrida likens it to a 'commandment'. The second is *arkheion*: the house or office of a chief magistrate (archon). He then posits the idea of 'archontic' as regulating, interpreting, and safeguarding the archive, or, in his terminology, 'consignation'—the desire to 'coordinate a single corpus'. Thus, there is great power in commanding or holding authority over the archive. Derrida imagines the archive in the strict sense, differing from Foucault.[22] He means the material or virtual collection of documents, for lack of a better object. Although, he extends the archive into a metaphor of a discourse, like 'psychoanalysis', he is, to be clear, interrogating or deconstructing the archive qua archive throughout his lectures on the subject. Derrida's work on the archive is particularly pertinant to the reading of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* at the end of this chapter. The *arche*ological notion of memory and its imbrication with imagination is a heavy and recurring theme in the novel. One of the main characters, Tridib, who is represented through memories of the narrator, is an archeologist by training and the voice of many of the pronouncements about memory that the novel offers.

Derrida prefaces his three 'theses' that 'Freud made possible' with the proviso that each thesis is effaced (or, contradicted to a point) 'on the other hand' by Freud's thought and writing. One of the three theses is 'the idea of an archive properly speaking, of a hypomnesic or technical archive, of the substrate or subjectile (material or virtual) which […] cannot be reduced to

[22] In *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault sees the archive as a governing system in which a discourse, such as science, may appear in a particular time and place. Derrida, at least in *Archive Fever*, focuses on the material collections that one calls archives. Foucault's definition certainly includes this, but the chapter utilizes its narrower meaning.

memory'.[23] He posits an archive outside of memory, and here he speaks of memory as 'neither […] conscious reserve, nor […] as act of recalling'. Derrida considers both a 'psychic archive' as well as a physical one, and they come 'neither under *mneme* (memory) nor under *anamnesis* (remembrance).'[24] The archive, then, possibly provides a way out of the unknown meta- and biophysics of memory and time not to resolve, but to help move past the paradox of time and memory in the previous section.

As recherché as Derrida can be, his lectures on Freud allow one to bring these issues (past and memory) into the realm of archivization and archeology—to the socio-historical. Specifically, he posits the function of the *first* or 'arch-example' as being the impulse or 'desire of an admirable historian' who wants, in effect, to discover and perhaps control the archive, to become the archon, in Derrida's terminology.[25] Archives must be constructed and circumscribed, and as such, they must be placed in an external space to be referenced, memorized, or reproduced. Yet, the archive must be maintained and expanded. Derrida points out that the archive incorporates referential knowledge of itself, thereby engrossing itself—gaining '*auctoritas*'. However, 'in the same stroke it loses the absolute and meta-textual authority it might claim to have'. In this way, Derrida shows that the archive's struggle for absolute objectivity is inherent in the archive's incompleteness. Under the archivist's direction, its aim is to 'produce[…] more archive', which becomes endless. In this process of self-production there is also self-repetition. Indeed, the archive is closely associated with repetition of memory or the past—an attempt to name or label the past under some sort of categorical or narratological coherence.

Understanding how Derrida views memory helps link this idea of the archive as being sub-memory and facing toward the future to come, which will be an important element of the reading of *The Shadow Lines* below. Myrian Sepúlveda Santos argues that Derrida sees memory as 'a

[23] To 'translate' Derrida's terminology, 'hypomnesic' can be thought of as 'sub-memory'; 'substrate' is the 'under-layer'; and 'subjectile' is the 'medium'.
[24] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 91-92.
[25] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 55.

continuous movement, "in memory of" rather than "memory" in itself […].' This points to Derrida's criticism of attempting to render as fixed events in the past and in the present, for 'there is no past independent of the present, as there is no present independent of the past'.[26] Memory may utilize the archive, and it can add to the archive, and there is a necessary relationship between the two via the act of repetition, in that 'one associates the archive […] with repetition, and repetition with the past'. However, the archive presents 'an irreducible experience of the future', and it 'opens out of the future', because it is endlessly expanding.[27] This inversion or reorientation (from backward-looking to forward-looking) of the perception of the archive is a crucial point for this chapter, and indeed for any theorization of hope in the novel.

The archive, or at least his formulation of it, is not exclusively about the past. Recalling the previous discussion of *l'avenir* in Chapter One, the conception of the archive is precisely about what is to come. This idea provides the crucial link, however tenuous, between past, memory, history, archive, future, and hope. Derrida is adamant when discussing this future orientation:

> The question of the archive is not […] the question of a concept dealing with the past that might *already* be at our disposal or not at our disposal, *an archivable concept of the archive*. It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what that will have meant, we will only know in times to come.[28]

The matter at hand is that one can only approach the archive as an archive and risk becoming archontic. However, Derrida deconstructs the possibility of comprehending the archive, in that the archive does not have meaning in itself, but, rather, it must be interpreted, and this interpretation will only come from future interpreters. The movement toward a future-orientation of the archive needs further elaboration. First, the archive is assembled to coalesce 'violently' around its object. The 'injunction of the past' and the future to come are not 'juxtaposed' or added together via the archive, but rather they are 'founded on one another' through inscription,

[26] Myrian Sepúlveda Santos, 'Memory and Narrative in Social Theory: The Contributions of Jacques Derrida and Walter Benjamin', *Time Society*, 10 (2001), 163-89, (p. 170).
[27] Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p. 68.
[28] Ibid., p. 36.

whether psychic or physical, into 'historical memory'.[29] Second, the archivist strives to expand this archive in the hope of achieving totality. Derrida points out the archive's tendency toward self-repetition as a consequence of the archivist's struggle for totality, not only this struggle, but also the 'violence' of the archive's aggregation, its attempts at boundless expansion, and its iterability. This is at the core of the above injunction of memory. This injunction is *always* forward looking, and it 'orders to promise, […] repetition, […] self-repetition, self-confirmation'.[30] That is why 'the question of the archive', as he rightly pinpoints, is about making a particular sense of the past that is never closed—to reiterate, the process of archiving (or, archivization) is endless.

Here, one begins to piece together the digression into Derrida's Freudian archive as it dovetails with Lukács's and Benjamin's hope and memory. The self-repetition of the archive links the 'injunction of memory' with its endless interpretation in the future. Whether or not the injunction relies on memory or the 'safeguard of the archive', it 'turns incontestably to the future to come'. At the same time, this command evokes what Derrida calls the violence of forgetting.[31] This brings to mind the narrator in *The Shadow Lines*, as he researches the events surrounding the death of his cousin, Tridib. In his childhood memories, the impact of the riot that led to this tragedy assumed a disproportionately large significance in historical or communal memory. His college friends do not recall the riots in Calcutta and Dhaka at the time, so the narrator turns to the archive, in this case searching in the library for 'terrible riot' in Calcutta, and only finding a small article from the newspaper the day after the event occurred.

> Every word I write about those events of 1964 is the product of a struggle with silence. It is a struggle I am destined to lose—have already lost—for even after all these years, I do not know where within me, in which corner of my world, this silence lies. All I know of it is what it is not. It is not, for example, the silence of an imperfect memory. Nor is it a silence enforced by a ruthless state […]. I know nothing of this silence except that it lies outside the reach of my intelligence, beyond words—that is why this silence must win, must inevitably defeat me, because it is not a presence at all; it is simply a gap, a hole, an emptiness in which there are no words.[32]

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[29] *Archive Fever*, p. 76.
[30] Ibid., p. 79.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 218.

Neither memory nor the archive is able to speak to the events of the riot for the narrator, though the narrator does remember and manages to access the event through the archive. I return to this limitation of memory in the discussion of the novel below, but here it proves illustrative, perhaps more so than Derrida's complex prose, of the spectral—trace-like—nature of the archive and memory as being neither present nor absent.[33] However, like the narrator, there is always a hopeful attempt to re-write or close off memory, to be anarchival (resisting the archontic tendencies of the archivist or historian), even if it is a losing battle, even if memory cannot rescue the past.

Hope and memory revisited

The novel, which separates the temporal and the essential as Lukács states, strives to mediate time through hope and memory. At its most basic, that hope, as signaled by Freudian repetition, is ironically to lighten the burden and difficulties of life with experiences of death in the novel. How is it that the novel, which fails to give the essence of meaning, a source of hope? Perhaps overly optimistic about the novel's prospects, Lukács claims that 'everything that happens [in the novel] may be meaningless, fragmentary and sad, but it is always irradiated by hope or memory'.[34] His use of hope here is still unclear, but one might draw it back to the 'distant meaning which dawns with a mild radiance on the far side of the search and the failure to find, but also the fullness of life which is revealed precisely through the manifold failures of the struggle and search'.[35] For him, the struggle to discern a meaning is the redemptive feature of the novel, and it is memory that 'transforms the continual struggle into a process full of mystery and interest tied with indestructible threads to the present'.[36] Lukács's claims about the possibilities of memory are intriguing, and while I agree that it may be through memory that the novel may mimic the epic quality of grasping the 'totality of life', I stop short of hanging the value of the novel on some sort

[33] Derrida, p. 84.
[34] Lukács, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 126.
[35] Ibid., p. 123.
[36] Ibid., p 126.

of recuperation of meaning in a past where 'God did not forsake us', because as argued in the section above, that past is not accessible to be redeemed. With eloquence and skill, Lukács persuades his reader with his conception of memory as a messianic, though reflexive hope:

> That is why the unity of the personality and the world—a unity which is dimly sensed through memory, yet which once was part of our lived experience—that is why this unity in its subjectively constitutive, objectively reflexive essence is the most profound and authentic means of accomplishing the totality required by the novel form. The subject's return home to itself is to be found in this experience, just as the anticipation of this return and the desire for it lie at the root of the experience of hope.[37]

The difficulty I have in accepting what would be a wondrous prospect of the fulfillment of hope through memory is that his formulation relies on the dim, but indestructible connection of past and present. It also imagines a teleological historical progression that is at the core of the critique of historicism posited in this thesis, as well as signaling Nehru's complex historical relationship to the hope in Ghosh and Mistry's novels. Walter Benjamin, in the fragments of his 'Theses on the History of Philosophy', reminds us that a critique of this progression 'must form the basis of any criticism of the concept of progress itself'.[38] Lukács sees a completeness of historical memory accessed only through memory in epic forms such as the novel. Benjamin sees the hope for the unity of what he calls remembrance and recollection to be less likely to happen organically. And so, writers like Proust—and I would add Mistry and Ghosh—'produce [these] experience[s] synthetically'.[39] These outlooks are similar, and Benjamin still has faith in memory in that it is the mode in which information is handed down through generations, but knows also that this process presupposes a messiah-like historian who 'will have the gift of framing the spark of hope in the past'.[40] To me, this raises the danger of the archontic historian-archivist as regulator of this notion of historical memory. I now look to the Indian English novel to see how Mistry and Ghosh grapple with the Freudian repetition of memory, which, as has been shown, is constituent of the novel, to examine these 'synthetic' strategies of narrating a reflexive, postcolonial hope.

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[37] Ibid., p 128.
[38] Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', p. 252.
[39] Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire', *Illuminations*, pp. 152-96, (p. 155).
[40] Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', p. 247.

Nostalgia in *Such a Long Journey*

When Rohinton Mistry emigrated to Toronto, Canada in the summer of 1975—the beginning of the Emergency—his trajectory mirrored the legacy of post-Independence middle-class Indians and also the Parsi history of diaspora. The first category alludes to the wider view of class when engaging with the Indian English novel, but here I will expand the more parochial one of ethnicity to elucidate a cultural and moral context for Mistry's predominantly Parsi characters. Thus far, this chapter pins the disillusionment in the novels of the postcolonial promise of equality on the failure of the Indian state to actualize Nehruvian utopia. However, the minority status of the Bombay Parsis, their diasporic mythology, Zoroastrian faith, and close ties to the British during the colonial era greatly impact Mistry's engagement with hope and failure. Yet, as Nilufer Bharucha cautions, though Mistry's texts can be read as 'ethnocentric', they are not 'ethnic enclosures'; they are not impervious to other readings.[41]

Histories of the South Asian Parsis (an ethno-religious term) usually begin with the Islamic invasion of Iran in the eighth century. A group of Zoroastrian Persians migrated from (what is now) northeastern Iran to (what is now) Gujarat state in India around the end of the tenth century CE.[42] This migration is the central theme to the epic, *Qissa-i Sanjan* (c. 1600) that narrates the Zoroastrian settlement in Gujarat. This historical narrative presupposes a mass settlement of Zoroastrians into the Indus Valley, but a broader, longer view of the circulation between Persian and North Indian peoples via the Silk Road gives a more likely origin of South Asian Parsis. The community of the Gujarati Parsis and that of the Zoroastrians of Persia maintained a cultural and economic connection, but the subsequent Ottoman and Mongol invasions of Persia greatly reduced Zoroastrian numbers. During the Mongol Empire in the fourteenth century, the two communities lost contact, and it was not until the late fifteenth century that they reestablished communication.[43] This history implies a more gradual shift of

[41] Bharucha, p. 46.
[42] Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).
[43] Hormazdyar Dastur Kayoji Mirza, *Outlines of Parsi History* (Bombay: The Industrial Press, 1974), p. 236.

Zoroastrians from Iran to India; however, the diasporic mythology of the 'arrival' of the Parsis is a prominent feature of Parsi self-perception.[44]

The next migration follows the rise of the British Raj. In the eighteenth century Parsis migrated to Bombay to take up the role of the local mercantile class (aided by British ideas of Parsi racial superiority). The 'rise' of the Parsis during the time of Empire can still be found in the Tata, Wadia, and Godrej conglomerates that exist today. Likewise, the perceived decline of Parsi prominence correlates to the fall of British colonialism. As T. M. Luhrmann notes, 'Parsis appropriated the powerful side of the colonialist constructions of India, and it is the unintended consequence of that self-identification which now causes them such grief.'[45] What success stories such as that of the Tatas point to, is the adoption of British ideologies of progress, industrialization, and to some extent racism. Luhrmann contends that the Parsis attempted to situate themselves within the colonial structures of power between the colonizer and the colonized, and as this structure has shifted post-Independence, the 'symbolic markers' of self-identification must evolve with the new networks of power.[46] The vocabulary of Parsi identity will eventually 'catch up' with this new reality, but the inevitable 'lag' is a source of melancholia. This hints toward a residuum of decline in Rohinton Mistry's novels—both of the body and the body-politic.

A realistic assessment of the material wealth of the Parsi community does not, however, support the notion of the popular Parsi refrain of loss of wealth and influence.[47] The prevalent belief in the diminution of the stature of the Parsis in relation to that of non-Parsi Indians, combined with the anxieties of an uncertain future and guilt concerning their colonial ties, recalling Bharucha's warning, engenders rigidly ethnocentric readings of Mistry's texts. Amit

[44] Mistry alludes to Zoroastrian scholars (Boyce, Hinnells, etc.) and this very mythology in his latest novel *Family Matters* (2002).
[45] T. M. Luhrmann, *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society* (Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. viii.
[46] T. M. Luhrmann, 'The Good Parsi: The Postcolonial 'Feminization' of a Colonial Elite', *Man*, 29.2 (1994), 333-57 (p. 335).
[47] John R. Hinnells, *The Zoroastrian Diaspora: Religion and Migration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 55.

Chaudhuri in a review of *Such a Long Journey* for the *London Review of Books* observes that the 'Parsis are neither Hindu nor Muslim and seem absolved from the anxieties of modern India'.[48] Chaudhuri's review is playful, but verging on offensive: writing of their 'hunched' backs and 'long noses', their 'bad tempers' and 'incestuous intermarriages'. He constructs an image of a segregated, pale, homogenized, and, most importantly, not-Indian enclave—informed by Parsi stereotypes—that allows him to claim that 'their lives are marginal and emblematic'.[49] In this respect, Nicholas Harrison warns, 'minority groups' are 'liable to be *read* as representative, that is, liable to stereotyping and […] find themselves unable to act as individuals to the extent that their every action may be taken as typical of the type to which they find themselves assigned.'[50] Luhrmann suggests that the crux of Parsi anxiety—'in dress, in aesthetic and intellectual aspiration, in the westernized clubs and drinks and food, in torn loyalties to western and eastern style and in embarrassed ambivalence about the virtues of modern India'—is that of 'modern, elite, educated Indians' in general.[51]

The decline of the Noble family in *Such a Long Journey* reflects, in fortune and in health, this reified Parsi 'tradition'. And the above Parsi cultural context shows that a residuum of decline is not exclusive to this minority. It is a concomitant feeling of Indian middle-class malaise in the wake of a Nehruvian optimism. Parsi colonial grief is one representative aspect of a fixation with the past that opens fissures and interstices to examine the future. Mistry's perspective is not exclusively Parsi, though it is precisely from his minority perspective (both within India and Canada) that his critique of social reality gains force.

Ashis Nandy theorizes the type of mythological and imagined journey above as a powerful marker and maker of Indian identity. With regard to Partition and the village, Nandy postulates a Freudian repetition-compulsion of the trauma of violence that results in a

[48] Amit Chaudhuri, 'Parsi Magic', *London Review of Books*, 13.7 (4 April 1991), p. 19.
[49] Ibid., p. 19.
[50] Nicholas Harrison, *Postcolonial Criticism: History, Theory and the Work of Fiction* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2003), p. 100.
[51] Luhrmann, *The Good Parsi*, p. 41.

conservative, protective nostalgia. I read this as a hope to return to an imaginary idyllic state 'before trauma', which cannot be completely abolished at the risk of fragmenting the psyche.

> To realists of all hues such nostalgic invocation of the village is a dangerous myth. It misleads one about the past and romanticizes what have always been ambivalent, if not hostile, social relations. To those to whom the denial of psychological realities is itself an index of objectification and authoritarianism, the victim's imagination of the pre-Partition village has an entirely different meaning. It looks like a crucial means of coping with post-traumatic stress. It reorders the memory of a journey that constantly threatens to take control of one's life; it reiterates the ethics of everyday life and multi-cultural living. Resorting to an idyllic past may be the survivors' way of relocating their journey through violence in a universe of memory that is less hate-filled, less buffeted by rage and dreams of revenge.[52]

For Nandy, nostalgia can be viewed through realism, on the one hand, and the denial of psychological realities on the other. The lens through which one situates nostalgia greatly influences the perception of nostalgia as either dangerous, static, and ignorant of the 'ambivalence' of the idealized past or a coping and shielding mechanism against the threat of psychic disintegration (formulated in Chapter One as the narcissistic shield). In the next chapter, I return to the imagined journey from the village to the city that Nandy alludes to above, but I want to retain his formulation of nostalgia as a *hopeful possibility* a 'dangerous myth' in my reading of Mistry's novel.

Such a Long Journey opens with three indicative epigraphs, from Firdausi's *Shah-Nama*, Eliot's 'The Journey of the Magi', and Tagore's *Gitanjali*. The first epigraph speaks of a present in decline, ruined by the 'kings who had once possessed the world'. It asks, 'How were [the kings] able to live free of care during the days of their heroic labours?' and 'why is it that [the world] has been left to us in such a sorry state?' The pointed questions place the burden of decay on 'the kings'. The eponymous quote from Eliot is an evocation of the arduous journey to see Christ as remembered by the Magi, but the journey resonates with sorrow. The ellipsis in the epigraph hints at the rest of the poem—or the rest of the journey. 'We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, / But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, / With an alien people clutching

[52] Ashis Nandy, *A Very Popular Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 133.

their gods. / I shall be glad of another death.' The Magis, in some popular accounts thought to be Zoroastrian priests, encounter the birth of Christ, but also a 'hard and bitter agony', a 'death' of the 'old dispensation'. The journey brings about a disjoint between the past and the present, a world changed.

When the poetic voice in the epitaph from Tagore worries that his voyage has ended, he is reassured that hope has not disappeared: 'And when old words die out on the tongue, new / melodies break forth from the heart; and where the / old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders'. The residuum of decline follows the mythology of the Parsis and the trajectory of Nehru's legacy in 1960s and 1970s India, but what, exactly, does the journey entail? Is it the 'unending/unceasing' quest of Nehru and Indira? The nostalgia of the first epigraph and the hope in the third, bracket the cold journey in the middle. 'Encapsulated cryptically in the very title,' Deepika Bahri writes, 'is the notion of utopia'.[53] Here, the 'kings', possibly Nehru and Congress, need to be questioned given the state of present decline, and we must illuminate the cold, uncertain journey toward 'new country'. The illumination for Rohinton Mistry is through the memories of Gustad Noble. It is Gustad's implied journey via remembrance that will 'give flesh and blood to the notion of utopia, without betraying it to empirical life'.[54] My reading focuses on Gustad's acts of remembrance that formally create a disjuncture between reality and realism—the act of mimesis, turning content into form—to enunciate hope for change in relation to an ambivalent present. But, the 'force of remembrance is frustrated' as we will see below.[55]

The novel begins with Gustad Noble's morning orisons to Ahura Mazda and ends with the chanting of the most sacred mantras of the Zoroastrian faith—*Yatha Ahu Vairyo* and *Ashem Vohu*—after the death of Gustad's 'adopted' son, the man-child Tehmul-Lungraa. The story takes place primarily in the familial confines of the Khodadad Building, a Parsi enclave walled from the outside by a 300-foot long barrier. The narration swirls around the residents of the building, but it

[53] Bahri, p. 130.
[54] Adorno, p. 192.
[55] Marcuse, p. 73.

mostly focuses on Gustad Noble and his unease at his present state, his longing for the past at a time when his perceived hopes were still to be fulfilled. The conflict starts when his oldest son, Sohrab, receives admission to the Indian Institute of Technology yet refuses to attend in favor of studying for a degree in the arts. For Gustad, his son's university admission in some way meliorates his own disrupted studies as a result of his father's bankruptcy: 'The dream of IIT took shape […] it was the home of the Holy Grail […] all things would be possible and all things would come to pass for he who journeyed there and emerged with the sacred chalice.'[56]

Gustad's home is filled with the furniture of his grandfather, 'saved from the clutches of bankruptcy', when his disreputable uncle drove his father into financial ruin. The stain of this memory leaves Gustad unable to cope with his diminished status now further tweaked by his son's defection. The acrimonious relationship of father and son, the lingering illness of his youngest daughter, Roshan, and the intrigue and 'betrayal' when the Noble family friend, Major Jimmy Bilimoria, asks Gustad to help him secretly transfer government funds, provide the driving force of Gustad's journeys both literal and metaphorical. Barring brief interludes with Gustad's wife Dilnavaz and her 'magical' experiments with the recluse upstairs, Miss Kutpitia, the story is mostly involved with Gustad's travails amidst the backdrop of the *Indo-Pakistani War*, rising Shiv Sena violence, city-wide decay, and political corruption. These are heady, serious issues that tinge the edges of the familial life, but they, too, become an ordinary and lived part of the narrative.

