Université de Montréal

Imperfect Flâneurs: Anti-heroes of Modern Life

par Simon Yiu-Tsan Ng 吳耀燦

Département de littératures et de langues du monde, Faculté des arts et des sciences

Thèse présentée en vue de l'obtention du grade de Philosophiæ Doctor (PhD)
en études anglaises

Août 2015

Résumé

Cette thèse commence comme une simple question en réponse au modèle du « parfait flâneur » que Baudelaire a élaboré dans <u>Le peintre de la vie moderne</u> (1853): un flâneur peut-il être imparfait? Je suggère trois interprétations possibles du mot « imparfait ». Il permet d'abord de sortir le flâneur du strict contexte du Paris du dix-neuvième siècle et permet des traductions imparfaites de personnages dans d'autres contextes. Ensuite, le flâneur déambule dans la dimension « imparfaite » de l'imagination fictionnelle – une dimension comparable à l'image anamorphique du crâne dans la peinture <u>Les ambassadeurs</u> de Holbein. Enfin, il réfère à l'imparfait conjugué, « l'imparfait flâneur » peut rappeler le personnage antihéroïque de l'humain dont l'existence est banale et inachevée, comme la phrase « il y avait ». Ces trois visions contribuent à la réinterprétation du flâneur dans le contexte de la fin du vingtième siècle. Mon hypothèse est que l'expérience urbaine du flâneur et la flânerie ne sont possibles que si l'on admet être imparfait(e), qu'on accepte ses imperfections et qu'elles ne nous surprennent pas.

Quatre études de romans contemporains et de leurs villes respectives forment les principaux chapitres. Le premier étudie Montréal dans <u>City of forgetting</u> de Robert Majzels. J'examine les façons par lesquelles les personnages itinérants peuvent être considérés comme occupant (ou en échec d'occupation) du Montréal contemporain alors qu'ils sont eux-mêmes délogés. Quant au deuxième chapitre, il se concentre sur le Bombay de Rohinton Mistry dans <u>A fine balance</u>. Mon étude portera ici sur la question de l'hospitalité en relation à l'hébergement et au « dé-hébergement » des étrangers dans la ville. Le troisième chapitre nous amène à Hong-Kong avec la série Feituzhen de XiXi. Dans celle-ci, j'estime que la méthode spéciale de la marelle apparait comme une forme unique de flânerie imparfaite. Le quatrième chapitre étudie Istanbul à travers <u>The black book</u> d'Orhan Pamuk. Inspiré par les notions de « commencement » d'Edward Saïd, mon argumentaire est construit à partir de l'interrogation suivante : comment et quand commence une narration? En lieu de conclusion, j'ai imaginé une conversation entre l'auteur de cette thèse et les personnages de flâneurs imparfaits présents dans les différents chapitres.

Mots-clés : flâneur; antihéros; ville; roman fin vingtième siècle; anticipation; déception; traduction; imperfection; vie quotidienne; culture urbaine

Abstract

This dissertation begins with a simple question in response to "the perfect flâneur" model that Baudelaire elaborated in his 1853 essay "The Painter of Modern Life": can a flâneur be imperfect? I suggest three possible inferences behind the word "imperfect." First, it should liberate the flâneur from the strict context of nineteenth-century Paris, and allows for imperfect translations of the figure into other urban contexts. Second, the flâneur also strolls in the "imperfect" dimension of fictional imagination, a dimension comparable to the anamorphic skull in Holbein's painting The Ambassadors. Third, in the grammatical meaning of imperfect verb tenses, "imperfect flâneur" can also refer to the anti-heroic figure of the living, whose existence remains incomplete and mundane as in the phrase "it was." All three implications contribute to the reinterpretation of the flâneur in late twentieth-century contexts. My premise is that to experience the city as a flâneur, or to make flânerie possible in the city, one should concede being imperfect, anticipate imperfections, and come to terms with them.

Four in-depth studies of contemporary novels and their respective cities constitute the main chapters. Chapter One reads Robert Majzels's City of Forgetting and Montreal. I examine the ways in which homeless characters could be said to occupy – or, fail to occupy – contemporary Montreal from their dislodged position. Chapter Two focuses on Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance and Bombay. My reading evolves around the question of hospitality in relation to the accommodation and un-accommodation of strangers in the city. Chapter Three brings us to XiXi's Feituzhen series and Hong Kong: I address the special method of hopscotching as a unique form of imperfect flânerie in XiXi's works. In Chapter Four, I study Orhan Pamuk's The Black Book and Istanbul. Inspired by Edward Said's notions of beginning, I frame my argument with the enquiry: how and when does a narrative begin? In lieu of Conclusion, I imagined a conversation between the writing subject of this dissertation and the imperfect flâneurs featured in each chapter.

Key words: flâneur; anti-hero; city; late twentieth-century novel; anticipation; disappointment; translation; imperfection; everyday life; urban culture

疲倦地垂下
也許不過是暫時憩息
不一定高歌才是慷慨
把苦澀藏在心中
是因為看到太多虛假的陽光
太多雷電的傷害
太多陰晴未定的日子？
我佩服你的沉默
把苦味留給自己
──也斯《給苦瓜的頌詩》

Acknowledgements

In his 17 February 1903 letter to the young poet Franz Xaver Kappus, Rainer Maria Rilke pointed out that

> [t]hings are not all so comprehensible and expressible as one would mostly have us believe; most events are inexpressible, taking place in a realm which no word has ever entered, and more inexpressible than all else are works of art, mysterious existences, the life of which, while ours passes away, endures. (2004 [1934], 15)

In this dissertation, I endeavoured to address many "things" from the realm of the inexpressible, which words rarely traverse. These Acknowledgements pages exemplify one of my several attempts at expressing the inexpressible. Although I am very aware of my words' inadequacy when expressing gratitude, I hope to do justice to the following people, without whom this project would not have reached the completion stage.

This research started when I felt the urge to embark on an intellectual journey. At the time, I believed pursuing a PhD would be the best path. For some peculiar and unexplainable reason, I wanted to live in Montreal and be away from Hong Kong. As an imperfect flâneur, I did not plan my journey well in advance, not mentally, financially, or emotionally. Though it is known since June 2015 as the Département de littératures et de langues du monde, the then-called Département d'études anglaises at Université de Montréal gave me a home for a few years of my PhD study. The research was generously funded by numerous university bursaries, for which I am forever grateful to the Département. Indeed, I want to declare proudly that these past years were very meaningful to me. The dissertation bears witness to my growth and transition from innocence to experience.

I have been assigned a wonderful dissertation committee for this project. It was a privilege and a great honour to work with Robbie (Robert Schwartzwald) as my supervisor. Under his guidance, I have grown a lot and in many directions: intellectually, pedagogically, stylistically in terms of writing. In some magical and arcane ways, working with Robbie has stimulated me with original and exciting ideas. Many of them turned into arguments and insights developed in the dissertation. I am also greatly indebted for his comments and suggestions at different stages of writing this dissertation. All of them were very timely and insightful.

I was also lucky enough that Lianne Moyes and Sherry Simon were on my committee from the start: both are very encouraging and inspiring. I had the pleasure of studying under Lianne during the awesome Paris exchange seminars of the winter and summer of 2010, and she introduced me to Anglo-Québécois literature. In the course of my research, I encountered for the first time Sherry's book <u>Translating Montreal</u> (2006) and have wholeheartedly admired her ever since. Quite simply, I could not ask for a better group of first readers for my dissertation.

It is my great honour to have Roxanne Rimstead as my external examiner. Her stimulating comments and constructive criticisms mean a lot to me. Her insightful editorial suggestions in her examiner's report are more encouraging than I have expected, and proleptically anticipate the publication of this manuscript. I will definitely work towards this end in the near future.

Symposium on Literature and Culture in Asia-Pacific Region at the University of Hong Kong in 2013, the ICLA Triennial Congress in Paris 2013, and the Biennial Conference of the American Council for Québec Studies in Montreal 2014.

I owe my special thanks to my dear friend Marie (Gervaise-Marie Pilon), whom I first met in Gail Scott's Creative Writing Workshop during my first-year in this programme. She has always been supportive and caring. I am grateful for our wonderful friendship. Above all, I want to thank her for copy-editing and proofreading the entire dissertation during the last month prior to its submission. Her assistance eased the anxiety in this final process. She is the only one, in addition to Robbie, who read the entire dissertation before submission. Like Robbie, she marked some comments in margins and turned the dissertation into a palimpsest. Some of these comments made me think further, some simply made me smile.

I am indebted to Richard Robert, whose household space I share, and who took care of me during these years. My French has improved a lot because of him. I also thank him for accommodating me in his Paris apartment during my short stay there in the summer of 2013. I am grateful for his help in drafting the French version of the abstract.

I also want to thank the administrative staff on the eighth floor of Pavillon Lionel-Groulx, particularly Ada Gioia, Mélanie Deit, Chantal Benoît and Marianne Gallo for their assistance with paperwork and other difficult tasks. Un grand merci à vous!

At the time of completion, I genuinely feel that I have accomplished something huge, to the extent that I am tempted to describe the achievement as "epic" or "heroic," though it is exaggerated and contradictory to the central thesis of this dissertation. I am anxious to know how it is going to be received. Though I perceive it as a great achievement, I am prepared to accept that it may impact or change this world very little. Still, I believe that it is a contribution, however trivial, and so, I want to proleptically thank all my future readers.

Lastly, I am grateful for a fact which I secretly and lately discovered: I will always occupy an important spot in the lives of my family and friends (please forgive me for not mentioning your names here, because the list will be endless). You care for me and love me above many other things. To you, the completion of this dissertation has already shaken the world or broken the ground, even though you have not had the chance to read it yet.

I want to thank my family, in particular, my mom, my dad, and my sis for always believing in me, for allowing me to go for this journey, for always being there and for keeping my room in good shape. I am sorry for making you worry and for my absence all these years. You are all my anti-heroic heroes. I love you and miss you all. I hope we will reunite and celebrate soon.

A special acknowledgement to all the participants in the 2012 Quebec Student Protests and the 2014 Hong Kong Umbrella Movement: Châpeau à vous tous! 毋忘初衷。

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandma Mrs. Wong Tai So-chu and my uncle Mr. Wong Kin-nam, whom I dearly miss.

Contents

Introduction: Coming to Terms with Imperfections

This dissertation endeavours to trace steps of anticipation in cities of disappointment. In my reading of the primary literary examples, I frame my discussion within this main critical enquiry: how do these texts, each in their attempt at telling the stories of a single city, perform the rhetoric of anticipation and of disappointment? More importantly and undialectically (I will explain what this curious adverb means very soon), I will examine how these texts articulate anticipated disappointment and disappointment in anticipation, despite all the difficulties and paradoxes which arise from the process.

One such paradox resides in the adverb "already": an adverb that we frequently use; an adverb that lends its significance and gravitational force to the perfect tense of unalterable past and complete action; and an adverb that brings home to us problems of narration dealing with buried pasts, muted voices of the ordinary or the marginal, and bygone glories and shames. How should one reimagine the meanings of "already" and narrate the stories of a city without succumbing to the grand narrative of heroes, to the official history of victors, or to the preferred account of events in a linear structure parallel to progress?

"Already" ("*già*" in Italian) – a word which appears twice in the final scene of Italo Calvino's Invisible Cities (1974 [1972]) – anticipates our impression that all the cities we have come across through a fictional Marco Polo's narration are déjà vu. Not only have they already been seen and imagined, but also, they may have already existed:

> *Already the Great [Kublai] Khan was leafing through his atlas, over the maps of the cities that menace in nightmares and maledictions: Enoch, Babylon, Yahooland, Butua, Brave New World.*
> *He said: "It is all useless, if the last landing place can only be the infernal city, and it is there that, in ever-narrowing circles, the current is drawing us."*
> *And [Marco] Polo said: "The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is <u>already</u> here, the inferno where we live every day, that we*

form by living together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space." (Calvino 1974 [1972], 164-5, original italics, my emphasis)

In this passage, we hear the word "already" twice. First, we hear it via the narrative voice describing Kublai Khan's gesture of leafing through his atlas. Then, we hear it as an echo as Marco Polo reminds the Great Khan and the readers that "the infernal city" should not be imagined and projected as "something that will be" in the conditional future but perceived as "what is *already* here" ("quello che è già qui" 1972, 82) in the indicative present. The latter appearance of the adverb "already" carries many implications and does not situate the Great Khan and the readers in any privileged vantage point anticipating a distant and possible future, but in the *here* and *now*: we inhabit this infernal city where the reality of suffering *already* constitutes our everyday life.

The word "already" also signals that we are *now* reaching the book's end. *Already*, we have leafed through this novel like the Great Khan was leafing through his atlas. This atlas does not only show the vastness of "the empire and the neighbouring realms" (135). It also details the borders and the ships' routes of "the terrestrial globe all at once and continent by continent" (136). What stands out from those maps are "*all* the cities," inclusively, explored or unexplored, real or imagined, the bygones' in the past or the would-be's in the future. They are "cities which neither Marco [Polo] nor the geographers know exist or where they are" (137), "the promised lands visited in thought but not yet discovered or founded" that are nonetheless drawn and marked on the map (164), and finally "the cities that menace in nightmares and maledictions" (164).

Thus, the final conversation between Kublai Khan and Marco Polo in Calvino's book

brings up different visions of the future – the improbable utopia and the (un)avoidable dystopia. For Kublai Khan, he is curious to know "towards which of these futures" progress (in the metaphor of "the favoring winds") would lead his empire, namely towards which of those utopias, including "New Atlantis, Utopia, the City of the Sun, Oceana, Tamoé, New Harmony, New Lanark, Icaria" and many others which are shown on the map but not mentioned (164). He insists that Marco Polo, as someone "who go[es] about exploring and who see[s] signs," should have sufficient knowledge to shed some light on this question (164).

As usual, Polo does not provide any direct response but suggests that he "could not draw a route on the map or set a date for the landing" (164). In other words, he chooses not to make any false promise or deceptive appointment, which would ultimately turn into a disappointment of non-arrival. All those utopian models which the Great Khan mentions should paradoxically be found and not be found. No city, for certain, would exactly resemble any of those utopias. One may care to gather and put together "piece by piece" impressions and experiences from different sources such as "a brief glimpse, an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of lights in the fog, [or even] the dialogue of two passersby meeting in the crowd" (164). When all the pieces are together, a model of "the perfect city" finally emerges, as a mélange of "fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them" (164). Its reality dwells in places which are scattered among cities all over the world, but no single one would fully embody any perceived perfect city model.

Suddenly, advancing towards the book's final page, the Great Khan's obsession with utopia is replaced and overwhelmed by his anxiety over the prospect of transportation by these same winds or "the current" – which I interpret as *progress* – towards a possible cul-de-sac:

the dystopian future. He pessimistically speculates, "It is all useless, if the last landing place can only be the infernal city" (165). However slim, the possibility of ending up or landing in the infernal city (as expressed in the verb "can be"), triggers the withdrawal of any optimistic anticipation towards the future. Perceiving bleak visions of the would-be futures such as "Enoch, Babylon, Yahooland, Butua, Brave New World" (165), the Great Khan worries that progress is leading him and his empire irreversibly and inevitably to any of these dead-ends of history or endgames of civilisation: one of those "ever-narrowing circles" on his maps.

Again, Marco Polo develops an unexpected trajectory of response. He reminds Kublai Khan (and the readers) that the infernal city, just like any perfect city model, should not be imagined as exclusively or inaccessibly futuristic. It is indeed everywhere and could be found within any city. They *already* exist in the present. The question should not be whether one can avoid ending up in an inferno by anticipating the arrival of an undesirable future, but how one can *escape* it here and now.[1] The infernal city is "what is already here": "already" because the infernal city does not emerge all of a sudden; nor should the infernal city be considered an utterly new city. Every city has endured its growth, expansion, decline, crisis, disaster, hiatus, division, integration, and transformation, in becoming its current shape and form. It also carries the baggage and burden of yesterdays and yesteryears, of its pasts, histories, shames, glories, stories, memories, debts, profits, wastes, excesses, ghosts, and inhabitants. A city is after all an inhabited space. If one is able to detect at least a sign of perfection in every city, a similar hypothesis should apply to the infernal city: every city is (becoming) infernal. Indeed, no matter how perfect the city may seem or how much potential it may have, it holds its own problems and sufferings. Such is particularly true if these infernal elements' inevitable emergence is going unnoticed in the city.