Mistry's novels are imbued throughout with their Parsi context, and even an ungenerous exegesis cannot but note the resonance of the allegorical decline of the Parsis in prominence and population, the epic mythology of the Parsi journey, and the ethos of 'good thoughts, good words, and good deeds' of Zoroastrianism. But, as I previously stated, this residuum of decline is not exclusively Parsi in character. It is also allied to a middle-class, post-Nehru anxiety in India at large. Bahri shrewdly suggests that 'the political import of [*Such a Long Journey*'s] allegorical

[56] Rohinton Mistry, *Such a Long Journey* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991), p. 66-67.

construction of the problem of utopia lies precisely within the purview of its aesthetic dimension rather than in its availability as a portable program for change.'[57] The narrative of decline, journey, and redemption of the Noble family as an allegory for the nation is not a roadmap toward redemption for humanity. The idea of utopia—hinted in Gustad's reflections on Nehru and the symbolic nature of the journey—is never uttered. Mistry's dioramic representation of dystopia, his microscopic focus of the tribulations of the Nobles, complicates and questions a panoramic reception of reality.[58] We cannot read the Noble family and their financial, emotional, and physiological straits as merely allegorical of communitarian and national decline. This is not to say that Mistry creates a contra-reality: 'the utopia in great art is never the simple negation of the reality principle but its transcending preservation in which past and present cast their shadow on fulfillment. The authentic utopia is grounded in recollection.'[59] A novel written in the 1990s, set in the early '70s, and often harking back to Nehru's era, must recollect the 'destiny' of India—those worthy goals—even in its representation of a reality in decline. Any access to 'political import' is through the remembrance of the past, not mere nostalgia or history, but remembrance working through aesthetic form to create a space where hope for utopia can be imagined.

Throughout much of the novel, Gustad's active participation in life is stalled by his inability to adhere to the first tenet of the Zoroastrian aphorism: 'good thoughts, good works, good deeds'. The backward-looking Gustad wishes he were 'back in the beginning without knowledge of the end. At the beginning at least there was hope. Now there is nothing. Nothing but sorrow.'[60] Gustad is constantly treading the edge of hopelessness. He proceeds 'close to being broken by despair.'[61] He journeys via 'circles, U-turns, [and] reverse circles', and never do we get the sense that Gustad actually undertakes that journey toward liberating himself of the grief of the

[57] Bahri, *Native Intelligence*, p. 129-30.
[58] Bahri, *Native Intelligence*, p. 29.
[59] Marcuse, p. 73.
[60] Mistry, *Such a Long Journey*, p. 55.
[61] Ibid., p. 179.

past, the grief of the hope unfulfilled.[62] After running into his old friend Malcolm Saldanha and visiting the Church of Mount Mary, Gustad reflects.

> Alone, Gustad gazed at the horizon. There, the sea was calm. The tidal hustle and bustle could only be perceived near the shore. How reassuring, the tranquility at the far edge, where the water met the sky. While the waves crashed against his rock. He felt an intense—what? joy? or sadness? did it matter?[63]

There are echoes of Nehru in this passage—the incessant strive to bring about an end to suffering. The point, here, is Gustad's intense *feeling*. His previous inability to empathize with the joy, sorrow, love, and despair of others is the disconnect that is emblematic of his grief. After the death of Tehmul, when his prayers brought forth, finally, tears; tears 'as much for Tehmul as for Jimmy […] and for Dinshawji, for Pappa and Mamma, for Grandpa and Grandma, all who had had to wait for so long…'[64] Gustad and Sohrab embrace, the wall that confines Khodad building is literally knocked down, and Gustad removes the blackout paper from the windows. Still, it is uncertain how father and son will reconcile, and whether or not Gustad will begin to engage again with the smelly, dysfunctional world he envisioned.

Adorno notes that 'the impact works of art have operates at the level of remembrance; impact has nothing to do with translating their latent praxis into manifest praxis, the growth of autonomy having gone too far to permit any kind of immediate correspondence'.[65] This is the paradox of hope—the hoped-for will never fully materialize, but to go without horizons is to descend into despair. It mirrors the necessity of remembrance at the core of the 'truth' of art—the account of the injustice of the failure of Nehruvian utopia is at the same time, for Mistry, a space in which to imagine a possibility that can recreate this utopia but *only in the aesthetic domain*.

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[62] That is, until the end of the novel with his ceremonial removal of the blackout paper. But, even this statement is overshadowed by the greater injustices to come in *A Fine Balance*.
Ibid., p. 179.
[63] Ibid., p. 230.
[64] Ibid., p. 337.
[65] As Marcuse puts it, '[Art's] relation to praxis is inexorably indirect, mediated, and frustrating.' (*Aesthetic Dimension*, p. xiii). Adorno, p. 343.

The sacrifices made in *Such a Long Journey*—the deaths of Dinshawji, Major Bilimoria, and Tehmul—and the decline of the Noble family are not hopeful interpretations of a particular moment of India (the 1971 Emergency and war). Through recollection, Mistry avoids an idealism that has eroded since the 'Nehruvian dream of a secular India'[66] mirrored by Gustad Noble's constant longing to retreat to his grandfather's workshop or his father's bookstore. But remembrance can be both liberating and confining. For Gustad, it becomes an anesthetic within his journey toward self-awareness and also, when contrasted with his present, feeds his discontent. The very act of recognizing failure evolves into the double act of re-remembering dreams and resisting change. Mistry says of his own writing that 'there is a great difference between remembering the past which is creative and life enhancing and trying to preserve it which is detrimental and debilitating'.[67] There is a danger of crystallizing the past thus rendering a psychological prison of memories for Gustad, or writing an unreflexive monolith in Mistry's case.

When Peter Morey describes Mistry's first two novels as a 'diptych diagnosing the ills of a nation in the early 1970s', he recognizes Mistry's near-obsession with recounting the decline of worthy goals and the falling away from Nehruvian promises of social uplift. Morey describes Gustad as 'indulging in an ascetic instinct' that is contrary to his Zoroastrian principles, and that the reversal of his 'horror of contamination' and 'urge to withdraw' is the primary metaphorical journey for the main character.[68] I agree with this reading, but I would also add that his withdrawal can be seen as 'conservative' in the Freudian sense. It represents a narcissistic shield enabled through nostalgia. Further, his disengagement with the world around him—his retreat into the Khodadad compound, his fear of the 'dirty, smelly, overcrowded' Crawford Market, his grief and anger that flares up like his limp—echoes his recollection of Nehru's mien after the humiliation at the hands of China in the Sino-Indian Border Dispute:

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[66] Bharucha, pp. 120-21.
[67] Robert McLay, 'Interview: Rohinton Mistry talks to Robert McLay', *Wasafiri*, 23 (1996), 16-18 (p. 17).
[68] Peter Morey, 'Mistry's Hollow Men: Language, Lies and the Crisis of Representation in *Such a Long Journey*, *Rohinton Mistry's* Such a Long Journey*: A Critical Study*, Santwana Haldar (New Delhi: Asia Book Club, 2006) pp. 175-93 (p. 189).

> Chacha Nehru, the unflinching humanist, the great visionary, turned bitter and rancorous. From now on, he would brook no criticism, take no advice. With his appetite for philosophy and dreams lost for ever […] He no longer had any use for defenders of the downtrodden and champions of the poor, roles he had himself once played with great gusto and tremendous success.[69]

Here, Mistry juxtaposes Nehru as an 'unflinching humanist' and a role-playing 'champion of the poor' who never recovered from 'Chou En-Lai's betrayal'. This segues into Gustad's refusal to remove the blackout paper from his windows—an obvious metaphor to grasp. The blackout paper, put up during the first war with Pakistan, loses its original meaning six years on and becomes symbolic as it literally blocks out light from the Noble apartment. The antagonistic remembrances of 'Chacha Nehru' and the scathing parody of the Indira Gandhi government (almost as biting as Salman Rushdie's characterization of the 'Widow' in *Midnight's Children*) enfold the decline of the Parsis—particularly colocalized via the nationalization of the banking sector in August, 1969. 'Parsis were the kings of banking in those days,' says Dinshawji.[70] Mistry does not equate the state with the cause of the Parsi decline; no, the ebb of the Parsis is a peculiarity of their faith in not allowing converts. The extremely few numbers of Parsis in sum and the declining birthrates among the Parsis that choose not to intermarry creates a very real risk of the extinction of the ethnic group. Furthermore, the colonial guilt that Luhrmann notes of the Parsi community in Bombay echoes most in Mistry's novel in terms of Gustad's nostalgia of his family's pre-Independence prosperity. His 'bitterness turn[s] to the past for nourishment.'[71] Remembrance is a yearning for the security of the past but also a tool of Gustad's descent into despair, sadness, and grief. His grandfather's furniture, his father's books, his memory of his mother on vacation enmesh with his reflections and derision of Nehru and his inability to relate to his son.

[69] Mistry, *Such a Long Journey*, p. 11.
[70] Ibid., p. 38.
[71] Ibid., p. 122.

The memories of the bailiff's cleats on the stone floor when his father's life was being broken 'into little pieces'[72] evokes the memory of the broken gelatine bowl of his childhood vacation in Matheran—the bittersweet metaphor for the (temporary) end of happiness.[73] Later, in the hospital jail housing his friend Jimmy Bilimoria, Gustad notices the guard, Mr. Kashyap, 'had metal cleats on his heels, and his steps rang out on the stone floor'.[74] Images and sounds hint at an endless recall, yet deferral of memories, and perhaps this is why Gustad postulates that 'you have to be scrupulous in dealing with them'.[75] The problematic of remembering returns during Dinshawji's funeral.

> Crunch, crunch, crunch. A fitting sound to surround death. Awesome and magnificent as death itself. And as incomprehensible, no matter how many times I hear it repeated. Crunch, crunch, crunch. A sound to stir the past, to stir up sleeping memories, to whisk them all into the flux of the present.[76]

And on his final ascent after Jimmy Bilimoria's service at the Tower of Silence, the 'gravel spoke softly, like friends in a room'.[77] The sound of the breaking bowl, and the eating of the gelatine, the cleats on the floor, and the gravel beneath his feet recall longing, defeat, pain, death, and friendship. The deferral of meaning is a possible trap for Gustad; however it is the act of whisking memories into the 'flux of the present' that allows him to contemplate longing not as lost hope, but as hope qualified by memory. It may be possible to claim this peripeteia as a metaphorical journey, but I do not think one can go that far. One must merely be satisfied with Gustad's capacity to remember, rather than preserve, as a strategy of hoping for a future different from the present. Taking a step back from the Mistry's text, I now turn to the 'epic' poetry of Matthew Arnold to revisit the arguments made earlier about time and memory in the novel.

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[72] Ibid., p. 243.
[73] Ibid., p. 242.
[74] Ibid., p. 266.
[75] Ibid., p. 243.
[76] Ibid., p. 253.
[77] Ibid., p. 316.

'Sohrab and Rustum'

Bridging Lukács's and Benjamin's discussion of timelessness in the epic in the age of the novel, this chapter looks to Matthew Arnold's adaptation of a scene from Firdausi's epic, *Shanameh*, into the narrative poem, 'Sohrab and Rustum: An Episode'.[78] Arnold refigures the famous mythical battle between the heralded Persian warrior, Rustum, and his son Sohrab. The young Tartan, who is searching for his father, Rustum, 'challenges forth the bravest Persian lords', so that his father might hear of this victory (l. 56). Rustum, encamped with the Persians and not knowing he has a son, agrees to fight the Tartan man on the condition that he, Rustum, remain anonymous. During the battle, Sohrab is killed, and when Rustum recognizes that he has killed his son—after an Odyssean-like recognition scene—he weeps and vows to drown himself in the Oxus River.

Focusing on the symbolic representations of the two characters, E. Frances Frame argues that Rustum and Sohrab embody, respectively, Arnold's notions of the Philistine and the critic, which Arnold formulates later in his career through his prose.[79] Arnold depicts Sohrab as 'eager and open for exchange', while the proud Rustum 'shuts himself out from anything outside himself'.[80] This relationship, and the intertext of Firdausi, bring Arnold into conversation with Gustad and Sohrab Noble in *Such a Long Journey*, whose reunion at the end of the novel can possibly be read as Gustad's metaphorical journey from closed to open-mindedness.[81] The poem, Frame suggests, 'marks a turn in Arnold's work from the exploration of the isolated self's emotional and existential plight' (as is the case in 'Empedocles on Etna') toward a 'more objective kind of poetry'.[82] Like Frame, I think 'Sohrab and Rustum' registers a shift in Arnold's poetry and thought, but I place more emphasis on this 'turn' as his working toward the notion of the 'best self' and the disinterested critic most forcefully represented by the character of the Scholar-Gipsy

[78] The poem appears in his third book of poetry, *Poems* (1853).
[79] E. Frances Frame, 'Shaping the Self: Critical Perspective and Community in Sohrab and Rustum', Victorian Poetry, 45 (2001), 17-28, (p. 25).
[80] Ibid.
[81] There is also a biographical hint of the battle between Sohrab and Rustm and the relationship between Matthew and his father, Thomas Arnold.
[82] Frame, p. 17.

discussed in the next chapter. I do not intend a thorough reading of 'Sorhab and Rustum', and in fact the primary content of the narrative—the battle scene and Sohrab's death—is not the focus for this chapter.[83] But, I do want briefly to discuss the general statement on hope that this retelling of a Persian epic by a Victorian poet may represent in the broader trajectory of Arnoldian pessimistic hope explored in this thesis.

The focus on the sea is central to this poem as well as to Arnold's poetry more generally, for representing the perceived uncertainty of life in Victorian England. Responding to Rustum's taunts and hubris, Sohrab replies in a thoughtful, reflexive tone:

> For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
> Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
> Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
> And whether it will heave us up to land,
> Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
> Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death,
> We know not, and no search will make us know;
> Only the event will teach us in its hour.[84]

Sohrab echoes an Arnoldian anxiety that we are all connected—'swimmers in the sea'—through a disconnection of our control over our fate. Sohrab claims to be 'poised', 'uncertain' on a 'wave of fate', but the repetition of 'out to sea, / Back out to sea' and the fact that we are all already 'in the sea', suggests that to be washed ashore, to reach a place of stability, is unlikely. Not only this, the passage also foreshadows Sohrab's death due to the ignorance and suspicion of Rustum. Kenneth Allott draws attention to Arnold's note in the manuscript of the poem: 'We lie outstretched on a vast wave of this starlit sea of life […]: we desire the shore, but we reach it only when our wave reaches it'. This line, Allott notes, harkens back to Empedocles, whose 'spring of hope had dried', and so he yearns for the 'mild and luminous floor of waters' where 'held-in joy swells'.[85] Like fate, hope is 'uncertain' and contingent, and although Sohrab's comment on fate (and, likewise, hope) is ambiguous or tentative, this must be read alongside the serene, calm,

[83] Though, most critics—for obvious reasons—concentrate on the battle and recognition scenes. See E. Frances Frame (2001) or A. Dwight Culler, *Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold* (1966).
[84] Matthew Arnold, 'Sohrab and Rustum: An Episode', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 316.
[85] Arnold, 'Empedocles on Etna', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 188.

heroic, and openness of Sohrab's character. Sohrab is driven by 'one desire' to search for 'one man'. He represents the permanence of a productive, positive hope and the reflexivity of the increasingly callous world that stymies that hope—in essence the synthesis of the Arnoldian 'best self'.

At the end of the poem after Sohrab's death and Rustum's lament, the speaker steps back from the battle to narrate, in a pastoral mode, the path of the Oxus River from Pamere to the Aral Sea. The speaker does not imagine us as swimmers this time, but the river itself is personified. Moving away from the episodic time of the tragic 'event', the poem reverts to epic timelessness, symbolized by the Oxus.

> But the majestic river floated on,
> Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
> Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
> […]
> Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
> In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
> A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
> The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
> His luminous home of waters opens, bright
> And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
> Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.[86]

This closing stanza alters the metaphor of the sea as Sohrab originally frames it. The speaker contrasts the tragedy with the conjunction in the first line of the stanza: 'But the majestic river floated on'. This inverts Sohrab's statement of the 'deep waves of death'. Now, the sea is a 'luminous home', 'bright and tranquil'. The hope of the passage lies in the 'long'd-for dash of waves', which echoes, harmoniously, Heaney's 'longed-for tidal wave / Of justice'. Furthermore, the land—damming sands and 'matted rushy isles'—hinders the river's path (l. 886). For a moment, the Oxus is a 'circuitous wanderer' that recalls the 'Stanzas on the Grand Chartreuse', prefaces the roaming 'Scholar-Gipsy', and echoed in characters like Gustad Noble. But, the Oxus River is all these things at once: a quick-running mountain stream, 'a foil'd circuitous wanderer',

[86] Ibid., p. 330.

and an outlet to the Aral Sea. The speaker appropriates an epic timelessness narrated, necessarily, as a journey or progression of a river from Mountain to Sea, and, in doing so, posits a hopefulness when read against Sohrab's death as rolling 'back out to sea'. This constellates the two narrative modes of the tragic event, which bears resemblance to the tenuous connection between epic and story that takes place in the novel.

The poem's publication comes at the intersection between the despair of 'Empedocles on Etna' and the 'pleasing melancholy' of 'The Scholar-Gipsy'. I argue that in its comment on hope, it is the lesser of either of his other narrative poems. However, Arnold claims in a letter to Arthur Hugh Clough that 'Sohrab and Rustum' 'animates' the reader.[87] Perhaps, it is because of the skill with which Arnold emulates his poetic hero, Homer, that Arnold considers the poem in hand a success. I cannot speak to that, but I do see in this poem an optimistic fixity in the language—a hopefulness emblematized by the noble Sohrab (qua critic) and the timeless, 'majestic Oxus'. Arnold's penchant for boldness and action—to, perhaps Jawaharlal Nehru's appreciation—is on full display in this poem, even if there are moments of doubt and melancholy. The poem is largely optimistic and bucolic, despite the tragedy.

One could rightly ask why Arnold finds a less tortured and more fixed notion of hope in his poetry set in the East, and certainly an exploration of Orientalism in Arnold is warranted.[88] Haddad in particular claims that these poems, like 'Sohrab and Rustum', 'present the East as a potential place of respite from worldly pressures'.[89] This may be the case in Arnold's poem, and one should take into account the location of the narrative action (Persia) in the overall statement about hope as it relates to the poet's world-weariness. To follow this line of argument briefly, one sees an Orientalist attitude in his assumption that heroism—'that Greek exploit'—might still be found in the East, while being inaccessible to 'vulgar' America, commerce-obsessed England, or

[87] I return to this statement more fully in the following chapter.
[88] See Haddad (2004) and Colin Graham, *Ideologies of Epic: Nation, Empire, and Victorian Epic Poetry* (1998).
[89] Emily Haddad, 'Tennyson, Arnold, and the Wealth of the East', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32 (2004), pp. 373-91, (p. 374).

the 'madhouse' that is France.[90] Empire, no doubt, shapes Arnold's thoughts on national culture, and this line of argument is welcome, but perhaps better elaborated outside of this dissertation.

Even so, the epic quality of the poem makes the use of memory unnecessary in 'Sohrab and Rustum'. Nothing is 'remembered' as such, and the narrative never calls attention to remembrance or memory. The hope in the poem, as is always the case, is the search for meaning, though it is only 'found' in death. The epic, in which one might have once been able to find unity, is hedged by Arnold's valorization of a warrior-critic whose openness to critical perspective leaves him unable to find totality and meaning. The poem is in part a failure of the epic in the Victorian period, while at the same time it marks (though, not for the first time) the privilege of the episode or the event—'one hero, one odyssey, one battle'—over timelessness. The 'success', if one could call it that, ushers this chapter back to the interplay of memory and hope, which have been shown to be the prerogative of the novel, most particularly now, in the skepticism of memory in the very form of the narrative of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*.

Memory and *The Shadow Lines*

Amitav Ghosh's second and most critically-acclaimed work, *The Shadow Lines*, is perhaps the most apposite Indian English novel for this chapter's discussion and exploration of memory and hope. Not only is the form of the novel written through the memories of the narrator, but it is reflexive and explicit in exploring the adequacy of memory, imagination, and the novel in doing justice to writing about traumatic events. In an interview with Frederick Luis Aldama, Ghosh refers to two influences: Ford Maddox Ford's *The Good Soldier* and Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.[91] In relation to the former, he says his 'idea was to collapse space in the way that Ford Maddox Ford collapses time', and to do this Ghosh experiments with memory in the narrative.[92]

[90] Matthew Arnold, 'Sonnet to the Hungarian Nation', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 114. This poem was first published in 1849 in *The Examiner* and was not reprinted in Arnold's lifetime.
[91] Frederick Luis Aldama, 'An Interview with Amitav Ghosh', *World Literature Today*, 76 (2002), 84-90, (p. 90).
[92] Ibid.