The recognition that the infernal city is "already here" may sound pessimistic. It implies a failure of progress which has led us nowhere close to any perceived ideal or humanistic goal but to inescapable sufferings. The word "already" is unbearably heavy in this implication – we are reminded of Adorno's post-Auschwitz pessimism that "culture has failed" (1978, 55). Failure of progress does not allow anyone to partake in a journey of adventure like Polo's in different cities, but to find oneself incapable of laying any step of anticipation into the future.

However, there is also an optimistic note, or a touch of lightness, in this final passage of Polo in <u>Invisible Cities</u>. This lightness can be perceived, again, in the word "already": it allows us to see what we have presently as the worst condition. From then on, the city (or metonymically the world) only gets further away from becoming an inferno and loses infernal characteristics (as the worst cannot get any worse but becomes less bad, if not better). If the infernal city is already here, there is no point in passively and unreservedly receiving the future as what progress might bring forth to us. Progress, indeed, would lead us to a prospect either predictably unfavourable or unforeseeably disastrous, if we choose not to do anything but to unconditionally welcome it.

"Escape" is the suggested first step we take, but not in the passive meaning of withdrawal or non-participation. Between the two means of escape which Polo proposes at the end, the first one warns the Khan (and the reader) of the danger and comfort in being carried away by progress and of not taking any step of resistance. Hence, in this posture of passive reception in an attitude of come-what-may, one eventually lets oneself become part of the flows or forces of progress and part of the sufferings (as a victim, or worse, as an agent of others' sufferings). It is less option than dissuasion, and draws our attention to the second way

proposed in the final sentence: "seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space" (165). This imperative invites us to perceive the cities where we live as *a city of disappointment*. Rather than depart for another city, it demands that we identify what we believe should be preserved and sustained and that we take every tiny step of anticipation as a diversion or an alternative path from the flow of progress.

This final sentence in <u>Invisible Cities</u>, rather than offering closure or a conclusion to the book, invitingly introduces a beginning from which to tell the stories of cities, not through the voice of Marco Polo but through our steps of anticipation. That is, we need to accept the fact that the perfect city is an impossible ideal, just as all cities can be perceived as infernal to a certain extent. It is a beginning because this perspective allows us to step away from any imposed narrative of progress while still acknowledging the (sometimes messy and organic) aspects of what has *already* taken place.

Consider further the Great Khan's failure to recognise the infernal city in the here and now, how should sufferings and misfortunes (or other aspects which contribute to the image of inferno) be addressed without sounding fictive, unrealistic, unconvincing, or exaggerated? Can the imagination of an alternative history of a city go anywhere, unbounded and unlimited? Can the story of a city contain all possibilities, like the all-inclusive atlas of the Great Khan's, or, like the 602nd night of <u>One Thousand and One Nights</u>, as Jorge Luis Borges recounts, which "embraces all the other stories as well as – monstrously – itself" (Borges 1964, 45)? Consider that no story would take place perfectly within the city, without relating to anything outside of its limits; how should the story begin and end without creating a neat and convenient closure? Regardless, could a story go on and on endlessly, and also, perhaps, without a proper

beginning? What is sacrificed when a story is set to begin? Which perspective should the narrator take or avoid – the omniscient third-person or the self-obsessed first-person, given that both are equally inadequate?

To some extent, all these questions will be examined in the main chapters of this dissertation. In order of appearance in this dissertation, they are: Robert Majzels's Montreal or "City of Forgetting" in the eponymous novel (1997a), Rohinton Mistry's Bombay (Mumbai) or "City by the Sea" in A Fine Balance (2002b [1995]), XiXi's Hong Kong or "Feituzhen" ("Fertile Town" or "Fertillia" in different English translations) in Flying Carpet (2000 [1996]) and other short stories in her "Feituzhen" series, and Orhan Pamuk's Istanbul or the fictional Istanbul (or "City of Hearts") in The Black Book (2006, 1994 [1990]). These are cities of disappointment narrated and described through the eyes of their (implied) authors, narrators and protagonists.

In Calvino's Invisible Cities, the Great Khan and Marco Polo when separately considered – that is, before they come into contact with each other – respectively take up the posture of a Platonian philosopher-king or an outsider-traveller. These postures, however, are inadequate, and indeed at times antithetical, to performing the "steps of anticipation" which I trace in this dissertation.

As the emperor of the Tartars, Kublai Khan is always anxious to prove his capacity to genuinely possess his empire (Calvino 1974, 23). While his empire extends widely on two continents, covers prairies and mountains, across rivers and deserts, he actually would not have time and opportunity to visit all corners of his empire. Many cities remain obscure and foreign to him even though they are located within the borders of his empire. The major (and perhaps only) source from which the Great Khan perceives these cities' existence is through

the reports of envoys and tax-collectors, as the narrator describes in the beginning: "the emperor is he who is a foreigner to each of his subjects, and only through foreign eyes and ears could the empire manifest its existence to Kublai" (21). However, in the self-imposed "centre" of his empire, listening to incomprehensible languages as the envoys relay "information heard in languages incomprehensible to them" (21), the stories or details which the Khan obtains are not only indirect, unreliable, and hardly comprehensible, they are also subject to his subjective, self-serving interpretation. Thus, more often than not, the Khan only perceives the messages he wishes to hear. To borrow a contemporary diction I hear in my vernacular these days as a derogative term to criticise the deafness of government officials on Hong Kong media, the Khan is incredibly "remote from the ground" and stays in a prejudiced position which ironically keeps him above and away from the field that he hopes to understand. Modern equivalents to this position are governors, politicians, bureaucrats, and urban planners etc., who seek to control and take possession of the territory marked on their maps.

On the other hand, Marco Polo arrives in Kai-ping-fu (the Khan's imperial capital) as a Venetian traveller, and is initially "ignorant of the Levantine languages" (21). He is occasionally sent by the Khan to explore the empire on the latter's expenditures. Polo does not visit these cities on any well-organised itinerary, nor does he intend to revisit or return to any of them. Thus, he maintains that he would remain an outsider to these cities. For Polo, many of these cities, whether he really visits them or imagines their existence, can be described as such: "The city exists and it has a simple secret: it knows only departures, not returns" (56). For a traveller, these unplanned destinations are only good for temporary stay, once and for all. Walter Benjamin makes the distinction in his essay "The Return of the Flâneur" (1999b [1929]) between the accounts of cities from natives and those from travellers who "journey to

foreign parts" (262). While the former would always become something in common with memoirs written by those who "journey to the past," the latter may easily fall prey to the seductive fascination in "the superficial pretext – the exotic and the picturesque" (262). This may serve as a relevant description of Book of the Marvels of the World (Livre des merveilles du monde) – the book which was written by the historical Marco Polo, circa 1300 – as a chronicle of his travels for readers back home in the Republic of Venice. Nonetheless, the fictional Polo goes further and deeper than the superficial impressions in his accounts of different cities in Calvino's novel. He happens to cross the lines which separate an outsider from an insider, mainly because of the anticipated audience's intervention, the Great Khan's questions, responses, and reactions.

Through his response to the Khan's questions, Polo revisits those cities which he once visited or imagined. (Arguably, they may all be derived from his hometown Venice.) Similarly, it is upon listening to Polo's reports that the Great Khan perceives these cities' existence in his empire. Oftentimes, this perception is strengthened ironically through his doubt of the veracity in Polo's account. In other words, by re-imagining the conversation between the historical figures Kublai Khan and Marco Polo in the textual and fictional space, Calvino causes these two characters to gradually step away from their previous positions, a philosopher-king and an outsider-traveller. They become *wanderers* who do not only stroll deep inside each city which Polo describes and depicts in his long reports, but they also make necessary digressions and detours each time Polo and the Khan exchange or dialogue in their search of signs of habitation, footprints, memories and experiences.

I find this posture most fruitful and fascinating in addressing the literary examples and the recurring themes in this dissertation – a posture that emerges from the fissures of fictional

imagination and demands an audience for the perpetuation of such imagination; a posture whose existence relies solely on wandering in the invisible cities; a posture that insinuates an implicit turn *from* the Khan's future-oriented or progress-driven vision (be it a rose-tinted prospect of becoming utopia or a bleak prophetic view of ending up in a dystopia) *to* Polo's insistence on diverting our attention to the surroundings of here and now.

I tentatively name this posture the "imperfect flâneur," or alternatively, the "anti-hero of modern life."

Adaptations of the Flâneur

The phrase "imperfect flâneurs" which occupies the main title of this dissertation is an intended parody on Baudelaire's model, not simply that of the flâneur but that of the perfect flâneur, from his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" ("Le Peintre de la vie moderne" 1995 [1863]). Obviously, since Baudelaire's essay, the term "flâneur" has been loaded with literary and theoretical implications, related to Baudelaire's Paris, Benjamin's arcades, and their writings on the city. However, some of these implications are incompatible and contradictory.[2]

How could the flâneur be described as "imperfect"? Before we address this question, it is important to ask, (i) first, in what way(s) can the flâneur still be considered relevant as a literary device or a form of experience in twentieth-century or contemporary cities (now in the mid-twenty-tens, or the second decade of the twenty-first century), especially after Benjamin has famously announced the death of the flâneur in his writings? And, (ii) second, to what extent would the flâneur be applicable to the posture which I briefly elaborate above in my reading of the last scene of Calvino's <u>Invisible Cities</u>: in short, a figure which emerges from the fissures of imagination and strolls in a city between fiction and reality? I shall first address these two questions below, which should reveal partially why I modify the noun "flâneurs"

with the adjective "imperfect." Regardless, my profound understanding of the implications behind the adjective in "imperfect flâneurs" will come afterward – as a critique of completion, heroism, and the feeling of home which are all implied in Baudelaire's flâneur's "perfect" qualifier. The imperfect flâneur model which I introduce in this dissertation resists the temptation of entrapment within the frame of anticipation. This frame of anticipation is again called *progress*, which leads us towards a vision of perceived perfection. In short, imperfect flâneurs can be said to have come to terms with imperfections in their life, in their city, and in their narrative.

In response to question (i), Benjamin's 1929 essay "The Return of the Flâneur" offers a hint (1999b, 262-67). This essay serves as a review of Franz Hessel's memoir <u>Spazieren in Berlin</u> (On Foot in Berlin) [1929]. It is apparently the first instance of the flâneur in Benjamin's work. Interestingly unlike in most of Benjamin's later writings or drafts, the figure is examined not in nineteenth-century Paris but in twentieth-century Berlin. The word "return" in the title suggests that the flâneur comes from a different context and *returns* to a new form of existence – or, a translation – in Hessel's Berlin.

Benjamin is aware of the unavoidable discrepancy between Hessel's Berlin (that of his contemporary) and the flâneur (whose birthplace is nineteen-century Paris). He writes, "What [Berlin] reveals is the endless spectacle of flânerie that we thought had been finally relegated to the past" (263). Then, he asks, "And can it be reborn here, in Berlin of all places, where it never really flourished?" (263) In 1929, flânerie was already considered a passé practice in experiencing the city. For Benjamin, as he notes in <u>Arcades Project</u> (Section V of the exposé of 1935), "[t]he department store is the last promenade of the flâneur" (1999a, 10). The same idea reappears a couple of times in some other fragments of the <u>Arcades Project</u>, for instance,

in Section M: "Just as his final ambit is the department store, his last incarnation is the sandwich-man" ([M17a, 2] 448).[3]

Susan Buck-Morss pays particular attention to this observation concerning the extinction of the flâneur as a social species in Benjamin's unfinished Project. She suggests that Benjamin considers "the relative tranquil shelter of the arcades" (in nineteenth-century Paris) the "original habitat" of the flâneur (Buck-Morss 2006 [1986], 35). Benjamin explains why strolling or flânerie "took place in the arcades" rather than on the sidewalks as regards the transformation of the Parisian urban landscape:

> Until 1870, the carriage ruled the streets. On the narrow sidewalks the pedestrian was extremely cramped; [the arcades, on the other hand,] offered protection from bad weather and from the traffic. ([A1a, 1] 32)

Buck-Morss references this fragment[4] and goes on to explain the arcades' decline under Napoleon III: "the elements of modernity moved out of the womb of the arcades and settled onto the new boulevards built by [Georges-Eugène] Haussmann. The construction of wide sidewalks first made strolling on the boulevards possible" (36).

In short, this transformation in the landscape of Paris became the backdrop against which "the function of flânerie" had significantly changed:

> If at the beginning, the flâneur as private subject dreamed himself out into the world, at the end, flânerie was an ideological attempt to reprivatize social space, and to give assurance that the individual's passive observation was adequate for knowledge of social reality. In Benjamin's time, even this ideological form of flânerie was at the brink of decline: The flâneur had become a "suspicious" character. (Buck-Morss 36-7)

That the flâneur had become suspicious is an idea taken from Benjamin's reading of Hessel in "The Return of the Flâneur." Benjamin notes that Hessel had mastered the "art of the flâneur" during his time in Paris where he had lived long enough to consider Paris his "mature hometown." In this memoir on Berlin (Benjamin comparatively takes it as Hessel's "strict

home"), Hessel can be said to adapt or to translate flânerie from Paris (the "mature hometown") to Berlin (the "strict home"). For Benjamin, Hessel was born at the right moment for this translation: he was "young enough to have experienced [the] change" in Berliners which had transformed "[t]heir problematic national pride in their capital" into "their love of Berlin as a hometown" and "old enough to have been personally acquainted with the last classics of flânerie: Appollinaire and Léautaud" (1999b, 263). Through the experience of Hessel's flânerie in Paris and in Berlin, Benjamin remarks upon the difference between the two cities:

> Once, when [Hessel] was walking through Paris, he saw women concièrges sitting and sewing in the cool doorways in the afternoon. He felt they looked at him like his nurse. [Back home in Berlin, however,] this great city walker was soon noticed and regarded with suspicion by Berliners. (265)

However, for Benjamin, this "prevailing resistance to flânerie in Berlin" does not necessarily discourage Hessel from strolling in Berlin as a flâneur. Instead, he underscores the (expected) reward or the excitement which might have motivated Hessel to take the steps of a flâneur in Berlin as a unique form of city experience:

> It is here, not in Paris, where it becomes clear to us how easy it is for the flâneur to depart from the ideal of the philosopher out for a stroll, and to assume the features of the werewolf at large in the social jungle – the creature of whom Poe has given the definitive description in his story "The Man of the Crowd." (265)

Although the flâneur could be considered an extinct social species, whose death had long been identified and announced by Benjamin, it is still possible and at times innovative to imagine the return of the flâneur as a *translation* from nineteenth-century Paris to a different urban context. To consider this return analogously as an adaptation or a translation, it is important to be attentive to what could have been lost or become irrelevant in the new context. In the case of Hessel, it is the privilege of stealthy invisibility which became impossible in flânerie in

Berlin.

In our time, Buck-Morss proposes (and her article was first published in 1986), "in the case of the flâneur, it is not his perceptive attitude which has been lost, but rather its marginality" (37). Buck-Morss remarks that Adorno, too, in 1939 already saw a new reincarnation of the flâneur in "the station-switching behavior of the radio listener as a kind of aural flânerie" (Buck-Morss 37-8). Therefore, she concludes, "The flâneur thus becomes extinct only by exploding into a myriad of forms, the phenomenological characteristics of which, no matter how new they may appear, continue to bear his traces, as *Urform*" (38). It is in the light of this observation we can speak of the afterlife of the flâneur, that is, his or her new existence after premature "death."