Myriad literal journeys in *Shadow Lines*, though not as pronounced as in Mistry's novel, take place, and it is of little use to try and measure the distance covered or to map the coordinates of any of the characters. Yet, the novel is explicitly divided into two parts, and this structure cannot be ignored: 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home'. Very broadly, one could consider this as referring to the dual migrations of Tridib and the narrator to and from London and Calcutta (though, at different times), but these titles do not in fact evoke any particular location in their respective sections. For this reason, I read the sub-titles as somewhat ironic, but ultimately descriptive of a metaphorical journey of the search for meaning. When the narrator's grandmother confuses the verbs coming and going—thus adding to the irony of the section headings—the narrator comments:

> Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a word for a journey which was not a coming or a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement.[93]

Ghosh is no longer so concerned with searching for the right metaphor as in the discussion of *The Circle of Reason* in the last chapter, but rather the search is for the *possibility* of finding a meaning, a 'fixed' point, from which to make sense of memories. This search as journey is further elaborated after the narrator researches the riots in Calcutta and connects them to Tridib's death in East Pakistan. The narrator notes, 'It was thus, sitting in the airconditioned calm of an exclusive library, that I began on my strangest journey: a voyage into a land outside space, an expanse without distances […].'[94] The research takes the narrator from Calcutta in 1964 to the relic known as the 'Mu-i-Mubarak' that is 'believed to be the hair of the Prophet Muhammad' bought in 1699 in Hyderabad, brought to Kashmir, and stolen 263 years later (in 1963). Demonstrations of mourning, including riots, though without death, spread from Srinigar to Pakistan. Finally, the narrator connects the Mu-i-Mubarak to the riots in Khulna, near Dhaka. The distance and time—1200 miles and one week—leave the narrator questioning historical

[93] Ghosh, *Shadow Lines*, p. 153.
[94] Ibid., p. 224.

memories: would people in Khulna care the same amount about mosques in much closer places like South China? He tries to imagine an event in a city such as Stockholm that 'would bring the people of Milan pouring into the streets'.[95]

The struggle for the narrator to find the words to remember and narrate the riots that killed his cousin Tridib recall the previous chapter's arguments about striking through violence via Heaney and Ghosh. The latter writes, 'it is all too easy to present violence as an apocalyptic spectacle'.[96] That is exactly what the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* imagines, when he assumes that all of his friends must have heard of the 'terrible riots'. It is possible that when Ghosh wrote the article in which he talks about his experience in the Sikh riots that he was also speaking from his experience of writing *The Shadow Lines*. In the end, the narrator—and the reader—get the 'facts' of Tridib's death from Tridib's lover, May. This second-hand account, touched with guilt and grief, told *after* the accounts from the newspaper archives, gives the narrator the 'glimpse' of redemption.

Shadow Lines threads together the various memories of the main characters but is at the same time always filtered through the narrator. It is not just that the narrator is telling the reader about these memories, but that he is always present—in the novel—to recount the memories of the other characters, or to listen (and by listening, telling the reader) to others' remembrances. There are numerous references to memory within the novel, but this chapter draws out three strands that may help to codify, in a way, the novel's treatment of memory. These strands are embodied by three of the main characters: Ila, the narrator, and Tridib. The first, associated with Ila, is a 'subjective' memory. Most memories are, necessarily, mediated through a subject, but this denotes a way of remembering that is ephemeral, ever present, and resistant to 'objective' or other accounts. In a way, it can be thought of as a 'narcissistic' form of memory. The second type is a 'historical' memory.[97] The narrator, a historian research fellow, is an example of an archival

[95] Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, p. 231-32.
[96] Ghosh, 'The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi', p. 61.
[97] Though not entirely distinct from the notion of 'historical memory', it is nonetheless not synonymous with it.

approach to memory.[98] He consumes the various media or modes of memories—stories, imaginative accounts, atlases, maps, newspapers, or other people's memories—with which to comprehend and potentially 'redeem' memory. The third is a mixture of the two: above all imaginative, but also subjective and historical in its approach. Tridib, an archeologist, is concerned with the artifact or object around which one may construct memories, but he also creates imaginative accounts—stories that are often 'lies'—around these objects. He never seems anxious over the veracity of the particulars of his accounts, but his memories nonetheless maintain a value or validity of sorts. The commentary on imagination and memory in the novel often involves the intersection of these three characters. Though, the different strands of memory in the text cannot easily be separated, for clarity, I treat them here as being each somewhat independent of the others.

There is tension between memories and the way in which one should remember for Ila and the narrator. The tension is further intensified by the unrequited love the narrator has for Ila, but it also goes to the heart of whether the act of remembering is in itself of crucial importance. As teenagers, the two discuss childhood memories of Tridib: 'But how can you forget? I cried. She shrugged and arched her eyebrows in surprise and said: It was a long time ago—the real question is, how do *you* remember?' To the narrator, this 'wasn't a question at all'.[99] Though one is compelled to sympathize with the narrator—Ila's imaginative accounts of places are 'neither more nor less true' than the narrator's, his comments about Ila's outlook have a derisory, at times condescending, tone: 'It was not her fault that she could not understand, for as Tridib often said of her, the invention she lived in moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places, she had never travelled at all.'[100]

Being the daughter of an Indian diplomat and 'would-be Nehru', Ila has had a cosmopolitan upbringing that has apparently flattened her memory as well as her notion of time

[98] Archival in the Derridian sense.
[99] Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, pp. 19-20.
[100] Ibid., p. 21.

and space. Ghosh, through the narrator, comments, it seems, on the detrimental effects of a global life of privilege where places around the world are reduced to airport lounges and private schools. This is opposed to the 'magical talismans' of Tridib and the narrator's discussions of global cities with the help of *Bartholomew's Atlas*. Ila's type of memory does not fare well in the novel, and at one point the narrator 'marvels' at her 'easy arrogance' of her belief 'that her experience could encompass other moments simply because they had come later'—that London in 1939 and London in the 1980s are the same.[101] She understands time and memory in this way because 'for [her] the current was the real'. This is why she exemplifies a narcissistic, subjective, and 'present' memory. The narrator likens this to an 'airlock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of the past and the future by steel gates'.[102]

The 'presence' or current reality of Ila's 'memory' is due to her experiences of the world 'through her senses'. In comparison, the narrator claims that Tridib 'experience[d] the world […] concretely in [his] imagination'. For Ila this means that the 'sensual' experience of the world actually contradicts the notion of memory. Experience, which when collected or recollected is synonymous with memory, can always be accessed if it is constructed through imagination. There is 'permanence' in this formulation. However, the narrator says, 'When [Ila] spoke of her last lover's legs, the words had nothing to do with an excitement stored in her senses, but were just a string of words while they sounded funny and then forget as completely as she had the lover and his legs.'[103] Watler Benjamin notes that the 'experienced event is finite', but a 'remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before it and after it'. In this way, Tridib's imaginative memory is the manner in which Benjamin claims 'constitutes the unity of the text'. At the same time, Benjamin calls this impossible way of recollecting an '*actus purus*'. Yet, in a weaving metaphor that Ghosh would appreciate, Benjamin writes, 'The intermittence of author

[101] Ibid., pp. 104-05.
[102] Ibid., p. 30.
[103] Ibid., p. 30.

and plot is only the reverse of the continuum of memory, the pattern on the back side of the tapestry.'[104]

Literary critic Nivedita Bagchi considers the *The Shadow Lines* to be representative of the 'desire to validate the postcolonial experience and to attempt a reconstruction of "public" history through a reconstruction of the "private" or personal history.'[105] Not that it would be possible for Bagchi to go into detail about her understanding 'the postcolonial experience' or 'public and private history' in the space of an article-length argument, but these concepts are somewhat under-theorized. 'The narrative task of Ghosh's novel,' she claims, '[is] to examine every narrative, establish its credibility on the basis of time-space material coordinates, and, finally, suggest the veracity of one narrative over other narratives.'[106] Bagchi argues that this task is in response to a partitioned identity of the Bengali who must create a history of 'fragmented newspapers, oral narratives, "stories", street names', etc. that can only be done through 'reconstruction of the past'.[107] Because of this, the narrator 'develops an intricate methodology to establish narrative validity and reconstruct history, only to finally undermine the West's craving for validity, chronology, and order by taking recourse in a language that undermines the concept of chronology itself'.[108]

This is a rather celebratory reading of Ghosh's novel. Instead, I would argue that the skepticism toward memory, the undermining of chronology, the struggle for validity is not somehow unique or revelatory because an Indian novelist writes it—there is continuity here with other writers and philosophers mentioned above attempting similar experiments with time and memory in the novel. The narrator's 'methodology' does not undermine the West's craving for validity, but rather the reader's desire to capture, as closely as possible, an essence of meaning

[104] All of the Benjamin quotes are from Walter Benjamin, 'The Image of Proust', *Illuminations*, p. 198.
[105] Nivedita Bagchi, 'The Process of Validation in Relation to Materiality and Historical Reconstruction in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 39 (Spring 1993), 187-202, (p. 187).
[106] Ibid., p. 195.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid., pp. 195-96.

And rather than pegging this desire to the 'West', I would instead look to Mondal's claims to focus inward: 'If we remain frustrated by this open-endedness then this perhaps reflects our need for the closure of ethical, political and imaginative possibilities in order to pursue a politics that gives us the satisfaction of appearing to do something'.[109] Furthermore, the critique of time and space posited in the novel by entangling memory and imagination calls into question, and to some extent does away with, what Mbembe calls the 'distinctions between the symbolic and the real, the individual and the collective'.[110]

To a large extent, the narrator is involved with the project of culling memories and reconciling the dichotomy that Mbembe points to. The narrator examines yearbooks, newspapers, stories, postcards, etc. to access a historian's sense of Tridib's death. One judges subjective truth based on the empirical data one has, yet the plethora of information one has of any event—imaginative, archival, remembered, reported—leads to the argument that the novel is not only attempting to find more-valid memories and histories to add to the archive, as the scene in the library toward the end of the novel highlights, but also to the 'glimpse[s]' of 'final redemptive myster[ies]'.[111] This desire for a 'complete' memory of the event is destabilized due to the inability for the narrator to put into words the totality of Tridib's death. It is impossible to understand its meaning fully, and, therefore, he can only remain silent. The narrator alludes to this early in the novel asking (and answering), 'What is the color of that knowledge? Nobody knows, nobody can ever know, not even in memory, because there are moments in time that are not *knowable*.'[112] This unknowability and inability to remember manifests itself in an inability to narrate: 'When we try to speak of events of which we do not know the meaning, we must lose ourselves in the silence that

[109] Mondal, *Amitav Ghosh*, p. 178.
[110] Mbembe writes of memory in an African context, but I find it also useful for reading Ghosh's novel. Mbembe, p. 28.
[111] Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, p. 249.
[112] Ibid., p. 68.

lies in the gap between words and the world.'[113] As the novel shows, these two acts—narrating and remembering—are, in fact, inseparable.[114]

Shadow Lines cannot approximate the unity of recollection and remembrance in the novel form through Tridib's imaginative memory—what Santos might call an openness to the future via memory 'with a reflexive imagination'.[115] Any attempt to narrate memory in the novel 'can only lead to the creation of a concept that entails a teleological version of either the past or the future, with the ensuing political implications'.[116] The narrator's desire to complete the memory of Tridib's death, which I have described as the archival desire of the historian, is destined to fail. But to use Lukacs's phrasing, the inability to remember the event presents a 'strange and melancholy paradox' where the 'moment of failure is the moment of value'.[117] 'I know nothing of this silence except that it lies outside the reach of my intelligence, beyond words,' the narrator confesses. He cannot even fathom the nature or origins of this silence, which is 'why this silence must win, must inevitably defeat me'.[118] The impossibility of memory is not the silence of forgetting or censorship, but a fundamental limitation to memory, concomitant with narration, as a mode of accessing meaning. Though these gaps and silences inevitably 'win', the novel is wholly invested in the attempt to narrate the past through memories, but its failure, as Benjamin rightly argues, 'teach us' that these violent or unknowable events 'must be decided, over and over, by the future'.[119] The truncated hope offered through memory in the novel is crucial to what Benjamin calls the 'humanization of mankind', even at the risk of imagining continuity and furthering the hegemony of the archive.

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[113] Ibid., p. 218.
[114] Santos comments, 'Memory as an act of being is inscribed in traces, or survivals of a past, which mark every ongoing inscription. It does not have any concrete existence in itself and it is always contiguous to the act of being narrated. […] In short, we do not make stories out of our memories, because memories exist only within our narratives.' Santos, p. 175.
[115] Ibid., p. 174.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Lukacs, *Theory of the Novel*, p. 126.
[118] Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines*, p. 218.
[119] Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, p. 285.

This ties the chapter back to the notion that memory in the Indian English novel, is a critical mode of formulating hope; that is, the expression and narration of how one might redeem the hopes of the past through the novel form. More to the point, it is the memory of postcolonial promise by figures such as Nehru where one finds the most productive readings of hope in Ghosh and Mistry. It is important to always keep in front of one's mind the necessary incompleteness of this redemption, and that the various ways one recalls experiences with for-life and for-death implications—nostalgia, imagination, the archive—are inflections of memory concomitant with the nominal-messianic structure of hope.

In the next chapter, I look at the most pressing and fundamental aspect that is an ultimate limit to the hopes of capitalist societies: poverty. Its prevalence is a reminder of the failures of the supposed liberation provided by postcolonial states. With a particular focus on the genealogy of urban poverty, I aim to nuance definitions of poverty, which create, arguably, a more accurate and functional framework for addressing this issue. And, at the same time, I demonstrate the unique vantage point of the Indian English novel in General, and Ghosh's and Mistry's historical novels more specifically, from which a more fitting understanding of urban poverty arises.

Hope amid Specters of Poverty

A substantial amount of the focus of Indian English literature tends toward representations and formulations of village and peasant life in both content and criticism, however this chapter traces a strand of city- and poverty-centric, Dickensian textuality through realist Indian fiction in English. Following Ashis Nandy's work on psychogeoraphic journeys from the village to the city as being one of the most powerful markers of Indian identity, this chapter explores the various ways in which Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry imagine these migrations. From this point of view, urbanization and poverty informs both the literature explored and the hope that is the focus of the thesis.

Writing before the founding of the Indian novel by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, journalist and author Bhabani Charan Bandyopadhyay satirizes upper-class Calcuttans in his Bengali fiction. In *Nababababubilash* (1825) and *Nababibibilash* (1831) he focuses on the habits of the newly-wealthy urban elite, or more precisely, the newly-urban, wealthy elite.[1] His first book *Kalikata Kamalalay* (1823) prefaces these later satires with an intriguing question-and-answer encounter between a villager and a city dweller.[2] The title *Kalikata Kamalalay* translates to Calcutta, abode of Kamala. This opens a complex and manifold metaphor that runs through the text. Kamala is a sobriquet for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. 'Her abode is the sea' just as Kolkata is adjacent to the River Hooghly that feeds into the Bay of Bengal. During the monsoons water flows from rivers in India and adjacent countries to the ocean, and 'Calcutta is full of wealth and money like unfathomable water of the sea'. Money 'circulates constantly like the rivers'. The city hosts 'knowledge…like valuable jewels'. Bandyopadhyay links the creation of the seat of the British Raj, Calcutta, saying it 'was churned during the war between the British people and the Nawab which produced both poisonous grief and nectar-like pleasure'. Conjuring the Hindu

[1] *Amusements of the Modern Babu* and *Amusements of Modern Ladies* in Satyabrata Dutta's translation of the titles.
[2] The inventiveness of Bandyopadhyay's language may have been stifled by its translation into English, the historical commentary, nonetheless, gives insight into early nineteenth-century Calcutta.

mythology of the creation of the sea as a result of the clash between Devas and Asuras ('gods and demons', in the translation), but more aptly the divine and the material, the 'undrinkable' sea is full of nectar and poison with sharks and crocodiles.[3] Bandyopadhyay draws a further comparison to 'shark-like slanderers' and 'idiots' like crocodiles in a forming metropolis where 'money-intoxication abounds'.[4]

As a parable, Bandyopadhyay's metaphor is poignant, and the complexity of the sea, wealth, empire, mythology, and corruption shows how Bengali prose (in its 'modern' form) is intimately related to the colonial city.[5] Bandyopadhyay's metaphor overreaches in what might be called the prologue to the main story (the encounter between the city sophisticate and newly-arrived villager), but the point being made here through Bandyopadhyay's text is to posit that one of the earliest examples of colonial Bengali fiction must be read not only through the encounter with British mercantilism and militarism, but alongside the formation of the modern city.

The debates discussed and the arguments of hope put forward in the previous chapters reach a breaking point when faced with persistent and bleak forms of poverty. It is one of the most shameful conditions of societies which claim to adhere to democratic ideals (to say nothing of those that do not), and it cuts across all arbitrary categorical designations such as First and Third World or developing, developed, and undeveloped nations. The prevalence of poverty, even taking into account the lingering effects of colonialism and the continuing inequality of distributions of wealth in capitalist world systems, renders much of the aforementioned categories moot with regard to human suffering. It is the limit to the potential critique offered by the nominal-messianic structure of hope. Moreover, it remains to be shown how fictional representations of destitution can escape either facile or fetishistic portrayals, and what effects, consequences, or insights, if any, they bring to bear on socio-economic conceptions of poverty.

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[3] Bhabani Charan Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikata Kamalalay*, trans. by Satyabrata Dutta (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1990), p. xiii.
[4] Bandyopadhyay, p. xiv.
[5] Ranajit Guha, *The Small Voice of History: Collected Essays*, ed. Partha Chatterjee (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2009), p. 412.

That is to say, what is poverty *doing* in Indian English novels, and how does it complicate and strengthen the hope signaled in this dissertation?

There is arbitrariness in choosing a starting point at which to begin tracing a history of poverty, and this is even more so in light of the complex networks of power and exchange that colonialism and imperialism engenders. Yet, this thesis has maintained an implicit and explicit focus on the twin threads of capitalism and narrative fiction. In faithfulness to this idea, the historiography of poverty begins with the rise of industrialism in England and the mercantilist-militarist imperial campaign in India in the long-nineteenth century. Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb's two volumes on poverty in Victorian England provide a historical roadmap to lay out most of the terminology, ideas, and actors that shape political and socioeconomic narrative. However, Himmelfarb is noticeably silent on poverty in the colonies. She primarily focuses on the anxiety over working-class suffrage in the 1800s as the context for shifting opinions about the poor. Likewise, the Revolutions of 1848 are watershed moments—the culmination of such anxiety in continental Europe—that shape how politicians and, particularly, artists like Matthew Arnold view the poor vis-à-vis the state.

Poverty is intimately linked with hope, and *vice versa*, not only in the most obvious sense of the unfulfilled desire to be lifted from the gutters, but also in a more fundamental, absolute way. If one considers the capacity of an individual to hope and other factors' roles in allowing this capacity to flourish, then it becomes more clear how societies, and here I focus mostly on the state, are directly responsible for the conditions that make destitution possible. Amartya Sen's work redefining poverty in terms of capabilities helps illuminate this link and ties notions of societal and narcissistic hope with the very definition of what constitutes poverty. At the heart of Sen's argument is the prevalence of income, or lack thereof, as the determinant, and he shows this to be insufficient in the tasks of identifying and aggregating the poor. This chapter expands Sen's critique and how the novels discussed nuance his formulation, but first I must summarize

his approach to get a sense of how rethinking hope is crucial in thinking about poverty in the novel.

A tangible example of why income should not be the sole determinant of poverty is its failure to differentiate relative poverty across largely national lines. The incomes of a certain strata of homeless in England or America and in India or Bangladesh may be roughly equal (near zero), but the access to entitlements and the relative functionings of the poor person depends on the state in which he or she lives. In his early work on poverty and famines, Sen suggests reformulating income-based methods to define a category of poverty which can be measured that takes into account the distribution of incomes of those deemed poor, the gap between the poor and those above the poverty line, and the total number of poor as a ratio to the total population of the community. This seems intuitive enough, but it is a complex and novel measurement of 'poverty' as such. It is certainly true that one can be more or less poor relative to another (even if both are considered 'poor'), and to treat poverty as uniform would be a misconception.[6]

In his later work, *Quality of Life* (1993), Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum further theorize a notion of poverty that shifts focus away from income, and formulate what they call human capabilities. The critical point of moving away from income to capabilities is the incorporation of narratives of the poor, and quite possibly *by* the poor, as fraught as this proposition is.[7] The capabilities approach, as it is now termed, is well established in development studies, economics, etc., and it is a novel and important framework for this chapter with a slight revision. The focus on the various activities and possibilities that comprise living, foregrounds an agency that one might call a strong form of individualism. One must ask, as Ashis Nandy does, whether this focus might presuppose a bias toward a notion of autonomy that shuns dependency. That is to say, framing urban poverty around individual capabilities and functionings might obscure dependencies and interrelated ways of being, which one might take into account for

[6] Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, pp. 32-38.
[7] See Gayatri Spivak's famous essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'.

'maturer forms of individuality'.[8] Even so, Sen and Nussbaum integrate into their conception of poverty a subjective factor that is not merely 'soft' or unquantifiable, but rather it allows for a space within the discourse of poverty studies to engage, necessarily, with stories of poverty. In relinquishing some definitional control of what it means to be poor, Sen and Nussbaum open out this discourse to myriad interpretations and effects. In a way, these thinkers realize the economist's incomplete picture of what it means to be poor, and, instead, defer partly to those more adept. Literature, which can add emotion, affect, humanity, beauty, etc. to a definition of poverty, may be a powerful, far-reaching, and integral component to thinking about poverty. Yet, fictional representations vary in effectiveness, and in some cases one finds flat, rustic, and essentialized depictions of the poor.[9]

Internal and external identities, Amartya Sen argues, are dialectically related, and, as such, people attempting to establish certain kinds of distinctive and purposefully non-Western Indian self-images must be aware of a tradition of Western image-making of the East predicated on 'strangeness'. In Sen's view, there is congruency in James Mills's imperialist notion of 'oriental despotisms' of Indian history and the golden age glory of Hindu nationalism. He highlights a focus on 'specialness' in this image-making, and investigates the consequences of 'Western images of India' on 'internal and external identities'.[10] He posits three modes of 'outsider' views of India: exoticist, magisterial, and curatorial.[11] Exoticist views 'concentrate[…] on the wondrous aspects of India'; the magisterial 'strongly relates to the exercise of imperial power and sees India as a subject territory from the point of view of its British governors'; and curatorial perceptions include 'various attempts at noting, classifying and exhibiting diverse aspects of Indian culture'.[12] . This third category could be said to be less limited by preconceptions, and therefore is not as

[8] Ashis Nandy, *Bonfire of Creeds: The Essential Ashis Nandy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 465.
[9] For examples, one can look to the novels of Kamala Markandaya.
[10] Amartya Sen, *Argumentative Indian: Writings on Indian History, Culture and Identity* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 140.
[11] He is careful to say that there are 'at least three', and that he finds these particularly categories useful for his particular argument.
[12] Sen, *Argumentative Indian*, pp. 141-42.

overtly Orientalist as the first two, but Sen notes that this way of viewing India nevertheless attempts to see its object as 'very special or extraordinarily interesting'.[13] In *The Postcolonial Exotic*, literary critic Graham Huggan explores the global circuits, exchanges, and institutions bound up with the production and consumption of postcolonial writing similar to, and perhaps encompassing, Sen's modes, but with much greater depth. He sees in 'value-regulating' labels an 'exoticism [that] effectively hides […] power relations', and I return to this formulation of the exotic in the readings of Indian English novels later in the chapter.[14]

Sen exclusively discusses Western understandings of Indian intellectual history, but I find his categories compelling with regard to reading poverty in the novel for two reasons. First, the dialectical relationship between self-representations of the poor and the arguably middle-class perception of poor characters in fiction (internal and external, much like the Dickens-Malthus dialectic discussed below), lends itself to this mode of reading. The second is that Sen's framework provides a more nuanced treatment of the perception of identities of poor characters in light of the homogenizing trends (exoticist, magisterial, and curatorial approaches). Postcolonial criticism is supposed to be keenly aware and critical of these tendencies. With very little modification to Sen's framework, one can then interrogate fictional representations of the poor.

I find curatorial readings of poverty to be most subtle, yet intriguing, in that they lack the explosiveness of magisterial representations and the obviousness of the exoticist. However, it is in many ways the most nuanced and in need of edification. By and large, curatorial approaches to poverty in the novel avoid the preconceptions of the other approaches explored above, although there is still an anxiety about the power of description itself. Who is speaking, and how is it that they are able to? The epistemological questions at the core of the Subaltern Studies group and of postcolonial studies in general, shift focus onto the dynamics of power. Though these questions

[13] Ibid.
[14] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 6; p. 24.

must be asked, it is entirely possible that this intense prioritization of power occludes other motivations. Studying poverty or Indian intellectual history would be more than an exercise of such Foucauldian discourses, and it is likely to be curatorial in its approach. This leads to a more subtle question: whether or not this object of study is interesting. Likely, it will be interesting because it is *different*, and as well-trained postcolonial scholars know, this difference is necessary to maintain if one is to do justice to their subject. But as Sen has shown, the focus on difference is a familiar practice to the Orientalist. If one is bound to being curatorial as a postcolonial critic, then after reflection on discursive power it is necessary to make room for what is perhaps the saving grace of inquiry: curiosity. On one level, the socio-economic, cultural, and political causes and effects of poverty *are* extraordinarily interesting, and their creative and artistic representation even more so, but one must always be wary of this 'systematic curiosity'.[15] Curatorial readings still accentuate contrasts, just as Victorian novels and political economy attempted to accentuate contrasts between middle-class and the poor, as well as the deserving and the undeserving poor. I now provide an exegesis of Victorian thought and writing on poverty before turning back to its critical representation in the novel as well as in the poetry of Matthew Arnold.

'The mischievous ambiguity of the word *poor*'

The opponents of the British *Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834* who wish to rest their criticisms in the generalization of the poor held little sway for the Poor Law Commission. The commission report, from which the *Poor Law* is drafted, had no patience for such ambiguity, as the subtitle above suggests. Distinctions must be made, they claim, to separate the able-bodied pauper from the genuinely poor. More broadly, Victorian England is obsessed with categorizing, defining, and mapping poverty, but not necessarily from the standpoint of a statistician's cool detachment. It is noteworthy that the discourse of poverty (not coincidentally) tracks the industrial rise of Britain and the concomitant proliferation of capitalism through Empire. Historian Gertrude

[15] Sen, *Argumentative Indian*, p. 145.

Himmelfarb's two-volume exploration of poverty in industrial England begins with attitudes toward the poor in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) and the implicit discussions of poverty in his philosophical treatise. She then adumbrates a genealogy of thought through Burke, Bentham, Pitt, and Paine to Thomas Malthus. The trajectory of the long nineteenth century, in her view, is what she calls the de-moralization and re-moralization of the poor, which she traces alongside the broader tendency to 'secularize' poverty to the point of state responsibility.[16] Summarizing her arguments in the 800-plus page study she says, 'This ethos emerges more clearly by contrast to the latter part of the century, when the moral categories began to lose their primacy, when "social responsibility" began to replace "moral responsibility" as the basic category of thought, and when the causes of poverty came to be defined increasingly (although never entirely) in nonmoral terms.'[17] It is from her argument that this chapter takes its shape, though notably deviating from her continuing assertion that in speaking about poverty, or narrating a specific history of poverty discourse, one necessarily evokes the well-worn divide of collectivism and individualism.

Himmelfarb's personal politics aside, her seminal historical study is an important investigation of poverty in post-industrial revolution England. She makes little excuse for her focus on the history of ideas, and in particular those British men who focused on political economy. This, of course, is in contrast to later works of similar aim, such as those of the Subaltern Studies group, which approach poverty—perhaps too rarely—through narratives from the poor themselves.[18] Himmelfarb's decision to use Smith and Malthus to open into the social and political causes and effects of poverty in England provides excellent insight into a subject that

[16] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 4.
[17] Ibid., p. 13.
[18] Charles Booth, of course, attempted to collect narratives of the London poor during his study. Likewise, Charles Dickens's representations of the poor in London were influenced by his own experiences in workhouses and debtor's prisons. As for the Subaltern Studies folks, the historical documents detailing peasant narratives did not exist, so the project's famous debate about 'speaking' for subalterns crops up. Still, as much as has been written in the SSG literature, there are multiple articles about peasant histories, but almost no studies about poverty as a category in India, nor other types of non-agricultural poor.

had been hitherto under-explored. Her approach simulates a top-down narrative about a concept and, more importantly, groups of people whose own narratives were seldom represented. However, in my attempts to bring India into conversation with Himmelfarb's historiography there is a danger of producing false contrasts in trying to compare a 'self-consciously non-elitist history' of a space such as India with a 'typically classical understanding of the intellectual heritage of the West'.[19] That is not my intention here. Rather, it is to include the colonies in Himmelfarb's intellectual history of British poverty. Despite such a proviso, our different approaches to poverty find common ground with regard to a focus on the state as the mediator and cause of poverty both in Victorian England and postcolonial India. Briefly outlining how Smith and Malthus shape politics with regard to the poor in early industrial England helps to situate the following section's focus on Matthew Arnold's late-Victorian notions of the welfare state. And in the context of the debates about the Poor Laws in England from around 1830 to 1890, representations of hope in the poem 'The Scholar-Gipsy' find a different inflection. Furthermore, they give shape to the 'social novel'—a genre, if not emblematic of the period and place, then one at the heart of the eighteen hundreds.

The absence of the colonies in Himmelfarb's work must be of particular note to this chapter.[20] To read Smith's *Wealth of Nations* as being imbricated with the political economy of the British Empire as she does, one would have to take account of Smith's constant references to the East and West Indies.[21] The Anglocentric debates in parliament and among the intellectuals discussed no doubt have ramifications for India and elsewhere in the British Empire: not only in the proliferation of Smithian and Malthusian thought, but in economic terms of the 'exportation' of extreme poverty, in a sense, from places such as the Lancashire textile mills to the weavers of

[19] Sen, *Argumentative Indian*, p. 158.
[20] Himmelfarb does discuss the American colonies, but here I am referring to colonies not highly-settled by British immigrants. In fact, the Caribbean and Indian colonies were from the start more 'profitable' than colonies such as Canada or America.
[21] A large section of Book IV of *Wealth of Nations* centers on the colonies (settler and non-settler), as well as other nations Britain would colonize in the future.

Bengal as discussed in Chapter Two. This same criticism could be leveled at novelists and critics of the era, such as Matthew Arnold and Charles Dickens. The specter lurking behind all of the argumentation in parliament and public about workhouses, paupers, the poor, etc. is marked not so much by the moral/social divide that Himmelfarb speaks of, but rather the shifting of the scales of relative poverty to the colonies. To speak to the matter more plainly, ethico-political debates about the role of the state with regard to poverty are prefaced on a bigoted and racist colonial enterprise. This leads Adam Smith to contrast the 'genius of British constitution' that 'protects and governs North America' to the mercantilism that 'oppresses and domineers' India.[22]

Central to Smith's criticism of British colonialism is the lack of free trade. Free trade, in Smith's view, relies on the aforementioned 'genius', which can be taken to mean the various historical documents that make up the laws of Britain at the time. In his opinion the difference in governance, mercantilism-militarism in the East Indies or semi-autonomy in British America, is the critical factor of destitution in various colonies. Smith calls out mercantilism specifically with regard to poverty in Bengal, but it is a counterpoint to his advocacy of an economic system of natural liberty. The force to extend European monopolies to foreign markets and to increase luxuries, or 'enjoyments', is selfishly hegemonic, but his notion of free trade was born with the impetus to make all actors in this world system better off. Yet, this liberal international political economy allows for the colonization of *terra nullius* or 'waste countries' and 'savage and barbarous [sic] nations' in order to facilitate and spread this Enlightenment global economy. One must be made fit for liberty.

Colonization is not a troublesome enterprise for Adam Smith beyond the national debt incurred through war and maintenance; rather it is modern forms of labor that highlights a paradox in free-market economic systems. If there is any hope to be gained for the poor, it is the advancement of wealth and standards of living provided by the progressive economies of

[22] Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, p. 48.

industrial capital. This new economy and the concomitant division and mechanization of labor leave lasting and deleterious mental and physical effects on the laborers. Himmelfarb argues that Smith's main concern against modernization is not alienation, but that the division of labor and mechanization of that labor are the cause of deterioration.[23] Why she feels the need to separate mental and physical 'deterioration' from exploitation and a lack of identification with production (and the resultant psychic effects) is puzzling, if not merely to differentiate her from Marxist thought. The chapter revisits her critique of alienation/exploitation in a later section, but first I call attention to the rapidly changing shape of work vis-à-vis industrialization.

Labor is central to Enlightenment debates about political economy, but it is also essential to poverty. Smith considers poverty to be 'a function of inequality', and this prefaces his belief that one's wealth increases as the demand for one's labor increases. In contrast, other economists posit that wages settle to the lowest point at which the laborer can maintain living, and that in this view, one labors only because he or she must, or else perish. This shift, Himmelfarb says, 'between "labour as a cause of wealth" and "poverty as a cause of labour" had its corollary in the distinction between relative and absolute poverty'.[24] Constructing, as Himmelfarb does, the changing tide of thinking about poverty with respect to the history of political economy reinforces her claim that poverty is somehow stripped to a bare morality during the early part of the nineteenth century. In both views, the implicit binary of the state's role in the solutions it creates for the poor—the hope it can provide—relies on distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor. Yet, the view that poverty is absolute or endemic further differentiates a form of poverty that can be classified as 'miserable' or 'wretched'. At the very least, this stratification provides a more nuanced view, whether you subscribe to this particular premise of poverty or not. Moreover, one strand of this line of thought, posited by mathematician Reverend Thomas Malthus, dominates the political-economic discourse of the time.

[23] Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, p. 55.
[24] Ibid., p. 131.

If Smith is the reagent of the reformation of the old Poor Laws, and more importantly for Himmelfarb the attitude of the state toward the poor, then Thomas Malthus is the catalyst. His *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798 and revised numerous times) 'formulated the terms of discourse on the subject of poverty for half a century', but they also come to shape British politics in India.[25] His revelatory thesis regarding poverty centers on the struggle for existence. To summarize his 'law' of population very briefly, he argues that populations grow exponentially, while subsistence (that is, food) grows linearly. As a result, the increase in population lowers wages for labor, thus causing scarcity of means and food leading to famine and pestilence (relics of his vocabulary), which then checks population growth through 'misery and vice'. His explication of these laws is plain and callous: 'A man who is born into a world already possessed, if he cannot get subsistence from his parents on whom he has a just demand, and if the society do not want his labour, has no claim of right to the smallest portion of food, and, in fact, has no business to be where he is.'[26] To distill this sentiment further, and to emphasize the outcry his essay created, a man, though having no choice of being born, does not deserve to exist should he not be able to eat from the profits of his labor. In this view, poverty becomes a rational fact, a naturalist law: 'At nature's mighty feast there is no vacant cover for him.'[27]

Few sane economists or demographers argue these days for Malthusian conceptions of populations, yet his arguments do need to be situated in the context of the political economy of the late eighteenth century.[28] The title of the first edition reads: *An Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr. Godwin,*

[25] Ibid., 126.
[26] This quote appears in the second edition of the *Essay* (1803), and the outrage it caused likely led to its removal from all subsequent editions. Most editions of the *Essay* in circulation now reference the sixth edition, and therefore lose a bit of the fluctuating nature of his arguments from first edition to last. Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the Principal of Population*, ed. by Geoffrey Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[27] Ibid.
[28] Though, Himmelfarb relates an anecdote of John Maynard Keynes: 'If only Malthus, instead of Ricardo, had been the parent stem from which nineteenth-century economics proceeded, what a much wiser and richer place the world would be today!'" (p. 132) Keynes, of course, was probably thinking about Malthus's support for the Corn Laws and his critique of unregulated trade, and not the callous treatment of the poor. Himmelfarb laments the influence Malthus had on political economy (rather than economics), and hoped instead for Smithian origins.

M. Condorcet, and Other Writers. As the original title makes clear, his essay is primarily in response to the notion of the 'perfectibility of man' prevalent in his contemporaries William Godwin and Marquise de Condorcet. In Malthus's point of view, man's original nature is idle and savage, and since the poor are 'closest' to this nature, they are thus prone to indolence. But the essay is not written only to expose the utopianism of Godwin's doctrine of perfectibility. The 'other writers' upon whom Malthus remarks include Adam Smith, whose theory of progress he criticizes. Malthus is the shady side of skepticism and determinism—that the poor will not progress, nor are they hindered from above, but that they are 'doomed to misery and vice'.[29] Himmelfarb quotes Malthus's revised edition of the *Essay* to illustrate the shift in thinking of the poor as a moral societal imperative to a moral judgment of the poor themselves: 'they are […] the cause of their poverty; that the means of redress are in their own hands and in the hands of no other persons whatever.'[30] There is a type of 'natural liberty', to use Smith's phrase, to Malthus's view of the poor, and this is one of the central dispositions informing the new *Poor Laws of 1834*.

The notion that the burden of poverty be shared by the whole society is gone, and in its place is a morality that begins to fixate on distinguishing between the industrious and lazy poor. To put it another way, the idea that extreme poverty is a function of unequal enforcement of perfect liberty now becomes the impetus and a morbid 'solution' to wretched poverty.[31] According again to Malthus, 'Hope of bettering our condition, and the fear of want, rather than want itself, that is the best stimulus to industry; and its most constant and best efforts will almost invariably be found among a class of people above the class of the wretchedly poor.'[32] The new motivation put forward through the notion of misery brings a new inflection of hope to the foreground. Mere desire or 'want' cannot be expected to motivate those miserable peoples who

[29] Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, p. 109.
[30] Ibid., p. 118.
[31] Adam Smith's example of unequal enforcement is the litigation against workers' organizations in the eighteenth century and the lack of similar action against owners' alliances. Both of these groups were in collusion to raise or suppress wages, and depending on how you read Smith, he would prosecute against both.
[32] Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, p. 118.

will not have their wants satiated by the very laws of nature that makes them wretched in the first place, so the efforts of society should focus on the classes of people who have a chance at bettering themselves. This hope, as well as the fear of slipping into misery, should be fostered. This is no trivial point, as what makes Malthus so relevant to my arguments about hope is his pivotal role in shaping a hope intimately tied to the aims of capitalism.

Upon publication, Malthus has a great number of critics—Tories and, later, socialists alike. Coleridge deplores his ideas, and Engels goes so far as to call his theory 'vile' and 'infamous', a 'revolting blasphemy against nature and mankind'.[33] Even though public intellectuals like Hazlitt, Shelley, Coleridge, Carlyle, Byron, and Engels all decried Malthus's essay, his ideas have an impact on one particular strand of English politicians—the Benthamites. Bentham, Macaulay, and the Mills (father and son) are all influenced by Malthus's *Essay*, and it is through these thinkers that one can project Malthusian thought across the world to India. Not only are the above acolytes of Malthus, but Malthus, Macaulay, and James Mill have enduring effects on British administration in India. Mill's highly contentious (though less so upon its publication) *History of British India* shapes colonial governance and its viewpoints toward the East Indies for decades. In his essay 'History and the Enterprise of Knowledge', Amartya Sen undermines Mill's baseless remarks about the inferiority of India, and the rest of non-Europe, but he also reclaims historical value in a perspectival approach to reading Mill.[34] Attitudes of colonial administrators, such as those expressed in Macaulay's now-infamous 'Minute on Education' and his penal code, which had profound institutional and discursive effects in India and throughout the colonies, can be read in the light of Mill's Orientalism. However, the primary vector connecting these three influential men is not only Malthus's *Essay*, but the British East India Company and then Haileybury and Imperial Service College (then known as the East India Company College) where they had each worked in some capacity.

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[33] Ibid., p. 124.
[34] Amartya Sen, 'History and the Enterprise of Knowledge' in *The New Humanist*, 116 (Summer 2002), <http://newhumanist.org.uk/458/history-and-the-enterprise-of-knowledge> [accessed 10 October 2011].

Founded by the British East India Company in 1806 as the East India College, civil servants bound for India trained there. Thomas Malthus held the post of professor of mathematics for almost 30 years from its opening until his death. His contemporaries, the aforementioned James Mill, who eventually became head of the Department of the Examiner at the East India House, and William Bentinck, the Governor-General of Bengal and then India from 1828-1833, hold considerable influence in the East India Company, and they can be viewed, somewhat broadly, as emblematic of the economic and political approaches to governance in the British Raj. Malthus's supply-demand economic theories, as well as his law of populations, have a substantial impact on the austere and fiscally conservative economic policies put in place in India during Bentinck's control.[35] Mills, whom Bentinck considered instrumental to his views on the governance of India, drafts dispatches that directors in India 'accept[…] without demur'.[36] If these men represent a Benthamite vision for British India, they also mark a watershed moment in the trajectory of the British colonial enterprise. Their intellectual and administrative successors—Thomas Macaulay and Charles Trevelyan—would go on to shape the British Civil Service in response to them.

Macaulay's 'Mill on Government' critiques James Mill's utilitarian approach to politics with wit and precision. Published in 1829, it signals the beginning of the shift away from the theoretical utilitarianism of Mills and Bentham in favor of a more experiential, empirical approach to governance. 'We must find out what are the motives,' he says, 'which, in a particular form of government, impel rulers to bad measures, and what are those which impel them to good measures.'[37] This is the historical, experiential, inductive, or particular aspect of his 'Science of Politics'. 'We must then compare the effect of the two classes of motives; and, according as we

[35] For example, Bentinck reduced military pay and sold Indian cultural artifacts during his administration.
[36] William Petersen, *Malthus* (London: Heinemann, 1979), p. 32.
[37] Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay, 'Mill on Government', *The Miscellaneous Writings of Lord Macaulay*, I (London: Longman, 1860) <http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=99&chapter=48507&layout=html&Itemid=27> [accessed 30 September 2011]. The original essay was published in 1829 and was widely acknowledged to be a knock-down argument against James Mills's 1828 *Essays on Government*.

find the one or the other to prevail, we must pronounce the form of government in question good or bad.'[38] Altogether sound in his reasoning, Macaulay outlines what could be the basis of political science as a practice. However, one registers that the epistemological danger of what is worthy of comparison stymies Macaulay's methods, as evidenced by his becoming the face—or name—of the British civilizing mission in India.

Nonetheless, Macaulay and East India College graduate Charles Trevelyan, along with Balliol College's Benjamin Jowett, attempt to reform British Civil Service by adapting the East India College's model of specialized education and opening it to the Oxbridge elite. Peter Gowan argues that this is due to an anti-Benthamite attitude to 'settle scores with James Mill over the fundamentals of British strategy in India'.[39] But more importantly, this is part of a larger program to create two strata of civilian administrators—the managing, intellectual elite and the subordinate, mechanical workers. This leads Gowan to claim the *Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1853* as a manifesto to these ends, and he considers this the 'decisive moulding influence on the central institutions of the state right through into the twentieth century'. Without hyperbole, Gowan calls this move away from Benthamite utilitarianism to Coleridgean conservatism the 'greatest political intervention of the Victorian era'. It should be 'understood as a dynamic, reforming current for shoring up the aristocratic-oligarchic state and social order against the threat from democracy and the working class'.[40] This clamor for control by the Barbarian class in England against the bourgeois utilitarian program echoes Matthew Arnold's fears of 'anarchy' and his image of 'the Rough'. Gowan's arguments read almost conspiratorially and lead political theorist Alex Callinicos to consider it 'implausible', but the fact remains that the reforms to British Civil Service (and Indian Civil Service) adopt, by and large, the mandates of the Northcote-Trevelyan program.[41]

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Peter Gowan, 'The Origins of the Administrative Elite' in *The New Left Review*, 162 (1986), 4-34, (p. 16). Bentham was once quoted as saying that it seemed 'as if the golden age of British India were lying before me'. Quoted in Petersen, p. 32.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Alex Callinicos, 'Exception or Symptom? The British Crisis and the World System', in *The New Left Review*, 169 (1988), 97-106, (p. 101).