These adaptations of the flâneur liberate the flâneur from Baudelaire's model of "the perfect flâneur," which entraps the figure in nineteenth-century Paris and relates restrictively to white Parisian men (and obviously not women). In his Introduction to an edited volume on The Flâneur (1994), Keith Tester teases out a similar problem in Baudelaire's writing:

> [Baudelaire] was unprepared to make any significant distinction between Paris and modernity. Unfortunately, this leaves something of an impression that, actually, he was never really too sure whether he was writing about one or the other or indeed both at the same time. (Tester 16)[5]

The major disadvantage of this conflation is that, as Tester further elaborates,

> it could lead to flânerie being made so specifically about Paris at a given moment in its history that flânerie becomes of no contemporary relevance at all. Either that, or flânerie becomes so general as to be almost meaningless and most certainly historically rootless if not seemingly somewhat ahistorical. (17)

Of course, the adjective "perfect" highlights the exactitude of what designates the adjacent noun, which in turn signifies a type or, in Buck-Morss's term, an "*Urform*" of behaviours.[6] In his entire body of work, Baudelaire conjures different phantasmagoric types of

14

modern life, among which we find the dandy, the criminal, the prostitute, the gentleman, the ragpicker, the bohemian, the stranger, etc. In other words, "the perfect flâneur" refers to the archetype of the flâneur, this figure's perfect model. This adjective reappears a couple times in his writing. For instance, in "The Life and Work of Eugène Delacroix" (1995 [1863]), we encounter a similar phrase where the adjective "perfect" comes next to the figure of a "gentleman": "at first glance Eugène Delacroix simply gave the impression of an enlightened man, in the honorable acceptance of the word – of a perfect gentleman, with neither prejudices nor passions" (56). Similarly, in a later part of the essay "The Painter of Modern Life" we have the parallel to the perfect flâneur in the model of "the perfect dandy" ("le parfait dandy") (27). Both "dandy" and "gentleman" are loanwords (from English) in French. The adjective "perfect" in each case serves to neatly situate a type of a foreign origin in the local context of Second Empire Paris for Baudelaire's general readership in the French language.

Compared to these perfect models of the English "gentleman" and "dandy," the figure "flâneur" takes a similar but reverse path of translation. Baudelaire's "perfect flâneur" is usually considered the *original* model of the flâneur, while the word "flâneur" traverses other languages as an untranslatable word of French origin. Most translations of Baudelaire would leave this word in French, while any attempt to replace it with semi-equivalents such as "idler," "stroller," or "wanderer" in the English language, only delivers loss in translation, or reduces the figure into something less.

But, there are other more successful translations which enrich our understanding of the flâneur and take the idea of flânerie further (or make it possible for the flâneur to "leak") into other contexts. For instance, there are discussions on the possibility of addressing the female version of the flâneur, that is, the flâneuse. Jane Wolff in her article "The Invisible Flâneuse"

(1990) argues that the flâneuse could hardly exist in the late nineteenth century or 1900s because women have more often than not remained absent in the public sphere, and are thus "invisible," as the title suggests. However, for Elizabeth Wilson, women were not absent but part of the spectacle in the city. In "The Invisible Flâneur" (1992), as a response to Wolff's article, she argues that the (male) flâneur remains invisible, but not the flâneuse. Treating the city as a labyrinth "and the flâneur an embodiment of it" (108), she deduces that "the flâneur himself never really existed, being but an embodiment of the special blend of excitement, tedium and horror aroused by many in the new metropolis, and the disintegrative effect of this on the masculine identity" (109). According to Wilson, then, speaking of the flâneuse would imply the visibility of women in the city spectacle. Prostitutes may be the only women in nineteenth-century Europe who could aptly be considered flâneuses. However, unlike Baudelaire's perfect model, they could not enjoy the privilege (or get caught in the fated curse) of perennial invisibility.

Another example is Dianne Chisholm's Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City (2005). She devotes an entire chapter to "Queer Passages in *Gai Paris*" in which she studies turn-of-the-millennium queer adaptations of the flâneur in Gail Scott's My Paris: a novel (1999) and Edmund White's The Flâneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris (2001). Self-consciously, Chisholm limits her chapter's scope to Paris at the turn of the millennium to ask whether the flâneur can be adapted from the nineteenth century into our contemporary age. She asks specifically "can today's Paris accommodate [Baudelaire's] perfect flâneur?" (156)

This question is rhetorical and expects the answer no. Nonetheless, Chisholm does not question the hospitality or habitability of today's Paris in comparison with the Paris of the

Second Empire in Baudelaire (to borrow a phrase from Benjamin); nor does she underscore the problematic ideology behind the anticipation that the flâneur should feel perfectly at home in Paris. Instead, she suggests that one should anticipate disappointment because today's Paris will prove to be significantly different from Baudelaire's. She quotes White at length in support of this point:

> the cosy, dirty, mysterious Paris Baudelaire is discussing (or Balzac or even Flaubert of Sentimental Education) is the city that was destroyed after 1853 by one of the most massive urban renewal plans known to history [of course, he means Haussmann's renovation of Paris that Buck-Morss also references], and replaced by a city of broad, strictly linear streets, unbroken façades, roundabouts radiating avenues, uniform city lighting, uniform street furniture, a complex, modern sewer system and public transportation (horse-drawn omnibuses eventually replaced by the metro and motor-powered buses). (White 37 quoted in Chisholm 156)

She finds reassurance in White's contention that "more than any other city Paris is still constructed to tempt someone out for an aimless saunter, to walk on just another hundred yards – and then another" (White 38 quoted in Chisholm 156). Indeed, although Paris may have become less hospitable to flânerie, it is still a city where one might rewardingly thrive as a flâneur, or at least be tempted to experiment with flânerie.

Along similar critical trajectory which speculates or explores a possible adaptation of the flâneur in another context, some critics and writers seek to (re)situate the flâneur in cities other than Paris, or even outside Europe and the Western world. For instance, in his "Benjamin in Bombay? An Asian Extrapolation" (2003), Rajeev S. Patke explores whether the flâneur could be adapted into an Asian context. I discuss this idea largely in my reading of Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance (2002b [1995]) in this dissertation's Chapter Two.

Be they Hessel's Berlin walker, critical speculations on the possibilities of the flâneuse, the queer versions of the flâneur in the turn-of-millennium Gai Paris, or the indigenous flâneur

in an Asian context, these adaptations of the flâneur could all be considered imperfect because they inevitably (and deliberately) deviate from Baudelaire's *perfect* flâneur archetypal model. I believe this is the least significant among several dimensions in which the expression "imperfect flâneur(s)" makes sense. In the manner in which Sherry Simon (2012) calls "furthering," now adapted to each new context, these versions take the flâneur further away from their original but restrictive model.

The flâneur is renewed and made not to return but to *turn* to new directions. Indeed, it is important to note that Baudelaire's conception of "perfect flâneur" also involves an instance of translation (or adaptation). His flâneur is indeed an adapted version of a figure which carries a different name. Baudelaire conceives of the model of "perfect flâneur" largely through his study of the caricaturist Constantin Guys (the mysterious figure "M.G." in his essay) in Paris. However, in his description of this figure, Baudelaire also draws upon an exemplary literary reference, namely Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Man of the Crowd" (1975 [1845], 475-81). While Baudelaire translated Poe's story from English into French as "L'homme des foules" in 1856, he could be said to have further and critically translated the character of "the Man of the Crowd" into his model of the perfect flâneur in his essay in 1863. Rather than Guys being the direct equivalent of the protagonist in Poe's fiction, it is *the way in which* "the man of the crowd" is bound up with the narrator's pursuit that Baudelaire endeavours to translate from the text of Poe's London to the context of Guy's Paris, in order to capture the quintessence of flânerie.

As Stephen Rachman remarks in "Reading Cities: Devotional Seeing in the Nineteenth Century" (1997), Poe, who only spent part of his childhood in London, depicts the city of his birth with strong inspirations from Charles Dickens's textual London, particularly the short

story collection <u>Sketches by Boz</u> (1836). In short, Rachman suggests, "'The Man of the Crowd'
condenses and decontextualizes the ambience of <u>Sketches by Boz</u> into a single continuous
foray; its flânerie, in effect, relies on its cribbed knowledge of London street scenes" (658).

According to Rachman's close reading, the shadows of Dickens's London are apparent
in Poe's story. However, they are omitted or overlooked by critics. For instance, Rachman
points out that Benjamin's reading and Robert Byer's Benjaminian reading (1986)
"persuasively locate 'The Man of the Crowd' in an urban reality of 1830s and '40s." However,
"Poe's deep use of Dickens makes any claim to a strict referentiality problematic" (657). With
reference to "Benjamin's dependence on 'The Man of the Crowd' in his seminal discussion of
the flaneur," Rachman suggests:

> If the man of the crowd is a flaneur, then we should also recognize Poe as a flaneur of
> urban texts, and if Poe's flaneurlike [sic] narrator is observing anything it is Dickens's text
> as well as the streets, of London, Paris, or New York. In practical terms the Dickensian
> subtext of Poe's tale points to a relation with both realms – social reality and textual
> construction; the tale explores two kinds of public "reading," fusing reading with reading
> the social. (659)

Rachman's argument is suggestive. It relates to the question (ii) that I asked at the beginning
of this section: to what extent can the posture that emerges from Kublai Khan and Marco
Polo's dialogues in Calvino's novel be considered a flâneur's? If the flâneur could be said to
"journey[] to the past" as Benjamin remarks in Hessel's memoir, wouldn't it be appropriate
and promising to suggest that the flâneur also wanders and ventures through textual cities,
imaginary cities, cities in fictional narrative, and cities in literature?

Klee's <u>Angelus Novus</u>: Progress as Catastrophe

In the last scene of Calvino's <u>Invisible Cities</u>, as I have mentioned in the first part of
this Introduction, progress is portrayed figuratively first as "the favoring winds" which drive

the Khan's empire towards any of the "promised lands" as its future, and then as "the current" which draws the empire into "ever-narrowing circles" whose end is "the inferno" as its unfavorable yet inescapable future (1974, 164-5). Behind this imagery in which progress is seen as "the favoring winds" and "the current," and behind the implications that progress can be revised *from* being the force that drives us towards a better world *to* that which draws us towards the inferno, is the Benjaminian idea that progress should be understood as catastrophe. This idea appears several times in Benjamin's writing, notably in a later essay on Baudelaire titled "Central Park." In section 35, he pens these words with a tone of insistence:

> The concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are "status quo" *is* the catastrophe. It is not an ever-present possibility but what in each case is given. Strindberg's idea: hell is not something that awaits us, but *this life here and now* ["*Jetztzeit*"]. (2003 [1939], 184-5, original italics)

Here, progress is understood as catastrophe, or where things remain unchanged as "status quo."[7] Benjamin later develops this interpretation of progress as catastrophe into two different allegories. The first one appears in the preparatory notes or the Paralipomena to "On the Concept of History" (2003 [1940]), from the supposed thesis XVIIa. There, he conjures Marx's metaphor of the locomotive to address revolutions: "Marx says that revolutions are the locomotive of world history" (402). This of course is a banal and optimistic perception of history as progress. Nevertheless, for Benjamin, it renders something "quite otherwise." He suggests that "[p]erhaps revolutions are an attempt by the passengers on this train – namely, the human race – to activate the emergency brake" (402).

Another allegory in which progress is seen as catastrophe comes from Benjamin's interpretation of Paul Klee's 1920 painting <u>Angelus Novus</u>.[8] In his thesis IX "On the Concept of History" (2003 [1940]), Benjamin describes "the angel of history" in this painting:[9]

It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at. His eyes are wide, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how the angel of history must look. His face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives him irresistibly into the future, to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm. (392, original italics)

In her Introduction to her English-language selection of Benjamin's writings Illuminations (1978), Hannah Arendt associates Klee's angel with Benjamin's flâneur. For Arendt, the attitude behind the "angel of history" can be best described as "undialectic": "nothing could be more 'undialectic' than this attitude in which the 'angel of history' […] does not dialectically move forward into the future, but has his face 'turned toward the past'" (12). She further suggests that the angel be read as the flâneur's "final transfiguration" (13):

> For just as the *flâneur*, through the *gestus* of purposeless strolling, turns his back to the crowd even as he is propelled and swept by it, so the "angel of history," who looks at nothing but the expanse of ruins of the past, is blown backwards into the future by the storm of progress. (13)

The adjective "undialectic" strongly relates to Adorno's idea of negative dialectics, but is not exactly compatible with it. Adorno explains his model of negative dialectics as "a phrase that flouts tradition" (1987, xix). The tradition of dialectics dates back to Plato as a method of philosophical thinking "meant to achieve something positive by means of negation" (xix). With the stages or steps of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, Hegelian dialectic is the target of Adorno's critique in his model of negative dialectics. In Hegelian dialectics, history is narrated as a linear chain of causes and effects which lead mankind towards fulfilling the absolute. It requires a faith in achieving something positive: progress. History has shown that dialectical reasoning may indeed give birth to some demonic movement such as fascism in the name of

progress. Thus, Adorno questions granted positivism in Hegelian and Marxist dialectics and "seeks to free dialectics from such affirmative traits without reducing its determinacy" (xix).

It is through the lens of negative dialectics that Adorno perceives pessimistically that "culture has failed" (1978, 55). In the wake of the Holocaust, Adorno also abandons the optimism inferred in verbs such as "to build" or "to rebuild": "The idea that after this war life will continue 'normally' or even that culture might be 'rebuilt' – as if the rebuilding of culture were not already its negation – is idiotic" (55).[10] Adorno finds inconceivable the idea of "rebuilding of culture." Analogous to it is the house image – an end in itself the significance of which cannot be retrieved easily after it was brutally annihilated. The house can be taken as a convenient device to define the civilised from within and the barbaric from without. Adorno notes sharply: "To anyone in the habit of thinking with his ears, the words 'cultural criticism' (*Kulturkritik*) must have an offensive ring, not merely because, like 'automobile,' they are pieced together from Latin and Greek. The words recall a flagrant contradiction. The cultural critic is not happy with civilization, to which alone he owes his discontent" (1981, 19), or we should add, his disappointment.

If culture or civilisation can be taken as a metonymy of this house in Adorno's philosophy, this image should be dialectically negated as any attempt to get settled inevitably *unsettles* the attempt itself, the same way "the standpoint of redemption" in philosophical practice should be denied "for the sake of the possible" (1978, 247). Therefore, Adorno declares, "culture has failed" (55): to rebuild it after it has proven itself a failure is to reinstate the same pattern. However, as Rolf Tiedemann rightly observes, "that is precisely what has happened": "The Holocaust and the Shoah have been converted by the culture industry into aspects of the everyday television experience to which life itself has been reduced" (2003, xi).

Benjamin shares Adorno's pessimism. Empathetic with Klee's angel of history, Benjamin perceives progress as catastrophe. This angel's gaze is not directed dialectically into the future; but, as Arendt observes, "undialectically" backward into the past. Thus, Benjamin's theses "On the Concept of History" is not an instance of negative dialectics but an "undialectic" conversion of forward-moving progress into a static image of catastrophe. Arendt quotes Adorno's comment on Benjamin: "To understand Benjamin properly one must feel behind his every sentence the conversion of extreme agitation into something static, indeed, the static notion of movement itself" (Adorno translated in Arendt 1978, 12). The prefix "un-" in Arendt's "undialectic" signifies both undoing and abolishment of time. In other words, it connotes resistance to narrative progress and to the concept of time as a linear chain of events.[11]

In his reading of Benjamin's theses "On the Concept of History" Jeremy Tambling suggests that the face of this angel shows two "split forms of melancholy" (2001, 119). These correspond respectively to two incompatible implications of undoing in Benjamin's allegorical depiction of the angel of history. First, Tambling relates the melancholic face of Klee's angel to the angel in another painting: Albrecht Dürer's engraving of melancholia as an angel in Melencolia I (1514). Benjamin references Dürer's angel in his early work The Origins of German Tragic Drama (1998 [1925]) as an allegorical depiction of the mournful or the melancholy man: "in the proximity of [this] figure, Melencolia, the utensils of active life are lying around unused on the floor, as objects of contemplation" (Benjamin 1998, 140). In Klee's Angelus Novus, Tambling recognises a déjà vu scene: the melancholic face of Klee's angel resembles Dürer's angel. And, in Dürer's engraving, this melancholic mood is enhanced by the uselessness and disorderliness of different objects "placed in no relation to each other"

on the floor of Dürer's <u>Melencolia I</u> (Tambling 2001, 119).

Tambling considers that Benjamin's reading of Klee's painting is "the allegory of the allegory": "the angel breaks down what is seen into fragments or wreckage, which is the allegorical act, removing the signs of connectedness, which is the idealism of historicism produces" (119). A possible interpretation of the angel of history's melancholy is that he turns his back to the future and refuses to see past events unfolding in front of his eyes as "signs of connectedness." In other words, events happened as things were, with no necessary cause-and-effect relationship. The vision of this angel disarticulates the dialectic links between events, and breaks "the beads of a rosary" (Tambling 2001, 116, 128), by which the historian tends to tell the past as the evolutionary course of events and, in so doing, favours the victors. In short, the angel un-sees history as progress.