Instruction at the East India College is wrest away from the Benthamites (e.g. James Mackintosh and William Empson) and competitive examination replaced patronage as the criteria for acceptance to the college. After the British government assumed administration of India in 1858, the college reopens as Haileybury and becomes the administrative engine for imperial service.

The above digression has two aims for this chapter on poverty and hope. First, it connects Himmelfarb's focus on certain key figures in British political economy to the East India Company and the later British state control of India (and Haileybury), and it links the parliamentary debates to colonial practice and its later reflection in the novel. To Bentham, India is his utilitarian sandbox, and to Smith (and Malthus, as he cites and agrees with Smith's criticism of mercantilist intervention in the colonies calling it the 'worst of all governments for any country whatever'), the colonies are examples of how supply-demand economics require a global network of trade for arbitrage, and that a new international system of free trade would create liberties that outweigh the domination of 'backward' nations.[42] The second aim is to take Himmelfarb's focus on particular dominant voices in British history and follow them 'outward' from London to India (and back). Many of the philosophers, politicians, and economists mentioned here worked in India at some point in their lives, and almost all were closely tied to the British East India Company. Himmelfarb does not trace the above arguments in her study, nor would she probably claim that they are necessary for her project, but I suggest that focusing on a history of political economy of an empire, one must account for imperialism as such. There is still another glaring issue, though, in trying to speak about poverty in England or India through Smith, Malthus, Mill, and Macaulay: there are few available quantitative or qualitative studies on the issue of urban poverty at the time. One could look to the sociological contributions of Charles Booth and Friedrich Engels alongside the British censuses and Parliamentary minutes, as Himmelfarb briefly does, but much more historical work needs to be done in this field. Later, I look at literary

[42] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by Fred R. Glahe (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992). The bulk of Smith's discussion about mercantilism, especially in Bengal, comes from Book IV, Chapter 7 of *The Wealth of Nations*.

representations, which can be categorize as secondary sources, but there still remains the situation of the poor *in* India, and specifically the urban poor. However, there are surprisingly few such studies to hand.

The Indian census reports in 1871, 1881, and 1891 gesture toward this absence in that there may just not have been many 'urban' Indians. (Urban was generally taken to mean towns of 20,000 or more, though sometimes this is lowered or raised, and in other times suburban populations are not included in urban numbers). The 1871-72 Indian Census claims between five and 10% urban population (compared to 42% in England and Wales). It is not until the 1891 census that extensive study of urbanization in India garners more than a few paragraphs. By this time, Bombay and Calcutta have assumed their respective roles as metropolitan trade centers, and interestingly become worthy of comparison to cities like London. The total urban population from the 1891 Census is stated at 9.5%, clustering around the three Presidency capitals—Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. The 1881 Census is the first to note urbanization, but largely the vision of India as at once rural and rustic—resistant to the vicissitudes of capitalism—remains. One such example:

> There are indications, no doubt, of a movement towards the town, but they are chiefly to be found in Gujerat, where the strength of the Aboriginal element and the comparative weakness of the village system, the results, as far as we can judge by other signs, of a more recent colonization, allow of a greater industrial liberty, for which the wealth of that division affords more varied openings.[43]

The Gujarati propensity for 'greater industrial liberty' rests on a 'more recent colonization' that explains the relative opportunity for urban occupations. But, generally speaking, this is the extent to which urbanization is treated in the censuses. Whereas attempts are made to categorize the population by geography, occupation, caste, and gender, income is not reported. Perhaps the statistician may have seen occupation and caste suitable enough to generalize about the distribution of income in the country, but nonetheless, it is another instance of how difficult it

[43] Report on the Indian Census of 1881, p. 275. All of the census reports were accessed through La Trobe University's Digital Colonial Documents archive at <http://www.chaf.lib.latrobe.edu.au/dcd/mill.htm> [accessed 19 October 2011].

might be to explore the history of urban poverty in India. It is not as though poverty is not discussed in the census reports. On the contrary, poverty is treated as a pervasive, situational fact of India. Even though its causes are rarely explored (beyond famine and epidemic), there is a sentiment of a generalized notion of the control of wealth and accumulation by a tyrannical minority of upper-castes. The finer gradations of the poor in demographic studies in England are not reproduced in India.

It makes sense in this light that most of the poverty-related histories coming from the Subaltern Studies group should focus on the peasant revolts, agrarian relations, rural indebtedness, etc. Nevertheless, the millions of Indians in metropolitan centers such as Calcutta and Bombay surely include poor communities, and these poor must be included under the subaltern category and in the larger project of archiving histories, but it might be that their numbers are either too small to matter or their stories too difficult to find.

Subaltern Studies historian David Arnold in his article, 'European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century' is one of the few secondary sources to attempt a history of 'poor colonials' in Victorian-era India. And though it is through the lens of poor Europeans rather than Indians, at the very least it might speak toward how one can conceive of urban poverty in the era. Focusing primarily on British whites, he posits how Victorian attitudes toward poverty (particularly the compassion that Himmelfarb notes in the second half of the century) take a back seat to the politics of power. Poor whites certainly existed in nineteenth-century India, and Arnold suggests that they represent roughly half of the 150,000 Europeans there at the end of the century.[44] The most conspicuous of these poor—orphans and vagrants—are institutionalized in orphanages and jails. And although this is not a practice exclusive to the British Raj, it is 'especially attractive' because it 'removed poor whites from their sight' and removed them from the sight of the colonial subjects. This latter reasoning is an example of such

[44] David Arnold, 'European Orphans and Vagrants in India in the Nineteenth Century' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 7 (1979), 104-27, p. 104.

colonial power and perception—Europeans in India are meant to be seen as a 'super-race—never aged or infirm'.[45] Poor British whites and mixed-race Anglo-Indians can be counted, at least tentatively, toward a poor population in Indian cities, but there is as yet a proper account of the native urban poor.[46]

Gertrude Himmelfarb includes in her history of British poverty a section of fictional representations of 'industrial novels', as they are sometimes called. She discusses novels such as Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, Dickens's *Hard Times*, and Disraeli's *Sybil* as counterpoints to economists like Malthus and Smith. In doing so, she makes what must be a gutsy justification for a historian in asserting, 'Whatever else may be said about the novels, they were undoubtedly one of the most important means by which the "anonymous masses," in however fictionalized or fantasized a form, were brought to the attention of the public'. But not only can their popularity not be ignored, the novels' representations of the poor were undoubtedly 'assimilated into the social consciousness, and made the concern of an increasingly sensitive and vigilant social conscience.'[47] These literary works may not be history as such, but they somehow manage to sublimate into a 'social conscience'. Ignoring the tepid stance toward literature and the bold proclamation of a cohesive social conscience, which by the construction of bringing the 'anonymous masses' *to* a public excludes these masses from both consciousness and conscience, Himmelfarb nevertheless has a fairly prescriptive reading for Dickens's *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist*, whose representations of the poor continue to haunt the Indian English novel.

Dickens helps marshal this new Victorian compassion through his realistic portrayals of workhouses, factories, mills, drunks, orphans, beggars, and thieves. Compassion, in Himmelfarb's usage, is the 'final turn', which 'transformed the problem of poverty—the problem of destitution

[45] Ibid., p. 113.
[46] Perhaps, if they migrated from the village to the city, they returned to their rural homes when their fortunes turned. Or, what seems more than the most likely case, historians have yet to catch up with the urban poor. Nandini Gooptu has made strides in focusing attention on non-labor accounts of the urban poor in the Interwar period in *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Interwar India* (2001) and Prashant Kidambi (2004). However, more historical work needs to be done.
[47] Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, p. 405.

or indigence—into a problem of equity, and equity, in turn, into equality.'[48] Though Dickens manages this not so much through an unignorable realism that makes ignorance toward 'material deprivation and physical disability' impossible, but in highlighting the 'moral and spiritual impoverishment, the emptiness and meaninglessness of a mechanical, impersonal, soulless existence'.[49] If Himmelfarb finds in Dickens a kindred spirit, it is because his works are so easily 'read into' his moment in time. Although there is not space to supplement Himmelfarb's reading, it is worth dwelling on Dickens's influence. As George Orwell writes, 'Dickens attacked English institutions with a ferocity that has never since been approached. Yet he managed to do it without making himself hated, and, more than this, the very people he attacked have swallowed him so completely that he has become a national institution himself.'[50] His legacy is not limited to the 'social consciousness' of Britain—it is global. After the Macaulay Minute, Dickens's influence on Indian prose increased. An example of this is Kaliprasanna Sinha's *Hutom Pyachar Naksha* (1862). The novel satirizes Calcutta's middle class and was originally subtitled in English as 'Sketches by Hootum, Illustrative of Every Day Life and Every Day People'.[51] This is almost verbatim Dickens's 1836 *Sketches by 'Boz'*, 'Illustrative of Every-day Life, and Every-day People'.[52] This chapter revisits the English social novel's legacies in Indian-English fiction through to Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry, but it is useful to reiterate that the focus on urban poverty in fiction and in the political and economic policies of Britain and the British government in India help shape the representations of the poor by Indian authors in this chapter. And if Dickens manages to alert the public to the unjustly poor and the nasty pauper—Olivers and Fagins—he also has a hand in crystallizing their existence, and inscribing this existence in others' imaginations. This chain of tropes of the poor, like Malthusian thought, proves hard to break.

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[48] Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (New York: Knopf, 1991), p. 33.
[49] Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, pp. 481-82.
[50] George Orwell, 'Charles Dickens', *Critical Essay* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1946), p. 8.
[51] The book has recently been translated into English by Swarup Roy in 2009 as *The Observant Owl*.
[52] Guha, *The Small Voice of History*.

'It was Malthus who made the idea of poverty "ambiguous"', Himmelfarb states recalling the phrase from the *Poor Law Amendment Act*, 'by raising the specter of a population constantly at the mercy of the food supply, and by condemning the poor to an eternal recurrence of "misery and vice."'"[53] Malthus's victory, if it can be called that, over Smithean ideas regarding the poor can in part be attributed to its congruence with the formative phase of industrial capitalism. Urging the poor to rise above their station through hard work and virtue would be an attractive concept for a capitalist class hoping to retain power in the face of bourgeoisie encroachment, workers movements, and the revolutions of 1848. Along these lines, it is the poor person's fault should they not alleviate their own poverty and not the fault of their employers. As such, they become matters under the auspices of the state. The idea here is the uni-directional mobility of class, and the onus of that mobility on the lowest. The logical end to Malthus's political economy is a callous attitude toward the poorest in society. Even so, the Gradgrindian ethos, the Coketowns and workhouses, manage to reinvigorate a 'compassion' that Himmelfarb notes, but to an over-moralizing and romanticized end. 'The new ambiguity was different from the old in one important respect,' Himmelfarb states. 'Where the old had assimilated the pauper into the body of the poor, the new unwittingly assimilated the poor into the class of the pauper.'[54] Authors such as Dickens and acolytes of Malthus play a role in this discourse. Although Malthusian coldness has passed under the welfare state—even as his population theories persist in the 1881 and 1891 Indian census reports and beyond—one must recoup his original critique of Godwin and Condorcet's 'perfectibility of man'. In one sense, the nominal-messianic structure of hope of this thesis is much like the cautious hope of Malthus in revised editions of his *Essay*. His text discusses an improvement to the situation of the poor (for Malthus, however, only an industrious poor), while being altogether more gloomy about their prospects. In this light, Malthus contemplates poverty from a realist position, though he sees the immobility of class as a fault of those

[53] Himmelfarb, *Idea of Poverty*, p. 524.
[54] Ibid., p. 525.

unfortunate poor rather than as a symptom of a political-economic system. For Malthus, an 'ironclad' law of nature binds the poor, but I would suggest this binding force is an invidious capitalist co-optation of hope. At the risk of polarizing, there is more to the 'poor debates' than an unfeeling pessimism in response to an equally dangerous utopianism.

Arnold's 'The Scholar-Gipsy'

Published in the same volume of poetry as 'Sohrab and Rustum', 'The Scholar-Gipsy' is considered one of Matthew Arnold's finest poems, though was not by Arnold himself. In his preface to the 1853 edition to his book *Poems*, the volume in which the 'Scholar-Gipsy' appears, he begins to flesh out his particular *ars poetica*: 'Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting; but, if the representation be a poetical one, more than this is demanded.' Taking his cue from Phillip Sidney and Horace, Arnold continues, 'It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspirit and rejoice the reader: that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight.'[55] One begins to see the origins of his later notion of 'sweetness and light', a phrase from Swift, to denote the striving for beauty and intelligence toward the Aristotelian good life. Arnold has many critics, and there appears an uneasy consensus that Arnold is quintessentially Victorian—'quite normally and ordinarily Victorian' in F. R. Leavis's words.[56] Leavis's backhanded comment is indicative of how modern critics view Arnold's technical deficiencies, his clunky poetic constructions, and his tonal inconsistencies. T. S. Eliot describes parts of 'To Marguerite—Continued' as bathetic, and it is an adjective that pinpoints Arnold's poetic flaw in many of his poems—slipping from sublime to anodyne (as one might have noticed earlier in 'Empedocles', though less pronounced in 'Sohrab and Rustum').[57]

Arnold is mentioned along with Tennyson and Hopkins as representative of Victorian poetry and not merely as a foil to their lyricism. Leavis quotes Hopkins's rebuke to poet laureate

[55] Matthew Arnold, *Poems* (London: Longman, 1853), p. vii.
[56] F. R. Leavis, *The Common Pursuit* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952), p. 30.
[57] T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933).

Robert Bridges's dig at Arnold saying, 'I do not like your calling Matthew Arnold Mr Kidglove Cocksure. I have more reason than you for disagreeing with him and thinking him very wrong, but nevertheless I am sure he is a rare genius and a great critic.'[58] The nickname has since stuck in the minds of literary critics, and hints at Arnold's writing style. Bridges, who may have met Arnold around Oxford, may have a particular insight to Arnold the man, but the surname Cocksure might be an apt description of Arnold's literary and cultural critical writing—his elitist ideas of culture, censure of Victorian poetry as lacking, and classicist views of 'great' poetry. Kidglove, however, is more apropos of Arnold's poetry. It denotes Arnold's penchant for didacticism and a certain preciousness of phrase that can occlude feeling. Less disparagingly, Eliot speaks of Arnold's verse as 'academic poetry in the best sense'.[59] Though, he pulls back from this comment with the addendum that it is the 'best fruit which can issue from the promise shown by the prize-poem'.[60] Leavis and Harold Bloom, likewise, bestow Matthew Arnold with similar faint or damning praise.

The criticism of Arnold being absolutely Victorian or a mere bridge between English Romanticism and Modernism is beside the point. Arnold's reaction to a crisis of modern subjectivity is a poet-critic in awe of Wordsworthian optimism, but one that ultimately sides with poetry as investigation of this crisis rather than a solution. More recently in the *New Left Review*, Matthew Arnold is used as a stand-in for class in Franco Moretti and Tony Pinkney's debates about the meaning of Modernism. In 'The Spell of Indecision' Moretti takes up the argument troubling Marxist literary critics in the 1980s that postmodern and poststructural readings have been too-readily accepted by a new crop of academics to transplant an older generation of Marxists (and *NLR* contributors) like Terry Eagleton and Raymond Williams. Particularly, Moretti laments the focus on 'fragmentary texts' as being somehow now emblematic of the 'promise of free interpretative play' when they were once associated with 'melancholy, pain,

[58] This is quoted in Leavis, p. 69.
[59] Eliot, p. 105.
[60] Ibid.

defencelessness, loss of hope' in the criticism of Walter Benjamin or Theodor Adorno.[61] He tries to corral what he perceives as an elitist maneuver to evoke 'exhilarating concepts of semantic freedom, de-totalization and productive heterogeneity', when the most indicative 'narrative forms capable of dealing with the great structures and transformations of social life' are the 'various genres of mass literature and, more broadly, mass culture'.[62] If these kinds of texts can be considered fragmentary, then they should also be viewed as threatening. Moretti sharply critiques a strand of Marxism in the late 1980s that he considers an 'apology for Modernism'.

In response, Tony Pinkney claims that Moretti is being anti-Modernist—an '80s Lukács to an invisible Lyotard. Situating 'modernity' post-1848, he attempts to question first and foremost Moretti's slippage between 'Modernist' and 'avant-garde'. Referring back to nineteenth-century realist novels much like Fredric Jameson had done in *The Political Unconscious*, Pinkney argues:

> From a great height the transcendentalist narrator contemplates the follies of his characters, mired in passion, contradiction, mutual incomprehension, history. The form then drags even the 'social-democratic' content back towards a classicist order that had not, after all, been surpassed […]. The English response to 1848 is represented by a Matthew Arnold rather than a Baudelaire or Flaubert; but then it more vividly demonstrates how the structures of classicism survive on into—or even generate—the modernist project. The Morettian 'split' […] is of course an explicitly announced principle in Arnold's neo-classicist poetics and the literary-critical discourse he builds upon it: it inheres now in the radical distinction between the disinterested, universalist 'best self' and the shabbily self-interested and divisive 'ordinary self'. […] If there is, in one sense, no more radical principle of social critique than the disinterested subject, which x-rays the fumbling empiricism of English political life with the pitiless gaze of Enlightenment rationality, Arnold also builds into his system a crucial caveat which allows the world of practice and decision to run on undisturbed in its oppressive tracks: 'force till right is ready' is the judicious, temporizing counterpart of an apparently stringent principle of disinterestedness.[63]

Though I am normally inclined to agree with Moretti's critique of overly-enthusiastic poststructuralist claims—and the bulk of this thesis has been devoted to reining in utopian visions of hope in its Marxist or postmodern incarnations—Pinkney's response via Matthew Arnold's poetics to Moretti's argument is crucial. Not only is it integral to the genealogies of

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[61] Franco Moretti, 'The Spell of Indecision' in *The New Left Review*, 164 (1987), 27-33, (p. 27).
[62] Ibid.
[63] Tony Pinkney, 'Understanding Modernism: A Response to Franco Moretti' in *The New Left Review*, 167 (1988), 124-27, (p 125).

Modernism but to the argument for hope put forward in this dissertation. Even if the disinterested cultural critic is an aspiration toward 'radical social critique' that ignores the 'strange disease of modern life' in a material sense, Arnold argues for a meliorating 'force' until such a time comes when, in his opinion, a cultured middle-class takes their rightful hegemonic place.[64] Moretti's retort to Pinkney's criticism is unproductive: he attacks the latter for his 'cheerless diet' of 'plenty of Matthew Arnold' that speaks more to Pinkney's 'desire for strong theoretical potions' than for Marxist criticism.[65] Pegging Pinkney as an Arnoldian apologist, Moretti disregards what are some valid points of contention to his own assertions. Focusing on Arnold's notion of culture as a mediating term for political struggle and the revolutions of 1848 as a historical *ansatzpunkt*, however, may provide a hospitable space to assert the arguments for hope posited by this dissertation.

The discussions of Matthew Arnold above illustrate the dominant modes of contemporary critical strands of thought toward the poet-critic. In the first half of the twentieth century, Arnold's body of work provides a critical stepping stone from pre-modern to modern poetic forms. Toward the end of the century, Matthew Arnold loses some of his literary-critical purchase and instead becomes a pawn in high-low culture debates. Cutting across these two modes, I suggest that Matthew Arnold's poetry and prose have a continued relevance in thinking about how hope and culture (more specifically, hope and fiction) may be a fruitful ground from which to cultivate the skeptical, postcolonial hope proffered by certain Indian English novels precisely because his poetry is often hopeless, pessimistic, and melancholy.

Arnold takes the central character of 'The Scholar-Gipsy' from Joseph Glanvill's *The Vanity of Dogmatizing, or Confidence in Opinions* (1661). As his title suggests, Glanvill's philosophical essay argues against dogmatic approaches to religion, science, and philosophy. He is an early

[64] It is about the middle-class (and its hegemony), of course, that Karl Marx and Matthew Arnold contrast, but to say the least, their divergent solutions, as it were, are prefaced on the same recognition of capitalist interference with modern life.
[65] Franco Moretti, 'Words, words, words: A Reply to Tony Pinkney' in *The New Left Review*, 167 (1988), 127-28, (p. 128.

proponent of skepticism and the scientific method in England. In the course of his arguments, Glanvill relates a brief anecdote about a poor Oxford student who is forced into the 'wide world for a livelihood', and in his association with local gypsies—at once vagabond, extravagant, cheating, beggarly, while having a 'traditional kind of learning'—the Scholar-Gypsy discovers a new, mysterious power: one that could 'bind' others' imaginations through his own.[66] Glanvill uses this bit of storytelling to emphasize through near-hyperbole the aversion he has to imaginative power—the 'frothy imagination' as he calls it. Matthew Arnold's pastoral-elegy includes a summary of Glanvill's Scholar-Gypsy in a prefacing note, which is almost verbatim of Glanvill's account, though their contrasting opinions on the role of the imagination are not discussed at any considerable length in this chapter, a brief comment on the subject is necessary.[67]

Kazuhiko Funakawa focuses her reading of 'The Scholar-Gipsy' on the intertextual and philosophical links between Thomas Glanvill and Matthew Arnold's respective works claiming that 'we can be fairly certain that […] Arnold found a congenial spirit, and looked to this sceptical philosopher as a potential ally and guide.'[68] However, one finds it difficult to reconcile Glanvill's repudiation of the imagination with Arnoldian thought. Glanville, instead, favors a 'scientific' approach to religious matters compared to Arnold's belief in the restorative powers, in the wake of the dogma of both facts and faith, of his particular conception of culture by means of poetry. Critics *have* tended to underemphasize Glanvill's philosophical contribution to Arnold's thought, but even Funakawa's argument drifts toward contrasting Glanvill and Arnold's respective Scholars in order to reinscribe the tradition of reading into all things Arnold an anxiety about modern subjectivity—the ebbing faith and the dominant world of facts that are no doubt in much of his work. Yet, the attention to this line of thought can overshadow other readings.