Tambling also perceives another related but incompatible face of melancholia in Klee's angel of history:

> Shocked, unable to speak, posthumous in being severed from the past to which he is turned, he would like to "awaken the dead and make whole that which is smashed": as if the past could be amended. (Tambling 2001, 119)

In short, with the desire to amend the past, this melancholic sentiment can be rephrased as *nostalgia*. For Tambling, the angel of history who shows the nostalgic face of melancholy is dangerous, because of his intention or desire to "reverse everything of the defeats of the past" (119). Tambling does not justify the dangers of melancholy in this form. The reason is quite obvious though: this attitude is based on denial. It amounts to the impossible wish to reverse the irreversible or to change the unchangeable. The angel seeks to turn the clock back, to *undo* the linear narrative of history, and to mend what has been rent asunder. What becomes intentionally confusing in Tambling's reading is that the nostalgic melancholia in this second

face of the angel of history overlaps "[t]he historicist's melancholia" (126). The historicist "fails to re-read and so thinks in terms of linear development – progress – rather than in terms of Nietzschean genealogy" (126). In historicism, laziness "takes the form of 'empathy,'" as "a belief that it is possible to identify with the other to enter into his or her world" (126). However, as Tambling points out,

> In practical terms, empathy shows its emptiness since it always sides with the victors [here Tambling references a remark in Benjamin's thesis VII "On the Concept of History": "With whom the adherents of historicism actually sympathize? The answer is inevitable: with the victor" (2003, 391)]; in other words, it identifies with those whose story has become the preferred one. Empathy denies the pastness of the past, it abolishes difference, and can only exist at all on the basis of a preferential view of what is past. (126)

In other words, nostalgia is seen as a passive and empty form of empathetic response to the wounded, the victims, and the defeated in history. If the angel wishes to alter the past, it is not because he shares the defeated's pain and sorrow, but because it would allow him to empathise with the defeated as would-be victors in the narrative of amended history.

However, the melancholy behind the face of the angel of history can also be understood as the sentiments or preoccupations shared by those literary writers who do not so much wish to amend the past, as to amend *how* the past is narrated as history. For instance, Robert Majzels (the focus of Chapter One) is preoccupied with the question: "What's blanked out" when a narrative is unquestionably told in agreement with the status quo, as it usually is? (1996, 58) It is in literary preoccupations like those of Majzels's that I see how the flâneur, with the angel of history's melancholic face, can be said to journey not to the past, but to alternative histories, to the history of alterities, to buried or hidden stories, or to the city's fictional imagining.

Benjamin describes the flâneur as a collector whose concern is not the variety or

scarcity, but "the transfiguration of things," in his collection:

> To him falls the Sisyphean task of divesting things of their commodity character by taking possession of them. But he bestows on them only connoisseur value, rather than use value. The collector dreams his way not only into a distant or bygone world but also into a better one – one in which, to be sure, human beings are no better provided with what they need than in the everyday world, but in which things are freed from the drudgery of being useful. (Benjamin 2002 [1935], 39)

The flâneur is not only a collector of things, but also a connoisseur of stories and anecdotes. Indeed, he is also obsessed with the stories behind each object in his collection: "he would be happy to trade all his knowledge of artists' quarters, birthplaces, and princely palaces for the scent of a single weathered threshold or the touch of a single tile – that which any old dog carries away" (1999b [1929], 263). Just like the things he collects, these stories are to a certain extent transfigured by the flâneur. They are not archived as memories but are rearranged in an idiosyncratic pattern which Benjamin constantly refers to as constellation.

"Constellation," Dianne Chisholm suggests, is "a key concept of Benjamin's critical practice (and a key practice of critical conceptualization)" (2005, 33). She describes constellation in preeminent terms as "a prosthetic assemblage of mimesis, montage, and monad, aimed at extending our perception of the world of capitalism which is otherwise impossible to grasp in its expansive diffusion and mythic progress" (33-4). She quotes a passage from Benjamin's The Origin of German Tragic Drama as evidence that constellation had been formulated from the start of Benjamin's writing career as "an ideal method of critical representation" (34):

> as the configuration of these elements […] Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars. This means, in the first place, that they are neither their concepts nor their laws […] It is the function of concepts to group phenomena together, and the division which is brought about within them thanks to the distinguishing power of the intellect is all the more significant in that it brings about two things at a single stroke: the salvation of phenomena and the representation of ideas. (Benjamin 1998 [1928], 34-5 quoted in

Chisholm 34)

While Chisholm sees constellation as a practice or a method, Charles Taylor in <u>Sources of the Self</u> refers to Benjamin's key idea of constellation (which Adorno borrows) in slightly different terms as a "form of interspatial or framing epiphany" (1989, 478): "Its elements don't express what they indicate; they frame a space, and bring something close which would otherwise be infinitely remote" (478). In short, constellation offers a frame which, like a painting's, "transform[s] our way of seeing" (472) or "transfigures the world as it usually appears" (474).[12]

Epiphany is central to Taylor's interpretation of the Benjamin-Adorno constellation. Taylor briefly defines "epiphany" as "the revelation of something higher, not reducible simply to a subjective response through the work or what it portrays" (474), as a liberation "from the constricting conventional ways of seeing": "so we can grasp the patterns by which the world is transfigured" (475). In short, for Taylor, constellation as a "framing of epiphany" involves a moment of transfiguration. Tambling does not describe this moment in terms of epiphany but as an arrest of thought – "stopping the clock" – that amounts to a shock, as Benjamin writes in thesis XVII: "When thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad" (2003 [1940], 396). This shock is allegorised in the angel of history's facial expression in Klee's painting. Benjamin describes, "his eyes are wide, his mouth is open" (392).

The structure of Calvino's <u>Invisible Cities</u> shows a constellation of urban visions and architectural models of the city, arranged within an imaginary conversation between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan. The order in which different models of the city are introduced does not follow Polo's itinerary. It traces the mental steps of peregrination from one thought to another

at every turn during this conversation. Another frame of constellation in which the allegorical cities are grouped under different categories complicates this pattern, itself already constituting a constellation. This frame comprises eleven lists or "distinct rubrics, the realities and the potentialities of the city as the maximum expression of human civilization" as Letizia Modena puts it in her study (2011, 2), arranged in a mathematical structure that offers a sequence of reading (and defies randomness). As a pattern, it makes the reader anticipate what is about to follow. Thus, the journey through these fifty-five fables becomes a narrative of a complex itinerary for the reader. However, the conversation between Polo and the Khan reminds us of the context out of which these cities are conjured: they are within Polo's reports to the Khan. In the beginning, we are given the impression that the empire of the Tartars,

> which had seemed to us the sum of all wonders, is an endless, formless ruin, that corruption's gangrene has spread too far to be healed by our scepter, that the triumph over enemy sovereigns has made us the heir of their long undoing. Only in Marco Polo's accounts was Kublai Khan able to discern, through the walls and towers destined to crumble, the tracery of a pattern so subtle it could escape the termites' gnawing. (Calvino 1974, 5-6)

Rather than a moment of shock or epiphany, this impression should be more appropriately read as an image of disappointment: disappointment that the empire appears as either a complete blank page of nothingness or a canvas messily filled with wrecks and ruins, depending on how we see it. To this, no order or structure could be introduced or restored. Perceiving this bleak vision of his empire, Kublai Khan yearns for some distraction. This is how Marco Polo steps in and offers tales of different cities from the paths of his travels as antidotes to the Khan's anxiety and emptiness. These tales decisively distort the Khan's vision of his empire's barrenness (in a similar fashion that the emperor in the frame of One Thousand and One Nights is distracted and attracted by Scheherazade's tales).

Importantly, not only does this image of disappointment become transfigured into a series of fragments of narrative through Polo's tale and fill the perceived blank canvas of his empire, but it also inevitably returns at some point within this narrative as an epiphanic disappointment that the empire's blankness and ruins are not out there in the prairie beyond the walls of his palace, but exist right here and right now. At the end, we cannot but come back to it: "the infernal city" or "the inferno of living" which "is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together" (165).

In other words, I suggest that the novel's apparent narrative – the sequences of the cities which form the novel's main body and sustain our transitive anticipation of a definite end in a narrative sense – reflects the fragments of an anamorphic[13] or imperfect image. This image's "accurate" or "perfect" rendering can only be seen from a "tilted" or "distorted" perspective, that is, in this case, the unappealing perception of the empire of the Tartars as a land of wreckages and emptiness. This perspective is similar to the one from which Benjamin's angel of history beholds progress as catastrophe. The fragments of narrative which are told within this frame – the fables or stories of a unique city from the voice of Polo – are anamorphic to history. They exist in a subjunctive and imperfect dimension of fictional imagination or speculative narrative, like the if-clauses such as "if there were" (in the past subjunctive) or "*s'il y avait*" (in *l'imparfait*). In other words, the novel does not narrate a chain of events that really happen but enacts an event that is the attempt at narrating, or simply, the act of narration itself, in the dialogic space between the voices of two fictional figures borrowed from history.

The anamorphic transfiguration between the allegorical image of *disappointment* and

the fictional narrative of *anticipation* becomes possible in the distorted space. This space opens up landscapes where the imperfect flâneur wanders. In this space, the flâneur takes up the double role as *both* a narrator *and* a character, not simultaneously but anamorphically. The narrator perceives the catastrophic image and inserts him- or herself into the narrative that he or she attempts to tell in the face of this image in spite of him- or herself. Alternatively, it could also be argued that the implied author of these narratives mythicises their story of the city in what Stathis Gourgouris calls a "co-incidental" dimension – the myth corresponds on a parallel plane to the universe where the writer lives. I shall elaborate more on Gourgouis's idea of "co-incidence" in Chapter Three in relation to my reading of XiXi's fiction.

Allegories of Disappointment and Four Models of Imperfect Flâneurs

The four novels which studied herein begin and end with an allegorical image of disappointment. This image of disappointment triggers an important step of intransitive anticipation which resists and invalidates any frame of transitive anticipation towards a definite end. Instead, the novel opens up an anamorphic dimension in which a journey into the imaginative city can yield a unique pattern of fragmentary narrative. In each case, the narrative is constructed from story fragments, in a way similar to a connoisseur's idiosyncratic rearrangement or reorganisation of his collections in a pattern of constellation. Below I shall briefly introduce the chapters with respect to this argument. Specifically, I insert an important critical question for each novel, which may not necessarily guide me in developing each chapter, but which should serve as a navigational aid for the reader.

Chapter One reads Robert Majzels's novel <u>City as Forgetting</u> (1997a) where literary and historical figures are recast on the map of Montreal as homeless people. Some of these figures include Lady Macbeth, Clytæmnestra, Le Corbusier and Paul de Chomedey Sieur de

Maisonneuve (the founder of Montreal). They are caught between survival struggles and the extreme hardship they face in sustaining their ambitious dreams or utopian visions. What is going to happen to these characters? How are these characters going to survive in today's world? In what way would they adapt to contemporary urban space where their idealism can hardly be accommodated? Can there be any profitable communication or collaboration among them? By asking these questions, we allow ourselves to get into the narrator's shoes, and speculate on this apocalyptic image's narrative possibilities. Therefore, in this chapter, I focus on the ways in which these characters occupy or fail to occupy contemporary Montreal in their disadvantaged, homeless or dislodged position. The novel consists of fragments, mostly scenes in which characters are narrated from an omniscient perspective, or in some cases, bits and pieces written by them, such as Le Corbusier's letter to Mr. Rockefeller and Che Guevara's diary entries. Above all, it is important to ask an oft-overlooked question: who is this narrator? I propose that the narrator inserts herself as a flâneuse (Suzy Creamcheez) inside this City of Forgetting: among the protagonists and having lost her memory, she follows and interacts with other heroic figures and attempts to build a narrative of which she becomes the protagonist. In this chapter, I contrast Suzy Creamcheez (and the narrator) with the other characters: "ex-heroes" and "ex-heroines." I rely largely on the distinction between hero and anti-hero in a way similar to the difference drawn between strategy and tactics by Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday Life (1984). These ex-heroic characters once occupied prominent heroic positions in history or in literature but are now homeless in contemporary Montreal. I argue that they are reluctant to abandon their *strategies* of occupation through manipulation, exploitation and taking control. They fail to take up space in everyday urban life, so they inevitably meet their second deaths by the narrative's end. On the other hand, as the anti-

heroic protagonist and the narrator, Suzy performs *tactics* of occupation through her wandering steps, and manages to occupy the textual city and the sentences that construct urban spaces in many illegitimate or unconventional ways. The novel finally returns to the apocalyptic city, where an earthquake shatters almost every solid structure. Suzy is found in the ruins of a university library hinting at the possibility that the narrative undoes itself and is about to start all over again.

In Chapter Two, the scene in which a train comes to a halt near its destination opens and closes Rohinton Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u> (2002b [1995]). Yet, in both instances, we are looking at different trains in different contexts. The novel's first sentence introduces the reader to the first instance of this image: "The morning express bloated with passengers slowed to a crawl, then lurched forward suddenly, as though to resume full speed" (3). Shortly afterward, three of the novel's protagonists – Maneck Kohlah, Ishvar and Omprakash Darji – are briefly introduced: coincidentally, they are all on board the same train. Anxious to know why the train suddenly stops and "show[s] no sign of moving" (6), these passengers (as well as the reader) soon learn that "yet another body had been found by the tracks, near the level crossing" (6). There are some speculations about the story behind this death: "Maybe it has to do with the Emergency" (6), suggests someone. "Murder, suicide, Naxalite-terrorist killing, police custody-death – everything ends up delaying the trains," adds another (7). Regardless, at this point, no one seems to care too much about the story behind this body by the tracks. Instead, the narrator directs our focus onto the lives lying before the three impatient protagonists in the foreground, and closely follows their steps when they finally arrive in the destination in the City by the Sea. For different reasons, they come to meet the fourth protagonist Dina Dalal on the doorstep of her flat. The novel structurally comprises these main characters' overlapping

and intertwining narratives: a chapter on Dina's past followed by one on the Darjis, and then another on Maneck, interlaced with one on the Darjis' ventures in and out of the city struggling for survival, etc. While all these protagonists have very different backgrounds and carry different stories into this city, my exegesis of the chapter revolves around these questions: how are these characters – all initially strangers to each other – accommodated in Dina's flat and in City by the Sea? Extending this question of hospitality to the rhetoric of storytelling, how are their past stories and narratives received by their listeners and the reader? Is Derrida's idea of absolute hospitality, which Maneck to a certain extent naively advocates at the novel's beginning, feasible? What conditions does Dina have to establish in order to accommodate Maneck, Ishvar and Omprakash in her flat? How do Ishvar and Omprakash make necessary adaptations for survival in the city? Yet, more importantly, while the novel provides a frame of narrative in which we could comfortably and optimistically look forward to these characters' happy endings, or to keeping on reading as their stories grow longer and happier, the novel's end offers an anti-climax that smashes all these positive signs of accommodation into wreckages: echoing the beginning scene, the very same image of the train coming to a halt due to a dead body by the tracks returns. Here, rather than following the passengers' steps, we follow the ones of he who is determined to jump off the platform and onto the tracks just before the train arrives. Surprisingly, this person is Maneck. Importantly, in approaching this novel, we should ask: why would Maneck commit suicide? How could we make sense of the novel's abrupt end?

In Chapter Three, I draw into this dissertation my reading of several short stories and the novel <u>Flying Carpet</u> (2000 [1996]) from XiXi's Feituzhen series. Feituzhen is a fictional city that XiXi created as a deliberate allegory of Hong Kong. It appears in a handful of her

fictional works, loosely grouped together as the Feituzhen series. The English translation of this name varies in English: Eva Hung, Lau Pui-ming, John and Esther Dent-Yong translate it as "Fertile Town," while Diana Yue prefers "Fertillia." This chapter focuses on the novel Flying Carpet. Curiously, in a very early novel scene, a surrealistic image is conjured: in the sky of Feituzhen (Fertillia), someone is riding on a flying carpet. It is, however, only seen by a few Fertillians. As the vision is so overwhelming, the flying carpet's beholders cannot wait but find a listener to share the wonder. Nonetheless, almost none of them succeeds in convincing others of what they have just seen. The novel tells the city inhabitants' stories beneath this flying carpet: stories of those who see it, some of whom may see the carpet again and finally ride on it, and also stories of others who do not see it. In this way, the novel recounts different scenes in the everyday life of many characters that happen to live in the flying carpet's vicinity, and patches them together into a montage narrative of ordinary people, spanning a period of three generations of humble habitations in the city. The narrative could go on and on forever and enters the fourth generation. Regardless, it comes to an abrupt end with the same image that the reader has come across in the beginning: that someone is riding on the flying carpet in the sky. In the flying carpet's "second coming," the novel does not offer a vision from the ground, but from the vantage point of those who are riding on the carpet in the sky. To a certain extent, the flying carpet allegorises the freedom of storytelling itself – the freedom through which one's imagination could liberate the city from reality, or in other words, from the ground. This provokes the question(s): what risk would we take if we unreservedly delved into the imagination of a city? or, specifically in the Feituzhen series, to what extent can Feituzhen be read as Hong Kong? In this chapter, some of my arguments are developed in critical dialogue with Stathis Gourgouris's figurative impression that "[m]odernity is one of

[Heinrich von] Kleist's marionettes" (2003, ix) – an image that is too beautiful to refute. Yet, my reading of XiXi's works leads me to address the potential danger behind the posture of this marionette in Gourgouris's terms. For Gourgouris, Kleist's marionette is a fitting figure for addressing our experience of modernity as we often find ourselves tempted to stay in suspension between "defiance of gravity" and "unwillingness for self-mastery." This metaphor is particularly relevant to implications of floating, flying, and weightlessness in the figures of "flying carpet" and "floating city" in XiXi's work and in Hong Kong. The thesis of this chapter begins with the concession that one can never totally evade the gravity challenged by the marionette. In seeking an alternative to understandings of modernity through this figure of passive submission to modern machinery, I translate and analyse closely the word "concession" and develop a critical model that I call "concessive step" for addressing the special method of hopscotching (as a unique form of imperfect flânerie) in XiXi's works.

Chapter Four brings us to Orhan Pamuk's Istanbul. I study his memoir <u>Istanbul: Memories and the City</u> (2005 [2003]) and his novel <u>The Black Book</u> (2006; 1994 [1990]). Discussion is more focused on the novel, which opens in the guise of a detective fiction, with a mystery: Galip realises that his wife Rüya and his cousin Celâl (also Rüya's brother) disappeared suddenly. In Turkish, the name Rüya explicitly means "dream." (The secondary meanings behind Galip's and Celâl's names, however, are more complex and could yield different interpretations in different translations.) This mystery is encoded as a punny riddle in Rüya's name: Galip belatedly realises in shock that his wife and metaphorically his dream (Rüya) are now out of reach. (This can be understood as illustrating fictively the mood of *hüzün* – the Turkish word for melancholy – that Pamuk elaborates in his memoir.) Thus, the main narrative follows Galip's steps in his desperate strolls in different city districts and

corners in search of Rüya and Celâl, in the hope that he will eventually get to the mystery's heart: specifically in this case, the whereabouts of Rüya and Celâl, and their motive for hiding or disappearing. Eventually, Galip accesses Celâl's apartment and impersonates him. The novel has a complex structure: in the first part, odd-numbered chapters follow Galip's main narrative, while even-numbered chapters are articles from <u>Milliyet</u> (an Istanbul-based newspaper) signed by the very renowned columnist Celâl Salik. Part Two follows this structure, although odd numbered and even numbered chapters have exchanged their roles, implying that in this second part, the articles may not all be Celâl's but Galip's. Writing under the pseudonym of Celâl Salik, Galip becomes his cousin's double. At the end, Galip fails to locate Rüya and Celâl on time and cannot save them from being shot on the streets. There is no explanation for their murder. The book leaves the reader with the impression that the anticipated end (the mystery's resolution) will never be reached, or that there was from the start no answer to this puzzle at all. It returns to the same image which initially forces Galip to depart from his routine: that the "dream" or the unreal world of mystery is forever lost. Inspired by Edward Said's notions of beginning, I frame my argument with respect to the enquiry: how and when does the novel actually begin? The narrative could be said to begin with the mystery that leads both Galip and the reader to anticipate a definite answer. Regardless, at the end, the implied author's first person "I" interrupts the narrative and explicitly reveals himself to be Galip. In other words, he *begins* to write this narrative after the death of Rüya and Celâl. As such, the novel begins at the narrative's end, where writing and narration are triggered by an epiphanic disappointment that his dream-wife Rüya has become irretrievable. In this chapter, I introduce the difference between disappointment as it relates to transitive anticipation (as in the verb "to reach") and to intransitive anticipation (as in the verb

"to arrive"), with respect to the split positions of Galip as both the protagonist and the implied author of his narrative.

Each of the chapter titles relates to a particular model of the imperfect flâneur, they are "The Dislodged Occupant," "The Unaccommodated Stranger," "The Hopscotch Player," and "The Double's Double." Each refers to a specific character that could be both a protagonist and the narrative voice (or the implied author behind this voice). Respectively, they are Suzy Creamcheez, Maneck Kohlah, Constance Fa, and Galip. In lieu of a conclusion, this dissertation ends with an imaginary conversation between these voices and my persona Simon Anne-Gee who contributes to all the endnotes and acts as a devil's advocate in this dissertation ("Anne-Gee" is a parodic inflection of my last name "Ng," which I suspect many of my readers may find impossible to pronounce). In the imaginary conversation, I address an important paradox which I had initially decided to solve here in the Introduction, but which should inevitably remain unresolved throughout this dissertation: the paradox of home. This can be perceived by juxtaposing Adorno's refutation of home that "it is part of morality not to be home in one's home" (1978, 39) with Baudelaire's description on (the pleasure of) the perfect flâneur:

> For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. (1995, 9)[14]

The Posthumous: A Paradox between End and Continuation

Now, after I have introduced the main chapters in this dissertation, the reader is advised to go straight ahead to any of these four chapters and to skip the Introduction's

remaining parts. I am deliberately inserting an abrupt end at this point, which has, ironically, yet to end in a few more pages (or indeed, strictly speaking, as an Introduction, it is not going to end at all but leads to other chapters). I hope to produce here a feeling of sustained continuation in spite of an imposed end. This relates to the third dimension, in which to understand how flâneurs could be considered "imperfect." To this end, I would like to go back again to Benjamin's allegory of the angel of history in Klee's <u>Angelus Novus</u>.

As I have discussed in the previous section, the angel of history's attitude in Benjamin's thesis IX "On the Concept of History" is both undialectic in Arendt's terms and melancholic according to Tambling's reading. The allegorical image of progress, as the storm that brings forth an inevitable catastrophe to mankind, is alarming. Arendt sees this as an apocalyptic image "[w]hich would presumably mean the end of history" (Arendt 13). However, Tambling reminds us that "the catastrophic does not mean the end of everything, but rather the continuance of things as they are." He adds, "One meaning of the apocalypse is continuation" (Tambling 2001, 22).[15]

The word "catastrophe" could mean "the end of history" on the one hand, but could also imply "the continuance of things as they are" on the other. Its paradoxical implications anticipate the trope of the posthumous: a trope that resides in the main title of Tambling's book: <u>Becoming Posthumous</u> (2001). The posthumous is an ambivalent condition that "question[s] the distinction between past and present" and "confuse[s] a narrative based upon them" (25). Tambling's main examples include Shakespeare's <u>Cymbeline</u> (where the hero is Posthumus), Charles Dickens's <u>David Copperfield</u> (the fictional autobiography of "a posthumous child"), Nietzsche's <u>Ecce Homo</u> (the record of a posthumous life), and Benjamin's theses "On the Concept of History" (where, we can say, history comes into

existence posthumously).

In his Introduction, titled "The End/s of History," Tambling draws our attention to the generally perceived demand of a "caesura" in the twentieth century that in turn calls for "the category of the posthumous in which to think about art, or the past, at all" (2-3). For instance, from the list that Tambling outlines in his Introduction, there are the Heideggerian "end of philosophy" arguments in the 1960s, Daniel Bell's The End of Ideology (1960), Gianni Vattimo's The End of Modernity (1985), Arthur Danto's The End of Art (1997), and Francis Fukayama's The End of History and the Last Man (1992). All these studies articulate an irrecoverable break "which questions the possibility of there being *continuity* now" (3). And, yes, I italicise the word "continuity" because end and continuity seem to antagonise each other; however, as I discuss a while ago, and as Tambling suggests, the idea of catastrophe or apocalypse also implies continuation.

Although in these instances the perceived "end" varies from one to another, with reference to his reading of Blanchot, Derrida, Baudrillard, and Kojèves among others, Tambling makes it quite clear that this end should be understood "in one of the following ways, whose relation needs to be reflected on – either in Auschwitz, and what the death camps mean, or in the success story of the triumph of liberal American democracy" (2001, 21). A very unsettling paradox emerges: if an end is imposed at some point in the twentieth century's second half, with the implication that the continuity of past traditions becomes impossible; then, how do we account for "the continuance of things as they are"? (22) What inevitably ceases to continue? Then, what continues paradoxically and catastrophically, despite this end?

I shall answer these questions with reference to the grammatical distinction between the dual categories of verb tense in referring to the past, that is the perfect tense (in which the

action in question is perceived as complete) and the imperfect tense (in which the action falls

short of perfection but remains incomplete, that is, habitual, continuous, or indefinite).

Nietzsche contemplates on this distinction in his "On the Uses and Disadvantage of History

for Life" (1983 [1874]):

> Then [the human being] will learn to understand the phrase "it was": that password
> which gives conflict, suffering and satiety access to man so as to remind him what his
> existence fundamentally is – an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one. If
> death at last brings the desired forgetting, by that act it at the same time extinguishes
> the present and all existence and therewith sets the seal on the knowledge that
> existence is only an uninterrupted has-been, a thing that lives by negating, consuming
> and contradicting itself. (61)

Existence, Nietzsche proclaims, is fundamentally perceived and expressed in an imperfect

tense: the inescapable frame "it was" when we attempt to articulate what we remember either

in history, in memory, or both. Of course, as the word "disadvantage" in the title of

Nietzsche's essay suggests, this frame of imperfect tense is considered a source of resentment

and entrapment. Tambling precisely summarises and rephrases Nietzsche's preoccupation

behind this idea:

> the weight of a culture, a language and a tradition which inhibits the present; the
> gnawing power, like remorse, of always having to say "it was," and the fear of identity
> as constructed by personal, and more than personal, history[.] (Tambling 2001, 94)

In other words, the past is the burden (the "weight")[16] that we cannot change, leave behind, or

shake off. It marks a scar, presses a wrinkle on the present, and makes a presence in the

perceived here and now. In the above passage from Nietzsche, the idea of a seemingly

impossible transition from "an imperfect tense" to "a perfect one" is remarkable. It suggests a

path that is banished from human existence, but becomes available only at the moment of

death: a path which Baudelaire's perfect flâneur can be said to secretly pursue. The moment of

death provides neat closure to the endurance of being, and transcends existence from an

incomplete meaning in the frame of "it was" to the perfection of an "uninterrupted has-been."

Nietzsche equates death with forgetting as a desired condition that would eventually liberate

one from the anguish of always remaining in the imperfect "it was."

Here, death can be metonymically understood as the imposition of any impression of

an end. It makes possible the transition from the imperfect "it was" to the perfect "has-been"

as a natural but mysterious step of transformation, a leap by which modernity breaks off from

tradition and becomes possible. Consider, as Tambling observes, that

> Nietzsche advises against those biographies bearing "the legend 'Herr So-and-so and
> his age'" but is in favour of any Life subtitled "a fighter against his age." (96)

The latter are valued over the former ones because they show not a homogeneous relationship,

but the heterogeneity or the discrepancy, between the writer and his age. Via his reading of

Nietzsche, Tambling suggests that biography

> promotes the origin of the work in the author as the single subject and as the
> superintending controlling consciousness in whom textual contradictions unite and its
> nostalgia gives the author a heritage status while placing him or her within a
> determinate history, which, however, he or she is, miraculously, master of and which
> may be understood, in terms of its motivations and psychosexual drives, in terms of the
> present having a continuity with it.
> […]
> To read the writer cannot be to read the age, with which the writer does not fit. History
> must become awareness of the untimely, the heterogeneous within the apparently
> homogeneous[.] (96)

This heterogeneity should relate not restrictively to biographies but broadly to the works of

those writers who are aware of their untimeliness with age. Consequently, these same writers

imagine their own death or explicitly anticipate a readership that will only come into existence

posthumously: William Blake, Walt Whitman, Nietzsche, Baudelaire and Benjamin. In his

autobiography <u>Ecce Homo</u> (which remarkably includes his commentaries on all the books that

he had written), Nietzsche suggests in a note on <u>Thus Spake Zarathustra</u>, "One pays dearly for

immortality: one has to die several times while being alive" (1989, 303). In response, Tambling explains: "The immortal writer dies several times before his death; the writer who is merely of his time dies once, but fairly finally. Being posthumous saves him from being 'merely' fashionable, 'merely' of now: it is his privilege that he will die no more" (93).

The heterogeneity within the homogenous, untimeliness in one's age, anticipated immortality in the afterlife, and the arrival of modernity that decisively breaks off from earlier traditions – all these understandings of the posthumous allude to a particular sense of heroism. This is highly relevant to, if not primarily rooted in, Baudelaire's notion of the perfect flâneur. Baudelaire's perfect flâneur strolled in the Paris of the Second Empire and embodies "the heroism of modern life." Said heroism appears in Baudelaire's writings a couple of times, most elaborately in his early piece of art criticism "The Salon of 1846" (1956 [1846]),[17] the eighteenth and last section of which is handsomely entitled "On the Heroism of Modern Life" (126-30).

At the beginning of this section, Baudelaire anticipates a caesura in his time that should mark the end of earlier traditions and the beginning of modernity. The idea consistently recurs in his entire body of work: "the great tradition has got lost, and that the new one is not yet established" (126). He proclaims that the perceived "decadence in painting" of his time should not be accounted for in terms of "the decadence in behavior" ("behavior" here roughly means skill and craftsmanship), but in the "lazy" tendency or a "vested interest" in "ceaselessly depicting the past" that fails to capture the beauty of modern life (126).

He suggests that some unprecedented things that could vaguely be described as "modern beauty" or "modern heroism" were yet to discover (129). Consider the heroes of Greek and Roman mythology, such as Hercules, Cato of Utica, Cleopatra, Achilles, and

42

Agamemnon: their deaths or suicides could hardly be interpreted in terms of any virtue or meaning directly relevant to modern life. On the contrary, Baudelaire draws his reader's attention to a handful of examples of modern heroism, whose lives and deaths reveal "a specific beauty, intrinsic to our new emotions" (129). His examples are: Jean-Jacques Rousseau[18] and Rafael de Valentin in Balzac's La Peau de Chagrin, who both committed heroic suicide (127); Vautrin and Eugène de Rastignac from Balzac's Le Père Goriot (130), "criminals and kept women" and "the thousands of [other] floating existences" who "drift about in the underworld of a great city" (129), a minister who dares to speak up and give expression once and for all "to his scorn and disgust for all ignorant and mischief-making oppositions" (129), etc. For Baudelaire, they are all "poetic and marvelous subjects" that contribute towards the (new) heroism of modern life: "We are enveloped and steeped as though in an atmosphere of the marvelous; but we do not notice it" (130). In this early essay, Baudelaire also sketches his dualistic theory of aesthetics:

> All forms of beauty, like all possible phenomena, contain an element of the eternal and an element of the transitory – of the absolute and of the particular. Absolute and eternal beauty does not exist, or rather it is only an abstraction creamed from the general surface of different beauties. The particular element in each manifestation comes from the emotions; just as we have our own particular emotions, so we have our own beauty. (127)

Importantly, Baudelaire insists that the transitory element should be valued more deservedly than the eternal one in all forms of beauty. In the phenomenal and much later essay "The Painter of Modern Life" (1995 [1863]), Baudelaire defines "modernity" in similar terms:

> By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable. (12)

Baudelaire has never attempted to situate or describe himself as a hero of modern life. It is Benjamin who celebrates Baudelaire as such a hero in his study of Baudelaire's work.