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[66] Thomas Glanvill, *The Vanity of Dogmatising: Or Confidence in Opinions* (London: Henry Eversden, 1661), pp. 196-98.
[67] For clarity, 'Scholar-Gypsy' is the spelling Glanvill used and 'Scholar-Gipsy' is the spelling Arnold preferred. I shall maintain the different spellings so there is less confusion as to which Scholar I am discussing.
[68] Kazuhiko Funakawa, 'The Metamorphoses of the Scholar-Gipsy' in *Essays in Criticism*, 55 (2005), 117-35 (p. 119).

Historicization of the Romani in Arnold's work, however, may be a more fruitful line of inquiry. The figuration of gypsy characters appears four times in Arnold's poetry: 'To a Gispy Child by the Sea-Shore', 'Resignation', 'The Scholar-Gipsy', and 'Thyrsis'. Antony Harrison traces Arnold's evolving Gypsies and claims that 'They serve him […] as crucial ideological tropes that engage conventional stereotypes of a threatening alien Other in Victorian England'.[69] That is, Arnold uses the trope of the gypsy (and the anxiety toward the Romani during the 1830s and 1840s in England) to fit his critique of modern life. His poems should be read in light of the growing 'problem' of economic migrants from the British Isles and returning soldiers from the Napoleonic War manifest in the *Vagrancy Act of 1824*, as well as the changing sentiment in Victorian literature from rascal and scourge to romantic and pastoral figures. Harrison conjures the specter of the 'Other' with regard to Arnold's work, though his usage is somewhat unclear. One can certainly read otherness into Arnold's representations, but I would suggest a more banal Orientalism than a 'threatening alien Other'. Comparing the two 'Gipsies' of Arnold's poetry—the destitute gypsy on the Isle of Man and the Scholar-Gipsy—neither speak nor are spoken to (at least, directly). They are proxies for his deep-seated concern about the prospect of modern life.[70] The 'Gipsy child', as he called it, and 'Resignation (To Fausta)' evoke Wordsworth's Gypsy poems, but with a lamenting rather than disdainful tone. The realism of the Gipsy child is conflated to sorrowful musings ('—Thou hast foreknown the vanity of hope, / Foreseen thy harvest—yet proceed'st to live.'[71]) that culminate in the very title of his next 'Gipsy poem': resignation. 'The Scholar-Gipsy', however, does not fabricate an essentialized gypsy as a character symbolic of the dark side of modern life, but rather as a nostalgic counterpoint to modernity. Both figures, child and scholar, suggest a hope notably melancholic and identifiably Arnoldian.

[69] Antony H. Harrison, *Victorian Poets and the Politics of Culture: Discourse and Ideology* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1998), p. 103.
[70] Deborah Epstein Nord and Isobel Armstrong, respectively, make similar points.
[71] Arnold, 'To a Gipsy-Child by the Sea-Shore', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 25.

And like 'Empedocles' and 'Palladium', they raise pertinent questions about hope that inflect my readings of Ghosh and Mistry below.

The poem begins with the speaker in the fields on the Cumnor Hills talking to an unidentified shepherd. In the first three stanzas what begins as a pastoral fades as the speaker gazes upon the Oxford towers and relays Glanvill's tale of the Scholar-Gipsy. In lines 32-130 the speaker imagines the Scholar-Gipsy's peregrinations around Oxford and maps out the terrain of the wandering Scholar. In the fourteenth stanza, Arnold's speaker jolts the reader back to the present, saying 'But what—a dream! Two hundred years are flown' (ln 131). The speaker contemplates the immortality of the Scholar-Gipsy, but this gives way to the nucleus of Arnold's poem. Stanza 17 outlines why the Scholar-Gipsy is an important contemporaneous complement, or, perhaps, antithesis, to Arnold's 'Victorian' conception of life: comparing the Scholar with 'mortal men'. Arnold's movement toward social critique (after detailing the story and origins of the Scholar-Gipsy) represents a shift in the poem's subject. He is no longer concerned with the Scholar as such, but with the contrast the Scholar-Gipsy presents to modern life. Roger Wilkenfield claims that the pastoral and lyrical beginning stanzas are used as a way for Arnold to mount an 'attack' on modern man.[72] Wilkenfield sets up the Scholar-Gipsy narrative and the philosophical arguments as, first, to tell a story and, second, to posit a criticism.[73] This line of reasoning echoes Matthew Arnold's Sidney-esque belief that poems should delight and instruct. The Scholar-Gipsy fades away by the end of the poem, and all that remains is the inability of modern life to attain that which was available to the 'immortal' Scholar.

> For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
> Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
> Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
> Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
> Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
> O life unlike to ours!
> Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
> Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,

[72] Roger B. Wilkenfield, 'The Argument of "The Scholar-Gipsy"' in *Victorian Poetry*, 7 (1969) 117-28, (p. 123).
[73] Ibid.

> And each half lives a hundred different lives;
> Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.[74]

Kenneth Allot notes the similarities between Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' and 'The Scholar-Gypsy'.[75] The resonance in form and phrase are convincing, and Arnold's stanzas take a similar shape to Keats's. Arnold's poem is primarily in iambic pentameter, and each stanza contains two strands of thought around a truncated pivot in line six. The first part is a sestet followed by half of an octave. The rhyme scheme extends the theme of the two-part stanza: the first six lines rhyming *a-b-c-b-c-a* and the second half, *d/e/e/d*. Yet, the stanza's form, which resembles a sonnet's problem-solution structure, is subverted by the tension held between the Scholar and ordinary humans.[76] Rhyming lines one and six and seven and 10, respectively, points tentatively to closure, but the aforementioned tension of the content of the poem would have it otherwise.

The first part of the above excerpt (ln 161-66) discusses the Scholar-Gipsy's feat of having managed to 'leave the world' without being captured by the 'sick fatigue' and 'languid doubt'. For the speaker, this fatigue and doubt characterize modernity, or, at least England in the mid-nineteenth century. The line break after 'the world, with powers' juxtaposes the repetition in the end of the second line: 'the world without'. This signals two dichotomous worlds, but it is an illusion of form. It is an irony of the construction of the sentence, as it is the Scholar-Gipsy who has 'powers / Fresh' and 'undiverted'. To 'leave the world', of course, connotes dying, but the three stanzas prior to the one above question the mortality—and, likewise, the historical veracity—of the Scholar-Gipsy. 'Thou hast not lived', the speaker says but only that 'we imagine thee […] / […] living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page' (ln. 158-59). To expound on Arnold's bloated signifier of 'the world' would fill volumes beyond this thesis, so to speak concisely, but not too reductively, one can recall Arnold's early poem 'Stanzas in Memory of the Author of

[74] Arnold, 'The Scholar-Gipsy', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 340.
[75] Kenneth Allott, ed., *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 333.
[76] Allott notes that Keats's 10-line stanza was an 'experimentation with the structure of the sonnet', p. 333.

"Obermann'" (1852). The poem outlines the very core of the Arnoldian crisis, the 'hopeless tangle of our age':[77]

> Ah! Two desires toss about
> The poet's feverish blood.
> One drives him to the world without,
> And one to solitude.[78]

In this stanza (lines 93-96), Arnold outlines a theme that he returns to throughout his work. If Arnold's critics cannot stop talking about the 'absence' of religion and the inadequacy of science possibly being reconciled through poetry, it is because Arnold himself could not desist. Yet, his literary criticism, which at times claims a poetic resolution to this crisis, is at odds with Arnold the poet. The chapter explores this line of thought below through one his most insistent critics, T. S. Eliot. Alluding to some of the poet-avatars in Arnold's poetry (e.g. Empedocles, Callicles, the Scholar-Gipsy, and Thyrsis) illustrates some of the ways in which the poet navigates these 'two desires': solitude and world weariness. This discussion then moves toward the consideration of hope and hopelessness in the Indian English novel. Empedocles, struggling between 'the world and thee', chose suicide, Callicles's Romantic lyricism at the end of the poem holds a hint of sinister irony (in that he, too, may become another Empedocles), and Thyrsis—Arnold's elegy to poet Arthur Hugh Clough—as well, chose to face the world and failed. Negotiating the world and the self has 'baffled' those who have tried, yet the Scholar-Gipsy retains his immortality. He is the poet incarnate, or rather, the poet's poet—'alive' still 12 years later in 'Thyrsis'. The Scholar is the closest Arnold comes in his poetry to messianic hope.

But, before claiming such a sanguine reading of the poem, one must face the second part of the above stanza. The half-octave, lines 167-70, at first it seems hermetically sealed—the 'who' in the beginning of lines 167 and 170; the aforementioned contained rhyme scheme; the internal rhyme/repetition: 'strives', 'lives', 'thee'; and the middle rhyming of 'idly' with 'thee' and 'strives' with 'lives'. The symmetry is near-perfect, and it is as if bouncing from wall to wall mimicking an

[77] Arnold, 'Stanzas in Memory of the Author of "Obermann"', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 133.
[78] Ibid., p. 134.

'idle fluctuation'. Arnold also counterposes fluctuating with the 'roaming', 'wandering', or 'straying' Scholar-Gipsy, but it seems the Scholar-Gipsy strays with intention, or as the speaker says, 'scope'. The tight and tidy construction belie its unsettled and unsettling message: that we are living half-lives without hope.

The speaker differentiates waiting and waiting 'in hope'. The preposition 'in' implies a condition or state of hope in which one can claim to be. The speaker goes on to explain that the Scholar 'wait[s] for the spark from heaven!' repeating an earlier line during the Scholar's ambulations that foreshadows the aim of his movements outlined above: 'waiting for the spark from heaven to fall' (ln 120). Man and Scholar wait in kind ('Yes, we await it!—but it still delays, / And then we suffer!'), but the Scholar is afforded a hopefulness that mankind is denied. Even the 'wisest' 'amongst us' can only 'lay bare' 'how the dying spark of hope was fed' (ln 188). Arnold shifts hope, here, from a condition to an object. The transition between the spark of heaven and the spark of hope, which one might consider a minor inconsistency, is made complete in lines 194-96:

> With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,
> Sad patience, too near neighbour to despair—
> But none has hope like thine![79]

Such melancholy in these three lines: sorrowful or lamenting and reticent patience for an unnamed 'only friend'. Or, alternatively, is 'sad patience' our only friend? This seems a confusing reading, but the ambiguity of this 'friend' (is it the Scholar-Gipsy, the spark from heaven, or something unnamed?) remains questioned. Nevertheless, one is left waiting—'Too near neighbour to despair', indeed, and only the Scholar *has* the necessary hope. This is by virtue of the Scholar's immortality, which is a product of his immateriality. Whether from Glanvill or the speaker's imagination, the Scholar was 'born in days […] / Before this strange disease of modern life', and he can only exist in solitude. Away from Arnold's overpowering world, the Scholar

[79] Arnold, 'The Scholar-Gipsy', p. 341.

exists 'Still nursing the unconquerable hope, / Still clutching the inviolable shade'. It is, again, ambiguous to whether 'unconquerable hope' and 'inviolable shade' are the same idea, though the different actions—nursing and clutching—suggest they are distinct. Harboring and nourishing 'unconquerable hope' is the only way to withstand the imperative clutching of the 'inviolable shade' of solitude. These lines recall Arnold's earlier poem 'A Summer Night', where the 'freed prisoner' of the world takes to the sea:

> Grasping the rudder hard,
> Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
> Still standing for some false, impossible shore.[80]

'A Summer Night' echoes both 'Obermann' and 'The Scholar-Gipsy', and the two desires of the poet raise a pessimistic question: 'Madman or slave, must man be one?' The speaker in 'The Scholar-Gipsy' famously lets the Scholar slip away, and in the final two stanzas the poem compares the Scholar to a Tyrian trader who sees a Grecian coaster. Wary of the two people's troubled history, the trader 'snatched his rudder' and set sail 'to where the Atlantic raves' toward the land where 'dark Iberians come'.[81] It is a slightly jarring ending, and many scholars fixate on whether the final stanzas are congruent with the rest of the poem. But, the analogy of the Tyrian trader is fitting in light of 'A Summer Night' and 'Obermann'. The twin desires of solitude and hope dominate the poem more than the Scholar-Gipsy himself.

Arnold says in a letter to Arthur Hugh Clough, 'I am glad you like the Gipsy Scholar—but what does it *do* for you? Homer *animates*—Shakespeare *animates*—in its poor way I think Sohrab & Rustum *animates*—the Gipsy Scholar at best awakens a pleasing melancholy.'[82] This feeds into Arnold's belief that poetry, and literature more broadly should *do* something, which is a touchstone for this thesis. Wordsworth heals, to paraphrase a line from Arnold's 'Memorial

[80] Matthew Arnold, 'A Summer Night', *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, p. 270.
[81] E. K. Brown, quoted in Allott, claims that 'little ingenuity is required to discover the similarity between the gipsies and those […] "dark Iberians"' (p. 343).
[82] 'Letter to Arthur Hugh Clough, 30 November 1853', in *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang (London: University of Virginia Press, 1996), I, p. 282.

Verses'. 'The Scholar-Gipsy's' poetics, in Arnold's opinion, is a static, if 'pleasing', melancholy. He then criticizes Clough and brings back the familiar image of grasping a rudder:

> You certainly do not seem to me sufficiently to desire and earnestly strive towards—assured knowledge—activity—happiness.
>
> You are too content to *fluctuate*—to be ever learning, never coming to the knowledge of the truth. This is why, with you, I feel it necessary to stiffen myself—and hold fast my rudder.[83]

Clough, as far as one can tell, enjoyed the poem, and Arnold's reproach is harsh.[84] In letters such as these, Arnold's criticism of Clough may have more to say about Arnold's anxiety over his own poems than of Clough. He claims that readers 'want […] something to animate and ennoble them—not merely to add zest to their melancholy or grace to their dreams.'[85] Arnold makes a slight slip between the earlier 'pleasing melancholy', saying 'this is not what *we* want' (emphasis added) to the third person 'what they want'.[86] Arnold's vague terminology—animate, ennoble, truth, happiness—is in slight contradiction with his criticism of Clough's penchant to 'fluctuate' and to be 'ever learning'.

Arnold would rather that a good poet 'earnestly strive towards assured knowledge', to have '*one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire' as the Scholar does, but as should be evident from the readings of 'Empedocles', 'Sohrab', and 'The Scholar-Gipsy', this declaration about the aims of poetry is more difficult to produce in practice. In prose, Arnold stiffens, but in his poetry, he is apt to fluctuate. And though he wants nothing more than to 'hold fast' against the distracting world, to nurse unconquerable hope against the disease of modern life, his poetry does not, and for that it is all the better. T. S. Eliot is convincing amid his mostly-caustic assessment of Arnold's work:

> He is the poet and critic of a period of false stability. All his writing in the kind of *Literature and Dogma* [Eliot refers, here, to Arnold's later prose] seems to me a valiant

[83] Ibid.
[84] Arnold burned most of Clough's letters, so we may never know the other half of the story. Although, his harsh words may be in response to Clough resigning his Oxford post.
[85] Lang, p. 282.
[86] Arnold is referencing his poem 'The Youth of Nature' and quotes the lines 'The complaining millions of men / Darken in labour and pain—'.

> attempt to dodge the issue […]; but his poetry, the best of it, is too honest to employ any but his genuine feelings of unrest, loneliness and dissatisfaction.[87]

Eliot's commentary hints at a conflict in Arnold's work that is pivotal to recognizing the shape of hope in nineteenth-century England. In prose he is often taken to be the intellectual interstice between John Henry Newman and Thomas Henry Huxley. He intends to 'press foreward', to posit an untroubled hope. Yet Arnold's poetry, ultimately, questions and undermines this tendency to 'grasp[ ] the rudder hard'. His poetry may be 'at bottom a criticism of life', and Eliot can rightly criticize this instrumentalist view, but his poetry is nonetheless germane criticism in that it is conscious of the ways modern living can damage us. The 1848 Revolutions and pervasive industrial-capitalist modes bleed from one epoch to the next, as Tony Pinkney points out, and the unrest that Arnold sees, but fails to address in prose, is the same unrest that makes poverty a pivotal and visceral illustration of this 'strange disease'. Yet, poetry, in Arnold's prosaic understanding, cannot possibly resolve this, nor can it adequately address the 'dirty, or at least dingy, work which it is the lot of so many of us to have to do, and which some one or other, after all, must do'.[88] The poverty of Arnold's poetry is that poverty itself is almost entirely absent; however this poverty concerned Arnold's contemporaries, Gaskell, Carlyle, and Clough among them. It is from this point of view, that Pinkney and Moretti might find common ground. Arnold, at his best, awakened Victorian anxieties of republicanism, 'the Rough', socialism, and rationality through his poetry, but he refused any prescriptions. In his poetry, one finds the impossible, ameliorative potential of the 'best self' through the image of the Scholar-Gipsy, but one also finds the 'sick fatigue' of the world. If 'The Scholar-Gipsy' pleases us with its melancholy, it is through its affective exploration of despair in mid-nineteenth century England.

The trek to the city

As previously mentioned, until recently poverty studies on South Asia have largely concerned the rural poor. The rapid urbanization of developing countries, that mirrors the general trend of

[87] Eliot, p. 109.
[88] From Arthur Hugh Clough's review of Anrold's *Empedocles on Etna*.

urbanization throughout the world, underlies a shifting focus on urban poor. Postcolonial studies has yet to fully register this shift, and this is one of the reasons for the emphasis on impoverished city dwellers in Indian English novels. The discursive transformation is still bound to the dichotomy of the village and the city and the imaginary and real journeys that take place between them.[89] This trek closely mirrors the telos of India's aspirations toward secular democracy in Nehru's formulation in Chapter One. I focus on two aspects of this journey below. The first is representations of the village and narratives of migration from village to city, and the second is the (imagined) re-creation of the village *inside* the city as slum. In these journeys, there exists the danger of a simplistic vision of the village and the occlusion of the ideological baggage—one of those 'burdens' of the past—that the village signifies. The evolving meaning of the village vis-à-vis the city has weighty consequences for representations of poverty and hope.

The village as signifier has undergone an imaginative transformation emblematized by its 'changing cultural status'. In Ashis Nandy's words, it comes to represent on the one hand 'a tyrannical system that obligingly conforms to nineteenth-century left-Hegelian depictions of feudalism, […] the obstinate symbol of mindless homicidal patriarchy' and on the other, 'the depot of "pure" environmental-cultural sensitivity and people's critique of conventional development'. The village comes to mirror Marxist conceptions of pre- or proto-capitalist, feudal societies with malevolent thakurs and virtuous peasants as well as a spiritual or cultural oasis untouched by the taint of capitalism. One recognizes each of these in Markandaya's novels, but the more important figuration of the Indian village is that of 'the counter-city and an escape from the city'.[90] And for the purposes of this chapter, it is the movement from country to town (and *vice versa*) that highlights how poverty and hope are so inextricably bound.

[89] This journey is emblematized in various ways in novels like Kamala Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Coolie*, as well as Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*, and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*. This also alludes to the generalized understanding and academic treatment of the two pillars of Indian nationalism: Nehru as urban, Gandhi as rural.

[90] Ashis Nandy, *A Very Popular Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 74-75.

Framing this section as a journey to the metropolis, and one that is with an origin (obviously, some non-city) and a destination immediately raises caution. This prefiguration cannot but dichotomize the non-/city that should swiftly raise questions about the traveler (e.g. cosmopolitan, student, or peasant) and the reasons for travel (tourism, education, pilgrimage, exile). Yet, there are two journeys to adumbrate simultaneously. The first is the rural/urban dichotomy alluded to above that is largely uni-directional in India and the world, and the second is the psychogeographic journey, as Nandy calls it. This is the bi-directional, imagined journey.

Guy Debord, who originally coined the phrase psychogeography along with his Situationalist comrades, formulated this concept with regard to a specific urban experience. Its grounding is particular to the city, but it has since been theorized more generally as to how environments affect the emotions and behavior of people.[91] For Nandy, the idea of the journey towards progress and modernity 'has framed the Indian imagination so securely that all social, cultural, political and economic experiences of the country are now seen through it'.[92] One cannot imagine the village without first imagining the city; self-image making in India presupposes the symbolic journey of urbanization. Nandy pushes this notion even further. He says, 'Journey as a metaphor […] can also be a way of bearing witness.' Through these imagined and constitutive journeys, postcolonial citizens traverse, at least psychogeographically, the 'borders of the self'.[93] He constructs these psychogeographic journeys of the colonized in contrast to those of the colonizers: 'While for Victorian England a journey might have been primarily the frame through which others could be seen, for South Asians it has been mainly the frame through which the self can be confronted.'[94] Nandy theorizes an important point. Travel narratives from Dean Mahomet to V. S. Naipaul now must contend with the incompatible metaphorical journeys of the colonizer and the colonized. Although Nandy might be taking something away from a potential ethical

[91] Peter Brooker, *A Glossary of Cultural Theory*, 2nd edn (London: Arnold, 2002), p. 210.
[92] Nandy, *A Very Popular Exile*, p. 101.
[93] Ibid., p. viii.
[94] Ibid., p. 9.

Western response to the encounter with someone or something other than themselves via travel, he points primarily to how certain real and metaphorical journeys (e.g. 'modernization' or colonization) preface a framework for self-perception for the ex-colonized.