Benjamin makes this point particularly in Section III titled "Modernity" of his long essay "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (2003 [1938]). He writes, "The hero is the true subject of modernity. In other words, it takes a heroic constitution to live modernity" (44). Michael W. Jennings elaborates this heroism as the poet's "constant willingness to have the character of his age mark and scar his body" (2006, 16). Benjamin also links Baudelaire and heroism: "Baudelaire patterned his image of the artist after an image of the hero" (2003 [1938], 39). Specifically, for Benjamin, Baudelaire's heroism emerges from the perceived inaccessibility to all the many forms that the poet desired of becoming:

> Because he did not have any convictions, he assumed ever new forms himself. Flâneur, apache, dandy, and ragpicker were so many roles to him. For the modern hero is no hero; he is a portrayer of heroes. (60)

Rather than a metaphorical stand-in for the hero, Baudelaire succumbed to metonymic portrayals of heroes. This approach to heroic role-playing implies the fact that Baudelaire could not get satisfaction or find a way to compensate this dissatisfaction or disappointment in his era. Comparing Baudelaire with numerous contemporary French writers of his time, Benjamin highlights how Baudelaire stepped away from "the humanitarian idealism of a Lamartine or a Hugo," yet refused to "take refuge in religious devotion" like Verlaine did (60). Instead, Baudelaire ended up in profound loneliness and self-isolation throughout his life. As Baudelaire did in "The Salon of 1846," this image of genuine disappointment leads Benjamin to theorise an understanding of modern heroism in terms of suicide – self-determined termination that Benjamin would find heroic and redemptive amidst the irreducible frustration and disappointment in experiencing modernity:

> The resistance that modernity offers to the natural productive élan of an individual is out of all proportion to his strength. It is understandable if a person becomes exhausted and takes refuge in death. (2003 [1938], 45)

In the later essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (2003 [1940]), Benjamin merits Baudelaire's poetry for the latter's profound insight in the phenomenon of the aura. Yet, as Jennings notes (2006, 23), for Benjamin, it is not so much this insight as "the disintegration of the aura in immediate shock experience" (Benjamin 2003 [1940], 343) that marks Baudelaire's literary achievement. Baudelaire "paid dearly for consenting to this disintegration," suggests Benjamin (343). His sensitivity to this disintegration deprives him of any habitable position in his context. In other words, he remains mostly unaccommodated in Paris in the Second Empire.[19] A vivid image from Baudelaire's poetry comes to mind:

> Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
> Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
> Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
> Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec
>
> Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,
> Et disait, le coeur plein de son beau lac natal:
> « Eau quand donc pleuvras-tu? Quand tonneras-tu, foudre? »
> ("Le Cygne," Les Fleurs du Mal, 1996 [1857], 126)

The swan in the streets of Paris embodies the frustration and out-of-placeness at the heart of Baudelaire's poetry. It yearns for the "vieux Paris" which had ceased to exist in the wake of Haussmann's renovation of the city in the 1850s: "Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville/ Change plus vite, hélas que le coeur d'un mortel)." The concluding sentence in Benjamin's "Motifs" essay introduces a comparable image of Baudelaire's incongruity with the Paris of the Second Empire which allegorises Baudelaire's historical out-of-placeness: "This poetry appears in the sky of the Second Empire as 'a star without atmosphere'" (2003 [1940], 343).

The phrase "a star without atmosphere" is put in quotation marks. The source appears

only in the footnote and is omitted in some subsequent translations. In this way, Benjamin provokes Baudelaire's incongruity in his context through the phrase's textual non-relation at the essay's end.[20] The phrase "a star without atmosphere" comes from Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," where the image is elaborated as an unproductive and repetitive way of living:[21]

> All living things require an atmosphere around them, a mysterious misty vapour; if they are deprived of this envelope, if a religion, an art, a genius is condemned to revolve as a star without atmosphere, we should no longer be surprised if they quickly wither and grow hard and unfruitful. (Nietzsche 1983, 97)

This image ("a star with atmosphere") implies the wasted life of "a proud solitary" who is "flaming inwardly [like a star] while outwardly looming dead and icy" (Benjamin 2003 [1940], 355 fn 96).[22] To describe Baudelaire in terms such as "a star without atmosphere," Benjamin evokes the absence of aura in Baudelaire's life. In other words, a star is deprived of an atmosphere through which to illuminate the sky.

However, if Baudelaire was a dull and withering star that has no atmosphere through which to illuminate in his context, what makes him appear so bright and significant in Benjamin's writing or in the twentieth century? With this image, Benjamin does not intend to disparage the poet or his work. Quite the contrary, Benjamin endeavours to demonstrate how this status as "a star without atmosphere" shines only posthumously. If Baudelaire remains a dull "star" in the sky of the Second Empire, we should appreciate the irony that after his death, his name was attributed with an air of modern heroism – an air through which Baudelaire gets recognised as a brilliant star.

In short, Benjamin makes two important points about Baudelaire: first, the poet's submission to the disintegration of the aura, and second, the achievement of modern heroism

that "assumes the form of a mourning for a loss that has not yet occurred but always threatens" (Jennings 2006, 16). Jennings summarises them as the pair of "the splenetic and the ideal" (24) in Baudelaire's understanding of "modernity." The splenetic is the reaction to such an experience of inevitable disappointment, frustration, and out-of-placeness in modernity. It can be associated with the flâneur and its hesitant, wandering steps, and with the misplaced allegorical swan/sign ("*cygne*/*signe*") in Baudelaire's poem. The ideal, on the other hand, alludes to a heroic dimension. It concerns with this poetry's the capacity to capture experience in a "crisis-proof form" (Benjamin 2003 [1940], 333). For instance, the very few and significant *days* in Baudelaire's poetry (as Proust notes in his reading), that should be considered "days of recollection [*Eingedenken*], not marked by any immediate experience [*Erlebnis*]" (333). In other words, the ideal encompasses a concept of experience that is ahistorical and timeless, and "stand[s] out of time" (333). It captures "data of recollection – not historical data, but data of prehistory" (334). For Benjamin, importantly, this heroic dimension of modern experience has the potential to *transcend* the realm of ritual. If it does so, he suggests, "it presents itself as the beautiful": "In the beautiful, ritual value appears as the value of art" (333). The splenetic and the ideal also correspond to the experience of shock and that of sublime. Arguably, Baudelaire's work endeavours to translate – or to *transcend* – the transient and sharp splenetic experience (the shock) into the modern beauty of heroism (the sublime).

The dimension of the ideal in experiencing modernity pertains to the adjective "perfect" in the phrase "perfect flâneur." If flânerie remains continually in the imperfect tense, it is only at the absolute transcendent moment of the sublime, or ultimately at the moment of death, that the flâneur can be said to reach the "uninterrupted has-been" in the perfect tense. Nonetheless,

47

ironically, when a flâneur really reaches this perfect end, he ceases to be a flâneur. It is a position where one is outside the space of experience, and where, figuratively, the flâneur eventually establishes his permanent and ideal home as the eventual destination and thus stops wandering altogether. This moment, if it can be reached at all, costs his life. In short, the beauty of heroism, like other ancient heroes that Baudelaire identifies and finds irrelevant to modern life, can only be attained or reached posthumously.

Perceiving death as an end, a destination, a terminus or a point of termination is a derivative of what Simon Critchley considers "the question of finding a meaning to human finitude and making sense of the brute facticity of death" (2004, 30). It entails a form of transitive anticipation in which "what is the meaning of life" requires a definite answer.[23] But, as Critchley profoundly observes, this finitude is indeed radically ungraspable even if it is guaranteed by "the brute facticity of death" (30-1). "The event of our death is always too late for us" (31). In short, as Critchley proposes:

> if there can be no phenomenology or representation of death because it is a state of affairs about which I can find neither an adequate intention nor intuition fulfilment, then, the ultimate meaning of human finitude is that we cannot find meaningful fulfilment for the finite. (31)

That human finitude is ubiquitous but ungraspable is a derivative of the paradox of catastrophe that I briefly discussed earlier: that things continue as they are whereas history has already come to an end. I am now coming back to this paradox. That is, despite a perceived end, things simply continue – an idea that Adorno finds inconceivable, but is precisely what has happened in the wake of the Holocaust. This, I believe, leads to an "imperfect" signification of the posthumous. Blanchot's perception of the death camps' posthumous effects is a most striking example: "death continues its work" and abolishes any possibility of being moved beyond or

moving beyond (Blanchot 1992, 114; Tambling 2001, 3).[24]

The inevitable paradox between end and continuation is allegorised as the pair J. and Nathalie in Blanchot's <u>Death Sentence</u> [<u>L'arrêt de mort</u>] (1978 [1948]).[25] <u>Death Sentence</u> structurally consists of two *récits*, which are then followed by a short afterword. In the first *récit*, the narrator remembers J. who dies of a fatal disease. The narrator has plaster casts of J.'s hands: "They were small and she didn't like them; but their lines seemed to me altogether unusual – cross hatched, entangled, without the slightest apparent unity" (10). Soon, he cancels what he just said in his attempt at describing them, and suggests, "I cannot describe them, although at this very moment I have them under my eyes and they are alive" (10). Tambling points out,

> these hands are what [the narrator earlier] calls "the 'living' proof of these events" but the word "living" we can see is under erasure (for the casts are not living, not even "living on") [.] (Blanchot 1978, 3; Tambling 2001, 19)

The plaster cast reappears in the second *récit*. This time, it is made of Nathalie's head and hands. Nathalie offers the cast to the narrator. Importantly different from J. in the first *récit*, Nathalie is a living being. Thus, the cast terrifyingly reminds the narrator of J. and symbolises "a gift of (her) death," as Tambling puts it (2001, 20). The narrator comments on this in an incomplete sentence:

> In the face of her muteness I returned to myself, I who had perhaps talked to her about X. [the sculptor who makes those casts], perhaps described the process; a process which is strange when it is carried out on living people, sometimes dangerous, surprising, a process which… (Blanchot 1978, 75)

In short, J.'s cast is a symbol of living that annihilates itself as a proof or a trace of J.'s existence in the wake of her death. Nathalie's cast on the other hand is a gift of death that defers its implication of completion in the face of Nathalie's living.

In his essay "Living On" (1979), Derrida reads J. and Nathalie in Blanchot's book as doubles: each is the

> ghost, body at once living and dead, of the other. Separated: joined. There are two of them, absolutely different, absolutely other, infinitely separated by the *arrêt de mort* between two heterogeneous *récits*. […] But if the two women are different, utterly other "in relation to" [*par rapport à*] one another, each one is the other. Each one signifies and preserves [*garde*] the other. Each one remains – the other. For and by the other. Each sings the other's *arrêt de mort*. One dies *while* the other lives, lives on, comes again. "While": "as": "when": "in order that": "because": "as soon as": this is the timeless time of the "and," of the "and immediately" that recurs, that comes back […] (Derrida 1979, 133)

Those who survive the catastrophe live on as the doubles or the ghosts of those who die. This implication of living on or of continuation, in spite of a perceived end, opens up a dimension of the imperfect tense in the conjunctions "while," "as," or "the timeless time of the 'and,'" where while one inevitably dies, the other's life simply continues. The "timeless time" recurs, without any clear or *perfect* sense of beginning and end.

Similar to Nathalie as the double of J., the imperfect flâneur can be conceptually considered a double of Baudelaire's perfect flâneur (who is dead in several ways and can be said to have achieved modern heroism). Throughout this dissertation, the idea of double, or Doppelgänger, is most explicitly explored in Chapter Four with reference to Pamuk's memoir and novels. Baudelaire's heroism of modern life reaches an imaginative dimension of the ideal as the realm where the flâneur's "doing" – his learning, his wandering, and his seeing – can be described as perfectly done, as a complete action for eternal understanding. In other words, they correspond to the present perfect tense in English. However, the imperfect flâneur's wandering and experience remains in the tense of *l'imparfait* in French or the indefinite past (the imperfect) in English: they are habitual, incomplete, and always haunting from past and present (when the latter can sometimes be perceived as the future's past). If the perfect flâneur

endeavours to achieve a translation or transcendence towards a heroic dimension, the imperfect flâneur could be said to reverse this translation, or to *translate* the flâneur from this perfect tense of heroism *back* to the mundane imperfect tense of everyday life. Therefore, as this dissertation's subtitle suggests, I read these imperfect flâneurs also as "anti-heroes of modern life."

Vehicle of Progress and the Flâneur's Steps, or Achilles and the Tortoise

The perfect flâneur of modern heroism and the imperfect flâneur of everyday life can both be said to emerge from the paradox between end and continuation. The former performs the Nietzschean transition from the imperfect "it was" to the perfect "has-been." The latter lives on and their life could *not* be concluded by any imposition of an end (as a point of termination or as a ultimate purpose). I conceive of this understanding of the imperfect flâneur partly from Tambling's discussion of the trope of the posthumous in his book Becoming Posthumous. In his Preface, Tambling suggests that his book could be read as "four meditations on 'becoming posthumous' derived from studying [four major examples from Shakespeare, Dickens, Nietzsche, and Benjamin]" and that the reader could choose to skip the Introduction if they want to (2001, vii). However, he also invites the reader to take a look at the Introduction and at the afterword entitled "Afterlife." He persuasively outlines that both "relate [the argument] all to issues of contemporary culture and to where literary and cultural studies are today, and to the particular question how to relate to texts of the past, and to history" (vii).

One example stands out as a surprise in the "Afterlife" section's beginning: Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan's 1988 film Rouge. It paves the way for Tambling to end his book with Hong Kong in reference to a brief reading of Baudelaire's "Le Cygne" as his final

example of the posthumous:

> As buildings in the nineteenth-century were torn down, replaced by others in a state which made Paris as the modern urban scene a perpetual construction-site [particularly in the wake of Haussmann's renovation in 1850s], everything for Baudelaire became allegory – fragmented, not to be read literally, the space of an absence in itself. The city will not be "nice when it's finished," as is often said of Hong Kong, for that, if it was possible, would *finish off* an afterlife set up by the past. (150, original italics)

The heroine in Kwan's film, Fleur (Anita Mui), is portrayed as *both* a courtesan *living* in the bordellos in Hong Kong in the early 1930s, *and* a *ghost* wandering astray in same city's streets in the 1980s in search of her lover Chan Chen-pang (Leslie Cheung). The paradoxical "both … and" here is comparable to what Blanchot suggest as "the timeless time" that comes back. Fleur and Chen-pang are supposed to meet in the afterlife after their double suicide pacts in the 1930s. However, Chen-pang fails to show up, leaving Fleur desperately wandering in the limbo space between the living and the dead for a period of fifty years. In 1980s Hong Kong, she finally manages to place a search notice in a newspaper with the help of the journalist Yuen (Alex Man) and his girlfriend Ah Chor (Emily Chu): "3811. Rendezvous at usual place" ("3811" stands for the date and time of the intended and appointed suicide: March 8, 11p.m.).

The main act of filmmaking, Tambling asserts, is "one of creating a ghost, doubling the space of the present" (2001, 139). Through the montage of different scenes in which Fleur appears as a revenant, Hong Kong's "lack of continuity with the past" is demonstrated. Thus, Tambling makes the following remarks on the film's treatment on the change of the architectural landscape of Hong Kong from 1930s to 1980s, with reference to Baudelaire's "Les sept vieillards":

> The urban landscape of Hong Kong in the 1930s is now unrecognisable; functions have altered, but the modernised city is full of the ghosts of past building. Perhaps the insight is similar to that of Baudelaire, who notes how "le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant." […] Urban space is ghostly space: the aggressively modern city,

by tearing down what is classed as of the past before it has a chance to be old creates the ghostly as a possibility. But, equally, the present city threatens to make all perception ghostly, in that it removes the possibility of relationship with its architectural shapes, and deprives the senses through its creation of a certain intangibility within urban space. (138)

For Tambling, this film "looks back, [but] makes no investment in [the] past" (139). Rather than accuse the director of not respecting the past, Tambling indeed praises Kwan's innovative film media manipulation in creating a past to mirror, and to critically put into question, Hong Kong in the present at that time.

And, importantly, the film should also be interpreted as a deliberate but indirect response to past anxiety about Hong Kong's then ambiguous future, ten years before the appointed date of the transfer of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China in 1997. Tambling spells out the allegorical relationship between the film and the political context of Hong Kong where the film was made: at that time, there perceived "the need […] to create a past, to find a fold within that past in which there might have existed the potential for an other existence that is so palpably not a part of a reading of the present" (139-40). Specifically on Rouge, Tambling continues,

> The figure of the ghost, then, does not present itself, it is evoked by the need in the film-maker, to read the present as though it might contain a ghost within itself. (140)

The key word here is the noun "need" – Tambling refers it to an overwhelming *need* that is not only perceived by Kwan, but also collectively shared among the residents of Hong Kong faced with the political prospect of 1997. The date of 1 July 1997 had been proposed for the so-called "handover" of sovereignty of Hong Kong since the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed on 19 December 1984. In other words, during the time between the Joint Declaration and the proposed handover, the year 1997 was critically perceived as a crisis, as *the end* of

what then had been understood as Hong Kong. It had prompted Hong Kong citizens to actively search for, to formulate a theory of, or to capture the true essence of, Hong Kong and what could define the authentic Hong Kong identity. This end-date had inevitably led the exploration of Hong Kong identity to a heroic dimension that demands some completeness – that the year 1997 should be perceived as an ultimate endpoint. Tambling's reading of the film proposes that Kwan addressed this urgency in his filmmaking at the time in the wake of this anxiety over the uncertainty of the future: "where the historical past seems to have failed, the present needs to revisit it and to double its own space" (140). As a posthumous figure, Fleur returns as an imperfect flâneuse and strolls in her afterlife and in the contemporary city. Her posthumous flânerie produces an advantage of double vision for reimagining Hong Kong.

Now, eighteen years have passed since 1997, and it would be absurd to suggest that Hong Kong is still under the spell of this imposed but long expired deadline.[26] It is important to acknowledge that things, particularly aspects of everyday life, simply continue and get carried over in spite of an imposed end. They always remain in the imperfect tense. The film Rouge also provides some elements addressing this imperfect dimension of mundane everyday life: that is, the couple Yuen and Ah Chor. They represent the ordinary Hongkongers in the 1980s. Ackbar Abbas makes a stunning interpretation of this film in his book Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance (1997):

> The film is shot in two contrasting cinematic styles. The Hong Kong of the thirties is represented by a camera style that lingers lovingly on every detail to give us a baroque world of wealth, leisure, and decadence, a theatrical world [And, to add a little remark to enrich his observation: the colours in those scenes showing Hong Kong in the thirties tend to be flamboyant…] By contrast, the eighties are filmed in a neutral, unmarked, realist, demotic style to give us a mundane world of work, where the journalist Yuen and Ah Chor are too busy at work to have time to think about emotions. (42)

The distance between Hong Kong in the 1930s and in the 1980s is not only a temporal gap of

fifty years, but also a kind of decadence or disappointment: that the glory and theatricality of

life in the 1930s had lost and vanished into thin air, similar to that which Benjamin notes via

Baudelaire in relation to the disintegration of the aura in the age of mechanical reproduction.

The double suicide has transfigured Fleur into a ghost in the imperfect tense (and hence she

recurs to complete the unfinished business) and a heroine in the perfect tense of a memory

frozen and crystallised in the 1930s. It is the perfection of passion in the latter which Yuen and

Ah Chor, from the vantage point of the 1980s, find alluring but also unattainable. Abbas

recalls this scene in the film: at one point, Ah Chor finally learns that in their double suicide

plan,

> [n]ot only did the lovers swallow raw opium together, but Fleur also put sleeping pills
> in Chen-bong [Chen-pang]'s wine without his knowledge. This makes Ah Chor accuse
> Fleur of being a murderess, and she drives Fleur from the house. However, on
> reflection Ah Chor relents, as she realizes that her anger stems from her jealousy of a
> passion that she lacks: "It is difficult to be a woman… Who among us has her passion?"
> (44)

From here, Abbas makes an important remark on the difference between Hong Kong in the

1930s that shows the glamour in the theatricality of life, and Hong Kong in the 1980s that

reflects the mundane everyday life of the film's contemporaries: "In contrast to the old lovers,

the contemporary lovers, like contemporary Hong Kong society, find it difficult to commit

themselves as they flounder in a confusion of values" (44).

  With respect to the shared perception of an overwhelming need to create a past to

better understand and read the present, Ah Chor's epiphanic disappointment in her unexciting

life of confused values reflects the anxiety shared by many Hongkongers of her contemporary

that their lives would never reach their definite end in the perfect tense (unlike Fleur who has

made it to the heroic dimension). This anxiety was exaggeratedly heightened by the then prospect of 1997 that had been perceived as an inevitable crisis moment for Hong Kong.[27]

In Post-1997 and Hong Kong Cinema [Hou-jiuqi yu Xianggang Dianying 後九七與香港電影] (in Chinese, 2003, my translation), film critic Lang-Tian [朗天] proposed the critical category of what he calls "post-1997 Hong Kong cinema." In this critical study, Lang-Tian discusses dozens of Hong Kong films that were released from 1997 to 2003. His main thesis is that these films show a particular mood in post-1997 Hong Kong that responds to and emerges from a refusal to move forward beyond 1997 or the city's imposed end. In other words, there has been a period in which Hongkongers tended not to consider that 1997's implications of uncertainty and urgency to search for self-identity has already been passed.

According to Lang-Tian, the length of this period varies depending the subject; what matters, though, is that because of the passing of urgency, Hongkongers indulged in the languish moods of melancholy and indecision. It entails a suspension of engagement or perpetuation of disengagement. He makes two interesting references that relate strongly to what I have been discussing so far in relation to the imperfect tense of everyday life (and possibly to the flâneur's resistance to progress). I recount them below, one literary, and the other philosophical.

The first reference is Calvino's last novel Mr. Palomar (1985 [1983]), and specifically the last part, where the eponymous protagonist learns to be dead. Lang-Tian emphasises that Mr. Palomar instantly dies when he is ready to contemplate how to be dead and the novel ends.[28] Of course, he is referring to the irony in the book's final two sentences:

> [Mr. Palomar] decides that he will set himself to describing every instant of his life, and until he has described them all he will no longer think of being dead. At that moment he died. (Calvino 1985, 126)

Lang-Tian interprets this irony as a demonstration or a rehearsal of death that "as soon as one contemplates and engages in a discussion on the deferral of one's end (or that of one's death), the line which we perceive as the end will eventually disappear" (16).[29] "Disappear" because as soon as that line is crossed or passed, it will inevitably sink below the horizon and becomes no longer relevant.

I read the irony by the end of "Learning to be Dead" in Calvino's Mr. Palomar quite differently from Lang-Tian's interpretation. Lang-Tian brings up this scene in support of this argument: one may wishfully defer the acknowledgement that the end has been reached or the line has been passed; we can maintain the illusion that the imposed end still lies ahead and in front of us. His argument demands the arrival of an awakening moment that some day we would eventually realise that the line has long disappeared; and indeed, it has been left far behind us. At this point, Lang-Tian suggests with reference to the political conditions in Hong Kong that Hongkongers will finally get over the curse of 1997. As such, it seems Mr. Palomar has long been dead; in the process of learning to be dead he would finally realise that he has long ceased to be alive.

But, the end of "Learning to be Dead" should more profoundly be read in a different way: rather than death as the ultimate destination that we will all reach, it points to something similar to what Critchley calls "the radical ungraspability of [human] finitude" (2004, 31), and, as Mr. Palomar ironically contemplates,

> A person's life consists of a collection of events, the last of which could also change the meaning of the whole, not because it counts more than the previous ones but because once they are included in a life, events are arranged in an order that is not chronological but, rather, corresponds to an inner architecture. (Calvino 1985, 124)

The insatiable need that one's life be made whole and meaningful demands death as an

ultimate end. (This need should explicitly relate to the need that had been collectively perceived by Hongkongers before 1997.) Such an end would provide a perfect closure to the seemingly relentless narrative that is life itself. To be preoccupied or overwhelmed by this end and by the meaning one could derive from one's life as a whole, one has to ironically defer or deny one's presence and sense of living before the moment of death arrives. Thus is the irony: contemplating death's importance is not a condition where one may have ceased to be alive, but where one is cursed to be a stillborn forever. Either death is too late and we could not afford to spend a whole life waiting for this end, as Critchley proposes, or death is too early, as in the case of Hong Kong as 1997 prematurely announced the end for which the city was not ready. The lesson that Mr. Palomar teaches us is that we should invalidate the immediacy of death (or any imposed end), resist it, question it, and interpolate it.

Here, it relates to Lang-Tian's second reference, the philosophical one, or what he calls "the famous ancient Greek sophistry" known as "Achilles and the Tortoise" (12).[30] The source of this fable is hard to trace. It is usually referred as one of Zeno's (mathematical) paradoxes. For clarity, I quote below Jorge Luis Borges's version in English translation in the essay "The Perpetual Race of Achilles and the Tortoise" (1999 [1929]):

> Achilles, symbol of speed, has to catch up with the tortoise, symbol of slowness. Achilles runs ten times faster than the tortoise and so gives him a ten-meter advantage. Achilles runs those ten meters, the tortoise runs one; Achilles runs that meter, the tortoise runs a decimeter; Achilles runs that decimeter, the tortoise runs a centimeter; Achilles runs that centimeter, the tortoise runs a millimeter; Achilles runs that millimeter, the tortoise runs a tenth of the millimeter, and ad infinitum, so that Achilles can run forever without catching up. Hence the immortal paradox. (43)

Lang-Tian refutes this paradox (and which he conveniently considers a sophistry) by taking a realistic point of view. He suggests,

Everybody knows that Achilles should easily catch up […] It is not difficult to solve

this sophistry, one only needs to take a vantage point apart from that of the tortoise and of Achilles, for instance, the destination point. Suppose the distance between Achilles and the destination is *2x* feet [note: Lang-Tian's Achilles is a lot slower than Borges's: rather than ten times faster, here, Achilles is only twice faster than the tortoise. But, it does not matter much here], then that separates the tortoise from the destination is *x* feet. Now after *t* minutes, Achilles gets closer to the destination by a distance of *b*; the tortoise also gets a bit closer by a (shorter) distance of *c*. But, because *b* keeps enlarging in a much faster rate than *c* does. Sooner or later, when the distance between *b* and *c* is bigger than *x*, Achilles would eventually catch up. (12-3)[31]

For Lang-Tian, the post-1997 era in Hong Kong is a particular period of time, comparable to that in this fable when the tortoise is still ahead of Achilles. It is within this gap that one could indulge in the mood of uncertainty as if the imposed endpoint of 1997 has not been, and would never be, reached. Lang-Tian, at the time of writing this book in 2003, perceived an urgency (or another *need* so to speak) that Hongkongers should leave 1997 behind and pay attention to the more prevalent and immediate political problems after the SARS epidemic of 2003, and the proposal of implementing a national security law known as Hong Kong Basic Law Article 23 that tremendously and notoriously threatened the right of free speech also in that same year. Lang-Tian underscores that the new political questions that have emerged in the city could no longer be accommodated within the same old formula as part of "the question of 1997" (36-7).

However, in this interpretation of the race between Achilles and the Tortoise, Lang-Tian analogises Hong Kong or Hongkongers in the position of Achilles, or, "the symbol of speed" in Borges's words. As in the mentality of Achilles, he takes it for granted that the end should be reached and passed, and the tortoise should be caught up. In other words, this proposition is based on the perception of time as a linear scale of progress. He writes, "if time is a chain of events, then, 'post-1997' is an empty slot, as if it were a station on the map of a railway line. We stay in this station, constantly going in and going out" (22).[32] He proposes that one day, when history has reached up to a point where we look back and are then able to

come up with a proper name for this station, it will also be the time that this station will be permanently cancelled. By then, we will be on board again, riding in a vehicle called progress towards the future, leaving 1997 and this "post-1997" era far behind.

Lang-Tian also suggests that the post-1997 condition could be analogously associated with another similar fable from Aesop's, namely "The Hare and the Tortoise." In that case, Hong Kong is seen as the hare who takes a nap and refuses to look forward during the post-1997 era. It has to wake up and move on. In this respect, Lang-Tian's analogy sounds like an antithesis to what I have discussed above as the flâneur's resistance to progress. Here, I endeavour to offer an alternative reading of "Achilles and the Tortoise," which should be the final point on the flâneur that I introduce in this Introduction (which itself seems to defer coming to an end).

In his Introduction to The Flâneur (1994), Keith Tester brings up the fashion of taking turtles for walks in nineteenth-century Paris from Benjamin. Benjamin first mentioned it in "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," and sees it as a fashionable activity in Paris around 1840: "The flâneurs liked to have the turtles set the pace for them. If they had had their way, progress would have been obliged to accommodate itself to this pace" (2003 [1938], 31). The same tortoise-walking flâneur reappears in Benjamin's later essay on Baudelaire "Central Park," where the flâneur's pace is considered "a protest against the tempo of the crowd" (2003 [1939], 181). Immediately following this line is a suggestion for comparison: "Compare the fashion for tortoises in 1839" (181). Benjamin laments the fact that progress had not only failed to adhere to the flâneur's pace, but also that it had indeed unaccommodated this figure. Tester considers this fashion "an example of the protest of flânerie against the local clock of hours and the universal clock of progress" (1994, 15). But, he goes on to make a not quite

60

successful analogy of Benjamin's flâneur with "The Hare and the Tortoise": "The protest of the turtles against the hare of Progress (to rather misquote Aesop), was futile" (15). Chisholm's question – "can today's Paris accommodate this perfect flâneur?" (2005, 156) – comes to mind. In short, modernity turned Paris into a heaven for the flâneur once, but "the favoring winds" of progress had then made the city hostile to the flâneur (at least to a certain extent).

I say that Tester's analogy is not very successful, as he also indicates that in parentheses in the quotation above: "to rather misquote Aesop." It sounds like a misquotation or misinterpretation of Aesop's fable. The discrepancy in this analogy comes from the difficulty in imagining the flâneur in the tortoise's position – despite the protest against the symbol of speed that it embodies – as one who is racing towards a destination. However, I think it is relevant (and amusing) to modify our understanding of this analogy and associate the flâneur's protest against progress with the story of "Achilles and the Tortoise." As one of Zeno's paradoxes, this fable is not so much a sophistry as a vivid illustration of a mathematical problem known as the convergent series. To calculate the total distance travelled by the tortoise from the starting point to the end, a formula can be delivered in the following way. It is easier to demonstrate this using the slower version of Achilles from Lang-Tian's example wherein Achilles is running twice, rather than ten times, faster than the tortoise:

$1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + 1/8 + 1/16 + 1/32 + 1/64 + 1/128 \ldots$

The limit of the sum of this infinite geometric progression is two. Yet, it will only be approached closer and more approximately but it will never be reached as far as this series (or the perpetual race between Achilles and the Tortoise) is concerned. In Lang-Tian's model of this analogy, the focus is on Achilles. We anxiously ask at what point Achilles would catch up

with the tortoise and then finally reach the destination. Achilles symbolises speed and those who endeavour to keep in pace with progress. The destination in this case is like what Lang-Tian allegorises the phase of "post-1997 era" in Hong Kong, as a station among many that one should reach, move onward from, and leave behind.

Similar to Klee's angel of history in Benjamin's allegory, the tortoise and the flâneur perceive progress as catastrophe. The end is paradoxically considered inevitable and unreachable. For Tester, the flâneur is he who gets himself engaged in "a struggle for satisfaction through the rooting out and destruction of dissatisfaction" (5). At the heart of this equation, however, is "the abyss" that, Tester insists, even Baudelaire failed to recognise:

> By its very formulation, the equation of Baudelaire's poet means that if it is hoped to discover the secret of the truth of *being*, doing can never cease; it is impossible to rest in the knowledge of *being*, since even that resting is itself a *doing*. The secret of being is then the actuality of *doing*. Put another way, the search for self-hood through the diagnosis of dissatisfaction does not at all lead in the end to satisfaction; it just leads to more dissatisfaction. Perhaps, then, the poet can never be happy except in the moment of death. (5-6)

But, how can this be considered an abyss? I contend that the abyss should best be illustrated in terms of mise-en-abyme, just like the convergent series illustrated above. Baudelaire's perfect flâneur is similar to the tortoise in Zeno's paradox: he is preoccupied with a perceived destination, endeavours to reach it at his own pace, and resists progress. Instead of progress catching up with him, he is lagging behind. He will never reach the idealised end in the perfect tense or the completion of his action until the moment he dies.