From Nandy's arguments, one may raise the following questions. Is there a corollary psychogeographic journey of modernization for the poor regardless of nation? When evoking Debord's phrase, is it thinkable to shirk his conceptualization of the spectacle of commodification that obfuscates and hinders any notion of self-actualization for the urban poor? These questions reach beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, I should like to focus on the most applicable of Nandy's journeys: modernization and urbanization.

He says, 'In the whole of the southern world, the beckoning magic of the new colonial metropolis frames the mythic journey to the city.'[95] One might recognize Ranajit Guha's comment that Bengali prose is inextricably bound to the colonial city as an echo to Nandy's thesis. Nandy reasons that 'such a city vends a dream of total freedom for the individual and the reasoning self, both organized around an ego so autonomous that it yields agency to nothing outside itself'.[96] Vending a dream is an excellent phrase that captures economies of hope and how it is tied to both Enlightenment ideals of individualism and autonomy as well as the capitalist metropolis.

> The attempts at a controlled 'regression' to the village in the South Asian imagination, then, can be read as a form of play with visions that chalk out another possible point of departure for the city. It consecrates the hope […] that the city of the future will be more modest and sceptical about its privileged access to realism, its social-evolutionary edge over other lifestyles, its monopoly on multiculturalism and creative individualism.[97]

Reimagining the village is a means to temper the hegemony of the city, but it is also, ironically, a way to reinvigorate cosmopolitan views of the metropolis (justly or unjustly). The barren, hopeless city that Ravi discovers (though it does not completely defeat him) requires an imaginary

[95] Ibid., p. vi.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., p. vii.

village to give rise to the potentiality of the metropolis as a promising space for a dignified way of life.

Nandy also invests in this modest and skeptical potential city, as he notes that for postcolonial peoples 'the colonial city is now us, the non-village'. One cannot imagine the contemporary self without being 'identified with history, progress, becoming'.[98] Whereas Debord considers urbanization as stasis rather than progress and total modernization represents the collapse of the poles of town and country, Nandy crystallizes this dichotomy, though for him it is merely re-inscribed psychologically: 'It is the utopia of the village as a self, controlling the self-that-is-the-city.'[99] Nandy is talking about an idyllic vision of the village set against the atomized version of individualist life in the city. He also considers the 'fact' that three-quarters of the Indian population is rural, although this is rapidly declining. At this point it is more like two-thirds, with urban populations increasing faster than rural ones. Worldwide, we have reached the 50% urbanization mark, trending upward. It is now true on a global scale that to confront the self one must also confront urbanization and Western notions of progress.

If self-image making and urbanization are as essentially bound as Nandy would have it, then representations of the village have surely suffered as the town effaces the country. As he puts it, 'The obverse of the entry of the city as the locus of Indian consciousness is an erosion of the ability to imagine the village.'[100] Nandy, here, is specifically concerned with creative imagination, but not only does urbanization undermine representations of the village, it recreates and reinvents—in contrast to rural despotisms and the cold, unfeeling metropolis—a 'compassionate' slum.[101] Like late-Victorian attitudes toward the poor that Himmelfarb groups under the umbrella-term of 'compassion', modern Indian creative representations re-inscribe a sympathy and pathos in order to make sense of the city's deleterious effects on their psyches.

[98] Ibid., p. 13.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Nandy, p. 15.
[101] Ibid, p. 20.

Visions of the slum, in particular, attempt to refigure and reproduce an imagined village of eupschyian social relations within the metropolis.[102] To capture this modest hope of the village-ized city, writers create slums that emblematize the village or come dangerously close to parodying it.[103] Thus, the representation of the urban poor becomes ever more complex: on one level, power relations and inequality that make poverty in any form possible must be interrogated and exposed, while at the same time representations must be wary of the potential to Orientalize via the slum. Moreover, if there is a skeptical, postcolonial hope accumulating in urban spaces, which requires the reimagined village, then creative imaginative representations must also find an appropriate ethical mimesis.

Going further, how can a writer possibly reimagine the trek to the city in a way that questions the psychic status of the village as well as the potentiality of urban life? Early in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*, after King Thebaw is exiled to Ratnagiri, the narrative interweaves Saya John's teak trade and Rajkumar's entrepreneurial rise with the Burmese royal family's decline. Ghosh imagines a literal journey to Rangoon and the metaphorical journey of modernization through historical allegories of colonial atrocities. He attempts to have it both ways—imagining the economic success of Rajkumar through a traditional *bildungsroman* narrative while eliding the contrast of rural and urban spaces through a focus on commodity. Rajkumar needs both the teak outpost and the colonial city in order to manufacture or vend an economic dream, but his entrepreneurial spirit is based on the violent mimicry of colonial rapacity. For this reason, literary critic Grant Farred considers the 'Raj' in Rajkumar to be metonymic of the conjoining of colonialism and capitalism.[104]

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[102] The term, eupsychia, is used by Nandy rather matter-of-factly, but it is jargon coined by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow to denote a society of 'self-actualized' beings, meaning a community of people who have each met a threshold of physical and psychology needs that Maslow considered necessary for a 'good' society.
[103] Nandy, p. 74.
[104] Grant Farred, 'Infusive Mutinies: A Critique of Diasporic Politics in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* in *(In)Fusion Approach: Theory, Contestation, Limits: (In)fusionising a Few Indian English Novels*, ed. by Ranjan Ghohs (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2006), pp. 287-303, (p. 290).

The descriptions of the journey from the teak forests in the north to the economic hub in Rangoon are violent, sublime, and richly detailed. The comparison of teak felling to colonialism is palpable and overt. The narrator describes the torturous process: 'The trees, once picked, had to be killed and left to dry, for the density of teak is such that it will not remain afloat while its heartwood is moist.' The narrator continues this passive, yet indicative grammatical construction, 'The killing was achieved with a girdle of incisions, then slits, carved deep into the wood at a height of four feet and six inches off the ground (teak being ruled, despite the wildness of its terrain, by imperial stricture in every tiny detail).'[105] Ghosh imitates with matter-of-fact precision the 'tiny details' and 'imperial stricture' of colonial rule at the height of its power, but the passive voice lets the reader know that colonial wealth extraction was done for no other reason than the superiority of imperial will over a 'wild' terrain. Whether or not the last parenthetical statement is necessary to the mood and movement of the passage is, of course, debatable, but it is conceivable that Ghosh feels there should be no ambiguity of colonialism's violent and 'scientific' processes. In these passages one sees at work the ethical and aesthetic responsibilities of the writer Ghosh outlined in Chapter Two, but rather than aggrandize or essentialize the bodily violence of a colonial subject, he projects this violence onto the trees and elephants in Burma. This is not to say that he equates the colonized to a passive, consciousless nature, but this allows for the powerful, moving description of the log flumes, the colonial sahibs, the local middlemen, and the hundreds of invisible workers that comprise the real psychic and physical violence of colonialism without re-inscribing it.

After the teak felling scene, the narrator explains in detail the symptoms and effects of anthrax on elephants, though perhaps more importantly, an anthrax epidemic could also be 'felt on the London Stock Exchange'. The narrator notes the etymological link between anthrax and anthracite. The boils caused by the disease resemble powdered charcoal. Though much more

[105] Ghosh, *Glass Palace*, p. 69. The analogy of teak felling with the violent battle of Burma's colonial encounter is further exemplified in language such as, 'exploding simultaneously in deadly splinter blasts' and 'throwing up mushroom clouds of debris'. (Ibid.)

brief than the linguistic journey of 'cotton' detailed in *A Circle of Reason*, evoking this disease raises another link to his first novel: Louis Pasteur. Like in his earlier work, tropical disease, commerce, and colonization interweave in the text. After detailing the visual symptoms (and their concomitant relation to the origin of its name), the narrator vividly, and perhaps over-indulgently, describes the prognosis:

> The carbuncles are most numerous around the hindquarters, and as they grow they have the effect of sealing the animal's anus. Elephants consume an enormous amount of fodder and must defecate constantly. The workings of their digestive systems do not stop with the onset of the disease; their intestines continue to produce dung after the excretory passage has been sealed, the unexpurgated fecal matter pushing explosively against the obstructed anal passage. (80)

At this point, the narrative switches to reported speech as Rajkumar had been learning the 'many guises in which death stalked the lives of the oo-sis' from an elephant rider he befriended named Doh Say. The latter claims that the 'pain is so great' that even the 'tamest cows will become maddened killers; the gentlest calves will turn upon their mothers'. (80) This statement becomes all the more poignant in light of two scenes: Saya John's ghost story of the death of a colonial administrator by a grieving elephant whose rider had died because of that administrator's incompetence and the death of the Indian National Army (INA) soldier, Arjun Roy. The three narratives—the textbook-like description of anthrax, an incidence of anthrax, and the supernatural story of death and revenge—give some allusion to subjugation as a disease facilitated by colonialism. Yet, Saya John's story proves prescient when Arjun Roy, originally an officer in the 1/1 Jat Light Infantry who then became an officer in the 'mutinous' INA, is caught in an empty teak camp in Burma and put to death for treason. Connecting Arjun Roy's story back to the dangerous and violent descriptions of anthrax outbreaks and colonial brutality is another way of stretching or writing through different forms of colonial violence which are almost always bound to journeying.

Commodities such as teak, rubber, and oil play a large role in *Glass Palace*, and their extraction and exchange is pivotal to the societal relations both East-West and East-East. The

novel's protagonist, Rajkumar, begins his entrepreneurial rise by transporting goods to colonial administrators in the teak forests of Burma. He transitions to his own teak trade by selling indentured workers from his homeland in Chittagong, and then he finally builds his fortune with a rubber plantation in Malaysia. Yet, what is particularly poignant is that the foundations of his wealth are built on indentured Indian labor. Juxtaposed with Rajkumar's improbable economic ascent is the decline and forced migration of the Burmese royal family so that the British can access the mineral and material wealth of the kingdom of Burma. Like the excerpts above that focus on detailed and pointed descriptions of the teak trade, the narratives of these two families hinge on commodities. This is an important process and consequence of global capitalism and colonialism that Ghosh explores in the novel. *Glass Palace* throws light on the linkage between old globalizations and new. That is to say, global trade under the auspices of colonialism is not entirely dissimilar from contemporary, liberalist notions of 'free' trade. The novel draws links between forest, animal, and people, and the descriptions of the first two speak toward the violent, unnarratable acts of colonialism and exploitation. The novel's sympathetic rendering of its main character, Rajkumar, whose wealth is at the intersection of the colonialism and capitalism, must be read alongside the critique of the entrepreneurship that ultimately ends in family tragedy. For this reason, Farred argues that *The Glass Palace* takes an 'ethically ambivalent' stance towards him, though I read the novel's depiction of this complex character more along the lines of *New Testament* love: loving the sinner but hating the sin.[106] The novel is not ambivalent about the damage Rajkumar has done to his family, to the environment, and more broadly his commodification of poor, indentured labor all in for the sake of capitalist accumulation. This commodification, Guy Debord reminds us, is the moment in which 'the economy's domination of social life entailed an obvious downgrading of *being* into *having* that left its stamp on all human endeavor.'[107] Rajkumar's success is one that feeds into and mimics British colonial exploitation,

[106] Farred, p. 290.
[107] Guy Debord, *Society and Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), p. 16.

and his *bildung* and his literal journeys are more complicated than Ravi's or Munoo's because of the interdependence of Rajkumar's prosperity with that of the colonial metropolis, rural camps, and poor, indentured labor.

Ghosh's novel is not entirely uncharacteristic of postcolonial writing in general, as Huggan argues, 'Exoticist spectacle, commodity fetishism, and the aesthetics of decontextualization are all at work, in different combinations and to varying degrees, in the production, transmission and consumption of postcolonial literary/cultural texts.'[108] *The Glass Palace* attempts to connect the violence of colonialism with the physical and psychological violence of migration. This migration may not necessarily be forced, but it is built from economic necessity due to urbanization and modernization. In the novel, there is little nostalgia for the imagined village (except, perhaps, Dolly's retreat to a rural Burmese convent). If there is any nostalgia, it seems to be emblematized by Rajkumar and Dinu Raha's idyllic view of colonial Rangoon. The novel does not juxtapose either despotism or idealism in the teak camps and villages of Burma with the metropolis. Rather, *The Glass Palace* focuses on connections and journeys like the indentured laborers' boat ride from Chittagong to Burma or the log flumes from forest to city. This has the effect of recognizing the desire for progress that urbanization might offer, but registering the physical and psychological violence of commodification that this progress engenders. The village and the city certainly still exist in the novel, but the focus in *Glass Palace* is not on the poles of the journey, but the journeying—if one might excuse that cliché, since it is not meant here as a truism. Ghosh extends violence, oppression, and possibility—one could say hope—across village and city through the scenes of commodity extraction and exchange. This is why his novel makes such a powerful impression and effect on the discourse of poverty. It is difficult to formulate the skeptical metropolitan hope that recognizes the constitutive aspect of the psychogeographic journey, the utopia of either village or city, the possibility of collective, interdependent hope, and autonomous

[108] Huggan, p. 20.

and individual capabilities. In *The Glass Palace*, however, one may read such a skeptical hope that is always pointed toward a critique of capitalism. However, Rajkumar's story is still one that is largely entrepreneurial, and for that one may rightly be anxious about how one reads this critique of capitalism. The tension of interrelatedness and individualism as it pertains to hope and poverty needs further adumbration.

The quality of hope

The chapter began by tracing perceptions of poverty from industrial Britain to urban India with their close socio-economic ties across post-1750 history, while simultaneously threading fictional and poetic representations from Matthew Arnold to Dickens to Amitav Ghosh. However, it remains unclear how to re-think poverty in light of these Victorian attitudes and fictional interventions. What is still to be shown is how one might discuss poverty without the moralizing of nineteenth-century political economy and avoiding the Orientalist modes of inquiry that one finds in magisterial, exoticist, and curatorial approaches. In order to bring the various strands of hope into conversation—bringing to mind Ghassan Hage and Anna Potamianou from Chapter One as well as Nandy and Sen—this section examines Sen's notion of capabilities with regard to the study of poverty to provide an appropriate ethical framework for thinking about hope in light of the continuing destitution within capitalist economies. At the heart of the debate is a Western liberal individualism that is arguably the backbone of capitalist enterprise and Enlightenment thought. Thomas Jefferson's 'self-evident' right to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' becomes more complicated in countries with a colonial history.[109] The hope to be gained is not always autonomous and analogous to personal liberty; rather for many people in the world (and likely those that are the poorest) there is hope to be gained from dependency. Ashis Nandy criticizes what he calls a 'devastatingly sterile concept of autonomy and individualism' that cannot

[109] Of course, the United States has its own complicated colonial history, but its status as a settler colony and its 'early' break from British colonialism differentiates it from countries such as India. The discussion of Adam Smith above speaks toward this difference.

be separated from the motives of colonization or domination in his essay 'Towards a Third World Utopia':[110]

> The much-maligned dependency complex may not be the best possible cultural arrangement in the face of modern oppression, it could be seen as a more promising baseline for mounting a search for more genuine social relatedness and for maturer forms of individuality than the one which now dominates the world. The baseline may not meet the exacting standards of the westernized critics of the West in the Third World, it may not yield the virile anti-imperialism by which they swear, but those who have lived for centuries with only the extremes of relatedness and dependency will never guess that in a world taken over by the autonomy principle and by the extremes of individualism, dependency and fears of abandonment could represent a hope and a potentiality.[111]

Nandy juggles the two dangers of the potentiality of dependency. On the one hand, a harsh assessment of extreme individualism must take into account the risk of acquiescence to what he terms 'modern oppression', which most likely reflects a Marxist critique of suffering through commodification and alienation. On the other, he must fend off criticism from 'westernized critics of the West in the Third World' who might be afraid to relinquish an individualist self-image that was hard won in the face of colonial preconceptions of the colonized as weak-willed and subservient. Nandy posits that suffering can never be exorcised from the image of the self as absolute individualist freedom might imply, and that to sublate suffering, to incorporate man-made suffering into one's self-image through dependency, might be a way out of the loneliness of the individual in mass society. Nandy believes that there is something valuable to be gained by a somewhat anti-individualist orientation that may elide the oppression of the machine-like becoming of individuals in competition with their atomized counterparts. Not only would this relatedness to others be an anchor for the psyche against the fragmentation and alienation of contemporary capitalist ways of life, but it may also be the potential disengagement of that way of life. Nandy's hopeful dependency opens the debate about how societies can think about fostering the care and hope that Ghassan Hage suggests, while also addressing the complicity of hope

[110] Nandy, *Bonfire of Creeds*, p. 465.
[111] Ibid., p. 465-66.

within the logic of capitalism that many thinkers from Marx to Sen consider to be the conditions that make poverty possible and the counterpoint of a reflexive hope.

For now, though, I must couch Nandy's potentiality of dependency to speak toward desire in definitions of both poverty and hope. The latter already having been addressed in the first chapter as one of hope's constituent parts finds an important and complex corollary with regard to poverty studies. To deviate from 'objective' Malthusian visions of the poor, one must take into account how desire (and its deferral) might influence our definition of poverty. It is a contentious term that points to the definitional struggle, or, at least, the epistemological struggle of who gets to define. There are those, such as Gertrude Himmelfarb, that consider desire mostly irrelevant in histories of poverty (if not in the definition of poverty itself). She accuses 'pessimistic historians' of trying to justify their particular 'arithmetic of woe' as having to resort to subjective qualitative measurements such as 'quality of life'.[112] In particular, she is suspicious of claims of alienation and exploitation based on what she perceives as a lack of evidence in support of such experiences. On the contrary, she claims the agitation and anxiety about poverty in Victorian Britain increased as the nominal wealth of the poor increased. Himmelfarb attributes this to the rising relativization, and in the end the obfuscation, of poverty as merely contra-middle class, and she worries that to take into account the increasing 'felt wants' of the poor while their incomes and means increase would be to pander to an unsavory socialist agenda. Himmelfarb, at least in the above instance, re-inscribes Victorian conceptions of the deserving and undeserving poor, and although desire-based approaches strictly speaking may not be up to the task of constructing a better definition of what might be the essentials of human goods, one cannot conflate all attempts to conceptualize the 'quality of life' into mere desires.

Focusing on the desires of fictional characters is one way to approach poverty in the novels, but it also brings the discussion back to hope. Philosopher Thomas Scanlon summarizes

[112] Himmelfarb, *Compassion*, p. 29.

desire theories with regard to their application to the human good as 'the quality of a person's life at a given time', and its measurement is 'the degree to which the preferences which he or she has at that time are fulfilled'.[113] While he ultimately argues for a list of 'substantive goods' that provide value for human life as opposed to either unlimited or restricted desire-based approaches to the quality of life, he nonetheless discusses how desire-based theories avoid certain 'rigidities' of objective lists of values. Pegging well-being to individual desires allows for particular values to be weighed in specific cases rather than having certain universal values with which to judge a good life. The trouble with desire-based approaches to quality of life arguments is that the criteria for a good life then becomes the fulfillment of desire, which leaves out the prospect that desire deferred might also be valuable in itself—i.e. hope. Moreover, Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen are extremely wary of desire-based approaches to poverty, as they note in the case of women's rights: 'In most parts of the world women do not have the same opportunities as men. These inequalities—and the deficiencies in education and experience often associated with them—tend to affect women's expectations and desires.'[114] For the most part, the domain of desire lies in the realm of subjective possibility, and if one cannot imagine what some might consider a necessary good, such as literacy, then it is reasonably difficult to desire it. It is for this reason that Sen and Nussbaum argue that 'desire-based approaches to measuring quality of life frequently end up […] affirming the status quo,' because women in a certain region may not 'express an unsatisfied desire for literacy' and are therefore considered not to have such a need.[115] If desire-based approaches are inadequate to fleshing out a definition of the quality of life, then what are the alternatives? Similar to Scanlon's 'flexible' list of substantive goods, Martha Nussbaum draws upon Aristotelian virtues in order to delineate criteria for a quality of life with which to judge poverty.

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[113] Thomas Scanlon, 'Value, Desire, and Quality of Life' in *The Quality of Life*, ed. by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 185-200, (p. 186).
[114] Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, *The Quality of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 5.
[115] Ibid.

Nussbaum wants to escape utilitarian methods of an objective calculus of satisfactions and focus on what she considers 'concrete human experience'. Ethical approaches, she contends, have tended to reject the notion of single norms in favor of specific, local norms with local origins. Nussbaum writes, 'Most philosophers who have written about the appetites have treated hunger, thirst, and sexual desire as human universals, stemming from our shared animal nature.' In her view, Aristotle anticipated some of the problems that Scanlon raises about this universalism. 'He insisted that the object of appetite is "the apparent good" and that the appetite is therefore something interpretative and selective, a kind of intentional awareness.' Prefiguring a Marxist critique of Aristotelian virtue ethics, she registers that Aristotle did not give much consideration to how 'historical and cultural differences' might bear on this 'intentional awareness'.[116] Beginning with Aristotelian 'hungers' as a lens through which to view subjective desires she writes, 'The names that people call their desires and themselves as subjects of desire, the fabric of belief and discourse into which they integrate their ideas of desiring: all this influences […] not only their reflection about desire, but also their experience of desire itself.'[117] She gives the example of sexual desire, specifically contemporary discourse and debates about homosexuality that one would find difficult or disingenuous to argue for as continuous with fourth-century Classical Greece. Desiring implies an interpretative, subjective act; thus should include social and historical contexts—not unlike Hage's Kleinian notions of hope via child-breast experience—and in this instance she turns to the Stoics:

> As soon as an infant is born, it cries. Adults, assuming that the crying is a response to its pain at the unaccustomed coldness and harshness of the place where it finds itself, hasten to comfort it. This behaviour, often repeated, teaches the infant to regard its pain as a bad thing—or, better, teaches it the concept of pain, which includes the notion of badness, and teaches it the forms of life its society shares concerning pain. It is all social teaching, they claimed, though this usually escapes our notice because of the early and non-linguistic nature of the teaching.[118]

[116] Martha Nussbaum, 'Non-relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach', in *The Quality of Life*, ed. by Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 242-74, p. 252.
[117] Ibid., p. 253.
[118] Ibid., p. 254.

There is a worry, however, in formulating universal virtues and desires, and Nussbaum is careful to avoid the dangers of universalizing what may be historically constructed desires. Yet in this essay, she is not fully committed to the Stoic interpretation of how one becomes a desiring subject even in her recognition of the importance of the child-parent relationship in shaping the supposed universal concept of pain.

She argues that Aristotle from the very start weighed the particular and the general and had always considered the former as having priority. 'The Aristotelian virtues involve a delicate balancing between general rules and a keen awareness of particulars,' she writes. It is not necessarily that a particular virtue should not be viewed as the baseline of human experience of that desire, but that Aristotilean virtues provide a 'good rule' that is a 'summary of wise particular choices and not a court of last resort'.[119] Nussbaum provides a convincing argument for a set of normative accounts of a virtue—closely resembling those outlined by Aristotle—from which particular cases and accounts take precedence and may be considered as elaborations of these general virtues. From this point, with a 'sensitive awareness that we are speaking of something that is experienced differently in different contexts' discussion and debate over the ways in which one fulfills desires can proceed.[120] However, she argues for certain commonalities from which these desires originate: mortality, body, pleasure and pain, cognitive capability, practical reason, early infant development, affiliation, and humor. From these commonalities, she argues for the construction of corresponding human capabilities that one might deem necessary for leading a potentially fulfilling life: the baseline of how one might define poverty.

As previously noted, Nussbaum contemplates a potential Marxist argument about defining certain virtues (those surrounding private ownership, for instance). Utopia would render the virtues useless, and she notes the difficulty of formulating general virtues that could be eliminated or greatly altered by a fundamental transformation of context. This is the necessary

[119] Ibid., p. 257.
[120] Ibid., pp. 263-64.

limitation of an Aristotilean approach. Despite aspiring to the universal, they are always necessarily epochal and contextual. Amartya Sen recognizes the usefulness of building a set of capabilities around potential commonalities saying, 'The capability approach is concerned with showing the cogency of a particular space for the evaluation of individual opportunities and successes.' He adds, 'In any social calculus in which individual advantages are constitutively important, that space is of potential significance.'[121] Sen's discussion of the capabilities approach is often more abstract than Nussbaum's. This is, perhaps, because even with reflexive 'general' categories and their subordination to particular situations, the potential danger of obscuring or eliding what could prove to be 'constitutively important' capabilities still exists. Bringing Nussbaum's discussion of 'basic' human capabilities back to his arguments about aggregation of poverty, Sen invests in this framework of capabilities but with a purposefully woolly understanding of those general commonalities of virtues from which capabilities are defined. In response to why one might want to put stock in a capabilities approach without 'completing the task' of defining those capabilities, he argues that his 'motivation […] relates to the recognition that an agreement on the usability of the capability approach—an agreement on the nature of the "space" of value-objects—need not presuppose an agreement on how the valuational exercise may be completed'.[122] Scanlon and Nussbaum attempt the difficult exercise of defining common, generalized capabilities, but Sen sees in this agon of hungers or desires a more fruitful way to discuss poverty. However, as sketched above, capabilities imply hoping via an individualism that could, at times, be at odds with what Nandy might call the potentiality of dependency. This is similar to the arguments in Chapter One with regard to the interplay of individual to societal hopes.

Nandy's conception dovetails with Ghassan Hage's societal hope, in that it envisions a way of hoping within a capitalist system that relies on interdependent modes of living. In essence,

[121] Nussbaum and Sen, *Quality of Life*, p. 50.
[122] Ibid., p. 48.

a society of care that is most likely to be facilitated by the state. Whereas Hage wants to maximize hope offered within the possibilities of desire proffered by capitalist systems, Nandy imagines a society that attempts to mitigate 'autonomous' hope that endures via capitalism. Referring to the relative nature of poverty in Sen's view, which can only be measured through access to individual capabilities, leaves the 'valuational exercise' of the capabilities approach open to capitalist cooptation of the capabilities themselves. This is the danger in taking a step back from Nussbaum's Aristotelian virtues. Though it does not presuppose certain universals, it presupposes an access to an intense individualism that may not be available for those that Nandy describes as having a history of centuries of relatedness and dependency—those who might consider an attempt to define based on individual capabilities as an attack on the narcissistic shield of dependency. Certainly, if Sen or Nussbaum can imagine ascetics or communists in their arguments about poverty via the capabilities approach, then 'fears of abandonment' or dependency—a crucial aspect of hope outlined in this thesis—should also play a role in shaping how one views capabilities. I now turn to the Indian English novel, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, to examine the potential shapes of this hope of interrelatedness as it specifically pertains to poverty in a postcolonial context.

'Between coolie and clerk'[123]

The main characters of Mistry's *A Fine Balance* occupy a contingent space between pauper and working class. In the latter work, the two tailors Omprakash and Ishvar (whose representations have received varying degrees of criticism from Germaine Greer and Nilufer Bharucha) fit within this socio-economic category of not coolie and not middle class. Their village origins, modest literacy and numeracy, and service-sector trade are signifiers of their status. In fact, it is because of their modest education that characters like Ishvar and Om are stuck between these two calcified economic categories. They are yet another example of the limitations of the current

[123] Markandaya, *A Handful of Rice*, p. 23.

discourse about poverty. Bracketing classes into quintiles of income is too blunt a tool to represent the lives of these characters.

Not only is it difficult to define the tailors in economic terms, but they also closely resemble Malthus's descriptions of the 'deserving' poor. These are the poor worth helping or worth empathizing with, in his words, because they are honorable, hard-working, ambitious, yet their misfortune is due to birth and bad luck. As the critical trends followed by this thesis will have suggested, I have maintained a distance from this sentiment, but it is meant to highlight the difficulty in rendering poor characters within a Dickensian or Malthusian mold. However, these characters differ from *The Glass Palace*'s Rajkumar, because they are suspended between death and economic success—in a hopeful state.

By framing the story of the tailors as an escape from the despotism of the village to the possibilities offered by the city, *A Fine Balance* partly reinscribes the psychogeographic journey that Nandy formulates. The city, once again, becomes the location where there is the potential for dreams to be realized. Echoing Bandyopadhyay's metaphor in *Kalikata Kamalalay*, Ishvar and Omprakash Darji arrive in the city by the sea to 'passengers pour[ing] out into a sea of waiting friends and families'. The station becomes a 'roiling swirl of humanity'.[124] But not every character experiences this 'roiling swirl of humanity'. The middle-class Parsi student Maneck Kolah arrives in the city with 'clothes covered in dust and eyes smarting. […] His nosed ached and his throat felt raw.'[125] He then takes a taxi from the station to his college hostel. Neither the masses of people nor promise or hope of urban living is mentioned. One merely reads a description of a few small personal maladies and the facts of his transport. The banality of Maneck's arrival relies on the familiarity of the reader's middle-class experiences, while the more sublime description of the tailor's journey is curiously exoticized.

[124] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 153.
[125] Ibid., p. 175.

While the contrasting experiences of Maneck and Om (both of similar age but differing backgrounds) deepen the bonds that they later form, there is also a sense of a class difference in describing the journey to the city. For the poor, the city is dangerous and potent—it represents a mass of bodies and a potential for wealth.[126] For the middle class, by contrast, the arrival in the city is an inconvenience. Some critics, like Bharucha, point to the exoticized features of Mistry's Dalit characters. Hilary Mantel, in her review of the novel, suggests this tendency traces back to 'one of Dickens's less-applauded traits; when his characters fall below a certain income level, he stereotypes them'.[127] This line of argument is well taken, however, I would suggest that the difference in terms of description of the characters' experiences is, even so, recognized in the novel.[128] As Huggan claims, '[Postcolonial] writers/thinkers—in very different ways—have recognized their own complicity with exoticist aesthetics while choosing to manipulate the conventions of the exotic to their own political ends.'[129]

Mistry's narrative underlines the assumptions and egocentrism of Maneck's middle-class outlook, and the contrasting experiences of Maneck, Ishvar, and Om are not left unexamined (as explored in Chapter Two). The descriptions of their respective arrivals to the city by the sea can alternatively be read as highlighting the experiences of the city by various classes. It is also worth pointing out the link that critics might be drawing between a middle-class Parsi student in the 1970s with the middle-class Parsi author (who was a college student in Bombay in the seventies). Nevertheless, Ishvar and Om are drawn to the vision of the city by the sea with a metropolitan hope. In *A Fine Balance*, however, the city's status as a place of hope is questioned almost from the start. After seeing the masses of the city's people, Ishvar and Om's 'sense of adventure that had flowered reluctantly during the journey wilted'. And if there is any lingering thought of 'the

[126] For example, one sees this with Munoo's journey to Daulatpur in *Coolie*.
[127] Hilary Mantel, 'States of Emergency', review of *A Fine Balance*, *New York Review of Books* (20 June 1996), pp. 4-6, (p. 6).
[128] Mantel also notes that in the carnivalesque spectacle and violence of the beggar Shankar's funeral is a comment—or moment of recognition—of the author's technique; of taking part in the 'exoticist spectacle', as Huggan might say.
[129] Huggan, p. 32.

city of promise' that 'lay behind this final obstacle' of the crowded train station, it is again countered by their experience on the street. Om and Ishvar walk along a pavement 'covered with sleeping people' where a 'thin yellow light from the streetlamps fell like tainted rain on the rag-wrapped bodies'.[130]

Journeys still hold some promise in the novel in that at some point there is an arrival: in addition, one is required to read each, individual journey alongside contingent experiences of fellowship and affiliation. Once the tailors find work with Dina Dalal that connects them with Maneck Kolah, the commute on the train—the journey to and from—becomes a space of transition.

> Borne along by the homeward-bound flock, exhausted from ten hours of sewing, they shared the sanctity of the hour with the crowd, this time of transition from weariness to hope. Soon it would be night; they would borrow Rajaram's stove, cook something, eat. They would weave their plans and dream the future into favourable patterns, till it was time to take the train tomorrow morning.[131]

In this instance, journeying is the time between toil and nominal hope. This passage prefaces the metaphor of the patchwork quilt discussed in the second chapter. The section of the novel in which the Ishvar, Om, Maneck, and Dina become a 'family' combines the sea of the masses and the quilt of humanity metaphors, titled 'Sailing under one flag'. This underlines the shifting emphasis in the novel away from the idea of the psychogeographic journey to the city as the fulfillment of the promise of autonomous becoming. In its place is not the slum or the retrieval of village values or virtue, but an interdependent—and emotionally and materially satisfying—way of life.

In his conversation with Dipesh Chakrabarty, Ghosh touches on the poor's reliance on the family for satisfactory life due to ambivalence and inaction by the state, and Mistry, too, emphasizes the direct hostility of the state during the Emergency. In *A Fine Balance*, the mounting disasters heaped upon the characters, due in large part to the Emergency, temporarily subside

[130] Mistry, *A Fine Balance*, p. 153.
[131] Ibid., p. 179.

when the family comes together. It is from this point in the novel that the capabilities of the characters can begin to flourish. It is also the moment when journeys then prove disastrous. Maneck's decision to return home to reconnect with his family and Ishvar and Om's return to the village to find a bride for the latter both end in disappointment and tragedy. This, I would argue, characterizes the overall comment on hope in the novel: affiliation made thinkable by, but not exclusive to, urban life; it is the societal spacing where human capacities can grow and opportunity for self-improvement that is accessible to all.

The ending of *A Fine Balance* remains vexing. Arguably the most hopeless scene, Maneck's suicide, and the subdued, but hopeful scene of a meal by shared the defeated Dina, Ishvar, and Om, occur simultaneously in the novel. Mistry chooses to end with the latter: the remnants of the family, the broken pieces of a dependent hope smashed by the violence of a corrupt state. If one were to read this 'story of great misfortunes' through the epilogue (as theologian Samantha Joo claims, the 'need of [messianic] hope to balance the hopelessness'), one might dichotomize hope and despair without recognizing that they are inseparable.[132] Messianic hope and utter hopelessness end at the same point—death.

Mantel hints at this tension in the novel (as opposed to the resolution suggested by Joo), in that there exists a fundamental incongruity between the 'almost unbearable […] cyclical pattern of disaster' of the characters' lives with the formal optimism of the novel:

> Huge, ambitious novels tend to succumb to platitudes in the end. Unless the author is a genius, they are sucked into cliché by their aspirations to universality. This is one of Mistry's problems. Another problem runs deeper. The novel is an optimistic form. It offers its characters some freedom within their created nature, and an afterlife in the imagination of readers.[133]

Mantel's first criticism of cliché and universality is, of course, an important point, but I would debate whether or not Mistry aspires to 'universality' with clichés and platitudes. It is the second, 'deeper problem' that I find more compelling. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, the

[132] Samantha Joo, 'A Fine Balance between Hope and Despair: The Epilogue to 2 Kings (25:27-30)' in *Biblical Interpretation*, 20 (2012), 226-43, (p. 232).
[133] Mantel, p. 6.

various ways that the Indian English novel mediates its critique of the contemporary forms of domination wrought by capitalism is through its engagement with hope above all on a formal level. Furthermore, I claim that this 'problem' is in fact the privilege of the novel, and, more importantly, the hope that Indian English novels in particular offer us is *exemplified and made possible through* its 'afterlife in the imaginations of readers'. I have suggested, and this is once again repeated in the reading of Mistry's *A Fine Balance* above, a way of conceiving hope that shapes the very meaning of poverty, and incorporates myriad qualified and overlapping ways of hoping: for-life, for-death, conatic, nominal, societal, dependent, skeptical, and *postcolonial*.

Conclusion

This dissertation formulates the calibration of hope with a range of cognate terms (history, memory, and poverty) explored in the Indian English novel in a postcolonial nation in rapid transition from Nehruvian, state-driven socialism to neo-liberal capitalism. Taken together, the Amitav Ghosh's and Rohinton Mistry's varied textual strategies provide the source material, as it were, for the nominal-messianic structure of hope. The thesis posits a *reflexive* hope that is skeptical of the notion of Progress, while at the same time holding loosely to its inherent utopianism. The novels discussed draw from the work of Jawaharlal Nehru. And, as has been shown, Nehru's contribution to the discourse on hope is a wellspring for postcolonial literary critics. Too often, postcolonial materialists—even those whose focus is Indian English literature—have ignored Nehru's extremely nuanced and paradigmatic writing. When reading Ghosh and Mistry, Nehru's influence is almost impossible to ignore.

With regard to Nehru, the dissertation complicates the received view of India's first prime minister as an 'Enlightenment' leader with an uncompromisingly rational, socialist agenda. Those tendencies, of course, are strong in Nehru and rightly highlighted by his critics, but his writing and his legacy are much more intricate, and Ghosh and Mistry illustrate this through their representations of hope. Moreover, the hope glossed from these three men proves to be a pivotal category for materialist postcolonial critics. If there is to be any discussion of a postcolonial aesthetics, then hope, as has been presented here, is key. And, it is the privilege of these historical Indian English novels that emphasizes the materialist investigation of hope and poverty in postcolonial India. In assessing the trajectory of the thesis, I am reminded of Groucho Marx's one-liner, where he proclaims to have 'worked [himself] up from nothing to a state of extreme

poverty'.[1] Projecting forward, however, it is V.I. Lenin who asks a more pertinent question: What is to be done?[2]

Looming throughout this comparative and intertextual look at hope in the Indian English novels of Ghosh and Mistry is the disparity between the intense focus on neo-liberal economic policy for developing countries and state-subsidized welfare for richer nations. This brings to mind Jeremy Bentham's vision of India as a utilitarian sandbox in the nineteenth century. The International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment programs and the imposition of GDP growth as an economic model are examples of how the postcolony is shaped to fit a global capitalist order. India, for good or ill, remains tied to economic neo-liberalism and growth. It has managed to embody Nehru's fear—the 'enthronement of wealth' that causes 'neurotic states'—and his unrealistic hope for, and unshakeable faith in, Progress. And to some extent, this focus on 'making it', middle-class lifestyles, and entrepreneurship, has worked.

Amitav Ghosh speaks directly to these two economic themes of postcolonial India. On the one hand, he writes about the 'dismal' outlook for those who were coming of age in the 1970s and 1980s. For him, this era is marked by barriers to opportunity, class immobility, a 'besetting sense of stagnation', and a 'widespread feeling of despair'.[3] Ghosh and Mistry often cite in their novels the socialist democracy envisioned by Nehru as well as the failure to realize the worthy goals of his messianic hope, which contributed to the economic and political disasters of India in the '70s, culminating in the Emergency. One finds this structure of feeling in Ghosh's early novels *The Circle of Reason* or *The Shadow Lines* and in Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance*. And yet, Ghosh renders the unabashedly capitalist and entrepreneurial Rajkumar in *The Glass Palace* with a curious sympathy and care. Ghosh calls characters such as Rajkumar 'weirdly

[1] *Monkey Business* (1936).
[2] V.I. Lenin, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress, 1967). This is a constant refrain in Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.
[3] Amitav Ghosh, 'Churning of the Earth', 5 November 2011 <http://amitavghosh.com/blog/?p=1678> [accessed 27 July 2012].

interesting', because their economic success is partly due to 'mimicry', but also to 'getting along', 'sycophancy', and 'ruthless and cunning'.[4]

Nehru the 'unflinching humanist', as the narrator of *Such a Long Journey* comments, is symbolic of what Ghosh calls India's 'socialist era'. Though he is shown to be more reflexive about his unerring sense of hope than he is given credit for, Nehru is undermined by his belief in Progress-at-almost-any-cost. In Ghosh's view Indians today rarely defend India's 'socialist' period between the 1950s and the late 1980s. Observing that 'the cheerleaders of liberalization always point to the "reforms" of the early '90s as if they marked the advent of a new world, one that had no connection to the old,' he appears to both welcome and yet partially distance himself from that world.[5] He also points to the now robust public sector and the Indian Institutes of Technology, founded and expanded in the 'socialist era', to draw links from Nehru to today. These ambivalent observations capture the political, ethical, and economic conundrum from which both Ghosh and Mistry are writing. Ghosh states this rather plainly, but nonetheless vexingly: 'It must be acknowledged […], even by those who are not indifferent to the ills of liberalization, that it has also led to an enormous upwelling of human energy in India.'[6]

Recently, the same ambivalent anxieties that arise from this context have morphed into a somewhat celebratory, callous, and matter-of-fact treatment of the rags-to-riches story in Indian English fiction. For an example of this, one need only look at the narrator of Aravind Adiga's Man Booker Prize-winning novel, *The White Tiger* (2008). In it, the protagonist Balram pens letters to the Premier of China, Wen Jiabao, of the grotesque, murderous story of his rise to successful entrepreneur. Vikas Swarup's *Q&A* (2005) and Danny Boyle and Loveleen Tandan's film adaptation, *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), provide similar examples, which again give an unflattering and Malthusian view of the urban poor. These works have spawned both academic criticism and

[4] Aldama, p. 88.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid. Amit Chaudhuri claims that Ghosh's position in the cross-stream of postmodernism and the Bengal Renaissance gives him his self-reflexive historicism and his 'troubled liberal conscience'. Amit Chaudhuri, *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* (London: Picador, 2001), p. 538.

popular acclaim, which, though opinion has varied widely, continues to demonstrate that works of art focus valuable and urgent attention on questions of mobility, poverty, and hope in a capitalist, postcolonial context.[7]

The construction of hope in the South Asian context in this thesis was initially predicated on Nehru's early post-independence failures and defeats, and how his hopeful, even utopian construction of the future played into his political vision for the new nation, India. Given more time, I would have liked to extend and test the nominal-messianic structure of hope in Nehru into other national and postcolonial contexts, as these have been reflected in Anglophone fiction. How does hope figure in the different West and East African situation of Nigeria, Kenya, or Sudan where structural adjustment programs played economic havoc in the 1980s and seemed to shut down future prospects entirely for the poor? One could look to the novels of Ngugi or Okri as corollary to the focus on Mistry and Ghosh in this thesis.

There is vast potential in attempting to test in other national and global literatures the concept and configurations of 'postcolonial hope' hewn from the Indian English novels of the thesis. In an essay titled 'Latin American Aesthetics of Hope', Chilean author and critic Ariel Dorfman sketches a literature 'based on the proposition that the dead do not choose for us, but that we choose for them, that we change the past as we forge the future.'[8] Literary critic Sofia McClennen elaborates this 'aesthetics of hope' in Dorfman's work, touching upon many of the same themes of this thesis.[9] Dorfman's quote above recalls Benjamin's weak messianism of the present, but Dorfman shifts this weak messianism forward. This is similar to Nehru's comments in his historiography, *Discovery of India*, that he is writing for an 'unknown, possibly distant future'. It is from this difficult position that writers like Ghosh, Mistry, Dorfman, Heaney, and in his time Matthew Arnold grapple and grappled with redeeming the hopes of the past while attempting to

[7] See Mitu Sengupta's 'A Million Dollar Exit from the Anarchic Slum-world: *Slumdog Millionaire*'s Hollow Idioms of Social Justice' (2010).
[8] Ariel Dorfman, *Other Septembers, Many Americas: Selected Provocations 1980-2004* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2004), p. 169.
[9] Sofia A. McClennen, *Ariel Dorfman: An Aesthetics of Hope* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

shape our own social and political redemption in the future. This is, of course, always a dangerous and precarious creative and critical endeavor. When left insufficiently questioned, it can slide into instrumentalism and lose its point. Yet these writers from varied (post)colonial contexts posit in their artistic works a cautious hope that questions and admonishes its cautiousness. Dwelling in the incompleteness of hope to take a step back from the notion of revolution as redemption may prove to be a profound and fruitful methodological framework for reading postcolonial literatures.

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