However, obsession with an inevitable end aside, it is possible to interpolate, to invalidate, or to interrogate the validity of the end (or the series that ultimately anticipates this end). I first came across this possibility through the retelling of Achilles and the Tortoise in Borges's "Avatar of the Tortoise" (1962), where Lewis Carroll's reconstruction of the paradox

has merit as the most creative and humorous among a handful of different versions that Borges collects and discusses.[33] In Carroll's version, the Tortoise starts a quiet conversation with Achilles near the seeming end of the endless race – indeed at this point Achilles could be said to have already caught up, for he now sits comfortably on the back of the tortoise, yet the end is still a bit of distance ahead of them. Sylvia Molloy elegantly puts it in Signs of Borges (1994):

> Their conversation, an exercise in interpolations, is rather a pseudo-logical debate. The tireless tortoise insists on provoking Achilles, forcing him to interpolate, first with indignation, then with resignation, an infinite hypothetical proposition, or an infinite series of hypothetical propositions, between the second premise of the syllogism and its conclusion. If a and b are valid, z is valid; if a, b, c, and d are valid, etc. Borges points out that Lewis Carroll "observes that the Greek's paradox involves an infinite series of distances which diminish, whereas in his, the distances grow." And so they do, thanks to Achilles's docile reasoning and to the Tortoise's passion for asymptote, so to speak. Carroll's version, a humorous *trompe-raison*, is based on the pure pleasure of interpolation, not on the conclusion of a race that inexplicably has ended, nor in the culmination of clear, syllogistic reasoning, but on the pleasure of delaying closure and introducing gaps in an apparently coherent series of words. (Borges 1962, 207; Molloy 101)

The steps of imperfect flâneur that I trace and study in this dissertation are comparable to those of Carroll's clever Tortoise. Unlike the perfect flâneur's, these steps do not lead towards an anticipated end or a heroic dimension of modernity. Instead, they question the frame of transitive (passive) anticipation in which an individual miserably or self-determinedly aspires towards an unreachable destination and invests all his or her life in the transition from the imperfect tense of living to the perfect tense of death. These steps acknowledge the inevitable disappointment in this frame of transitive anticipation and deliberately allow one to wander away from entrapment. Collectively, they could be understood as the steps of intransitive anticipation.

Cities of Disappointment

In his Introduction to <u>The Flâneur</u> (1994), Tester remarks how the flâneur's decline corresponds to the rise of railway and the train in the nineteenth century. He references Wolfgang Schivelbusch's discussion (1980):

> this temporary predilection of the flâneur to take a walk with a turtle represents one desperate response to the increasing speed of circulation (of traffic, commodities, thoughts) in the nineteenth century. Flânerie is a harking back and a nostalgia for a slower and more definite world. Schivelbusch also stresses the point that flânerie is only really possible if the flâneur is in no great danger of getting run over by speeding things. It was important that there were places "where the flâneur would not be exposed to the sight of carriages," where there were "refuges from the vehicular traffic on the regular streets." (Schivelbusch 189; Tester 15)

Tester goes on to justify Benjamin's assertion that "the arcades of the Paris before Haussmann were so important" to the flâneur (15), because flânerie can be understood as "existence at a pace that is out of step with the rapid circulations of the modern metropolis" (15). In his reading of Robert Musil's <u>The Man without Qualities</u> (1954), Tester suggests that the scene in which "a man is knocked down by a speeding lorry" does not only shows that "Musil's [Vienna] has a few more physical dangers than Baudelaire's [Paris]" (12); but, he also proposes that "if the flâneur does not pay attention when he crosses roads he too will become a victim of a lorry" (13). He adds an afterthought: "(indeed, perhaps the man who is knocked down at the beginning of <u>The Man without Qualities</u> is, in fact, the last flâneur)" (13).

He who is killed in this accident, if we could consider him a flâneur at all, would be the perfect flâneur, whose self-preoccupied flânerie does not allow him to be distracted by the traffic when he crosses streets. Imperfect flâneurs, on the other hand, survive and live on, not because they are fitter in Darwinian terms but because they are aware of and sensitive to such hostile elements in the modernised city. Their paces and steps respond to, and resist, the speed

64

of everyday life accelerated by cars, trains and buses, and regulated by traffic lights and sidewalks.

I open this Introduction with a brief reading of Calvino's Invisible Cities. I also suggest the models of "the infernal city" in the final conversation between Marco Polo and Kublai Khan could be renamed as "cities of disappointment." Here, as the Introduction ends, I want to offer an elaboration on the City of Disappointment, followed by a Calvino-esque allegory of this City.

There are at least two different ways to perceive a city of disappointment. First, a city can be perceived as failing in the name of progress: they fall short of what is desired (prosperity, opportunity, and utopia), what it once was (bygone glory, historical past), or what they should *be* (shelter, network, world centre). It is an ontological question of what the city *is* or should be.

The second is to see the city as the product or the aftermath of a catastrophe – a catastrophe whose name is progress. If a city is perceived as disappointment in this way, it suggests that progress is considered the mere sources of nightmares and maledictions to the city. It is an "infernal city" as Calvino tentatively names it. Globalisation, movement, revolution, trend, fashion, advancement, improvement, grand narrative, or planning – all these terms and many others can be seen as derivatives of progress in our contemporary world. It is the disappointment that the cities have *already* been. It is profoundly articulated in the metaphor of the strong "current" in Calvino's novel: that this catastrophe, or progress, is inevitable.

For those who live in City of Disappointment, the city can be perceived either as a train in a forward motion or as a station awaiting the train of progress to finally arrive.[34] Its

inhabitants can be divided into two types. It short, they are passengers and flâneurs. Passengers believe that the train would eventually lead them towards a better world. They naively believe that there should be a destination far ahead to be reached, a goal to be achieved; and that the efforts for getting there is worth all the sacrifices and sufferings. Yet, the flâneurs know it better: these passengers would, however, eventually meet not their destination but the inevitable disappointment that the train would never get there. Passengers would then go on to curse the train for not arriving on time. They launch complaints against the train for failing to reach the destination. Their lives are neatly structured by the train schedules. The collective obsession with progress or blind conformation to its vectorial forces makes the passengers insensitive and numb to aspects which are not part of it.

Flâneurs, however, are aware of the inadequacy of this train or this station. They endeavour to exit the train or to occupy the station and turn it into something else, for they perceive it as a symbol of disaster, leading the city towards an inevitable catastrophe. Whether they see it as a train or a station, they are anxious to get hold of their own steps. They could never get satisfied with any seat therein. It is usually too small, too comfortable, too well regulated, and too indistinguishable from each other. They are aware that there is a specific language in which anticipation is structured in the logic or grammar of progress. They secretly decide to question and to seek flaws in the grammar of this language. For the flâneurs, the city is always imperfect and should always stay as such.

Passengers, however, usually get the upper hand in determining where the city should go or what it should become. (Yes, unfortunately, they do.) They strategically occupy such positions as urban-planners, policymakers, lawmakers, governors, administrators, bureaucrats, and developers. Now, they see that railway networks no longer lead them towards any

perceived centre of influence in this world; they desire to renovate and perfect the city with an airport, an absolute transit space where everyone stops over and follows different agendas and itineraries.

But, it is the flâneurs whose steps could be easily erased or forgotten, but deserve our attention. And, I want to go as far as to make the proposition that everyone is potentially a flâneur as soon as one comes to terms with imperfections and feels dissatisfied, not only with the city, but also with the status of a passenger in a comfort seat, headed towards any perceived end of perfection. Imperfect flâneurs are the protagonists in the story that I am telling in pages to follow.

Chapter One   The Dislodged Occupant

Heroes and heroines occupy the centre stage of this chapter. But one may wonder: of course, is it not the case of any story? Yet, I insist that the tropes of hero and of heroine should not be taken for granted. For instance, in her debut novel Heroine (1987), Gail Scott, explicitly questions the possibility of inventing a heroine in a unique context: "Permitting me to raise the issue of how the English heroine (of a novel) might look against the background of contemporary Québec" (Scott 1987, 89).[1] As Meredith Quartermain suggests in her recent reading, "[r]ather than drawing us in to identify with a particular heroine, the title [of Scott's novel] puts the conceptualizing of a heroine at stake" (2012, 114).

Robert Majzels similarly interrogates the literary trope of hero and of heroine in his second novel City of Forgetting (1997a). He conjures this imaginative question: what will happen if canonical figures in history and in literature are brought back to life in contemporary Montreal?[2] Quite obviously and inevitably, many of these heroes and heroines would become homeless. "There will be no place for them," suggests Majzels in an interview (1998, 19).[3]

By recasting several historical or literary heroes in contemporary Montreal, Majzels foregrounds the bankruptcy and out-of-placeness of the dreams and utopian models that each of these dislodged heroes[4] embody – the obsession with ideals and identities that makes each of them incompetent in reality. His cast shows a broad range of heroic figures from history and literary canon, including Clytæmnestra, Lady Macbeth, Che Guevara, Sieur Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve, Le Corbusier, Karl Marx (as the Librarian), Rudolph Valentino, and Suzy Creamcheez. Their dreams, just like the characters themselves, hardly occupy any place in the contemporary city.

The word "dislodged" in the title of this chapter alludes to the truly homeless condition

among these characters in the contemporary city, but we should also understand this homelessness in reference to the out-of-placeness concerning the dream and perceived ideal that each of the heroic characters embodies. My understanding of the word "dislodged" also draws from Erín Moure's remark in her reflection on the difficulty of talking about citizenship. In the preamble to her poetry collection O Cidadán (2002) Moure suggests that "'citizen' in our time can only be dislodged when spoken from a 'minor' tongue" (n.p.). The word "minor" carries a double meaning in this context. First, it refers to the Galician language to which the title word "Cidadán" belongs:

> A word we recognize though we know not its language. It can't be found in French, Spanish, Portuguese dictionaries. It seems inflected "masculine." And, as such, it has a feminine supplement. (2002, n.p.)

However, she chooses not to use the feminine form "cadadá" in the title, because in so doing, she "would only be speaking of 52% of the world, and it's the remainder that inflects the generic, the cidadán." Figuratively, she describes her gesture by musing poetically on the idea of citizen through the Galician word "cidadán" as a step into the generic and the general "just by a move in discourse": "I, a woman: o cidadán. As if 'citizen' in our time can only be dislodged when spoken from a 'minor' tongue." Here, the word "minor" refers to the Galician language, but also to the deterritorialisation of the word "citizen" through its displacement in a different language. Moure references Judith Butler and asks,

> If a name's force or power is "a historicity… a sedimentation, a repetition that congeals," (Butler) can the name be reinvested or infested, fenestrated… set in motion again? (n.p.)

One could understand the historical and literary heroes and heroines in Majzels's City of Forgetting as dislodged, that is, deprived of a previously advantageous position in history, in literary canon, or in mass media: they are inserted in a totally different context from their

69

original ones. Therefore, one could prefix them as "ex-heroes" and "ex-heroines." But, the dislodgement only tells the condition which they all share. Could they be "reinvested or infested, fenestrated" and "set in motion" as Moure optimistically suggests in her elaboration on the word "dislodged"?

As all these ex-heroes or ex-heroines are thrown homeless out of their original contexts, they are expected to undertake their passages through the city in translation – that is, Montreal, the novel's specific setting. Sherry Simon puts it concisely: in Montreal, "travel means translation" (2006, 6): "The very act of passage, willingly undertaken, carries with it the desire for knowledge and self-transformation" (6). However, the protagonists of Majzels's City of Forgetting undertake different passages through the city not *willingly*, but reluctantly. If transformation is the inevitable process, then they try to evade it. Rather than accepting translation as fundamental to their journeys, these heroic characters are its antagonists. Ironically, far from adapting to the contemporary city, they see their heroic statuses put severely into question and endeavour to restore them to no avail.

In search of a better word than the problematic "hero" or "heroine" in the title phrase, I find more appropriate and inspiring to refer to the ex-heroic figures in Majzels's novel as "dislodged occupants." When put together, these two key words implicate the two contradictory conditions between which these main characters oscillate in the limbo space of "City of Forgetting" – that is, in short, between a passively imposed dislodgement and an actively engaged occupation.

However, this gesture of occupation should be decomposed in two interrelated but incommensurable layers: on the one hand, the layer of strategic dimension of a heroic occupation read as manipulation, exploitation and control-taking, and on the other hand, the

layer of tactical resistance in the form of an anti-heroic occupation oftentimes comprising illegitimate gestures such as taking up time and space, inhabiting, and wandering. Among the eight protagonists, only the not-so-much-heroic Suzy Creamcheez could be said to perform tactics of occupation through her wandering steps. As I shall argue later in this chapter, Suzy manages to occupy – in many ways illegitimately or unconventionally – the textual city and the sentences that construct the urban spaces.

On the contrary, all the other characters – those ex-heroes and -heroines – are reluctant to occupy the contemporary city's space through their wandering steps. With their names remembered and celebrated, these characters once prominently occupied heroic positions as a permanent home either in history or in literary canon. However, we should not uncritically assume that occupation always implies habitation. Indeed, the heroic gestures of taking up a space, a role, or a moment always serve as a pretext – as transiting – to go somewhere else, beyond the space. Usually, an ideal model is imagined as a destination or goal for this hero.[5]

In City of Forgetting, it is true that each of these ex-heroes and ex-heroines is inwardly preoccupied with their specific dream or perceived ideal, but when recast in the contemporary urban terrain of Montreal, they tend to fail to occupy any relevant place in city of everyday life. Majzels's comment that "there will be no place for them" (1998, 19) is a subtle but revealing critique of their ironic dislodged heroic statuses in the novel.

Majzels's City of Forgetting follows closely these heroic characters' footprints in contemporary Montreal and maps the ways in which their painstaking attempts to make leaps and bounds brutally bring them to a shared pitiful position of homelessness. Their attempts and failures appear episodic and scattered into short novel fragments. However, it is through the narrator's voice and the steps of Suzy's sporadic but persistent stroll in the city that their

frustrations and flattened narratives intersect and are interwoven into a pattern of failures.

Importantly, failures do not necessarily entail a waste of efforts nor do they automatically trigger blame or accusation. They demand an alternative – an alternative way of survival when the possibility of legitimate inhabitation remains out of question. Suzy, I argue, embodies this possibility, who eventually emerges as an alternative and "anti-heroic" heroine. This ambivalent character exhibits refreshing ways of occupying a space wherein she traverses between urban infrastructures and wasteland and moves back and forth not to go beyond but to get *across* borders and create intersections. Rather than ending up with no place and nowhere to go, or becoming displaced and removed, Suzy inhabits and confronts the contradictions among these forgotten dreams and irreducible desires on the streets in the imaginative City of Forgetting. She embodies the heroine's radical renewal as a voice emerging out of a resistant (or defiant) chorus, but does not succumb to ideological, traditional, or tragic heroism. Michel de Certeau distinguishes tactics and strategy, anti-heroic and the heroic. My interpretation that Suzy differs from all other characters in the novel as an anti-heroic heroine is largely derived from this. In the next section, I shall first pinpoint my theoretical understanding of these terms in more details with reference to de Certeau's arguments.

The Barbarophone Syn-tactician

In his Practices of Everyday Life (1984), Michel de Certeau famously downplays the role of heroes and highlights the humble everyman or the anti-hero's importance. With regard to this shift from heroes on the main stage to anti-heroes in the chorus and in the audience, a useful distinction is proposed in de Certeau's study – albeit a bit simplified in a binary structure – the one between "the strategy of power and the tactics of the dispossessed" (163). In short, strategy can be vaguely associated with heroes in a master narrative, while tactics are

the steps of resistance performed by anti-heroes.

Both strategy and tactics are concepts that relate to warfare and involve conflict of interest, or of territory, for instance. If we consider them as tools for participation in a field of conflict, then strategy is available only to those who enjoy prerogatives or align themselves with the powerful. Employing strategy, then, exhibits a tendency to universalise and to generalise. Tactics, on the other hand, are for those without power who endeavour to revolt and who refuse to conform to arbitrarily maintained and pre-set rules and disciplines.

Majzels considers himself a tactician rather than a strategist. In his introduction to the 1994 Moosehead Anthology, he delivers this manifesto-like declaration: "Strategy? We have none, strategy being the prerogative of the powerful. We are tacticians" (7). Indeed, Majzels borrows the distinction between strategy and tactics from Charles Bernstein. In his essay "Optimism and Critical Excess (Process)" (1992 [1990]), Bernstein derives his understanding of these terms from numerous sources, among them Bruce Comens's interpretation of Louis Zukofsky's sense of "the local and the particular [tactics], as opposed to the general and universal [strategy]" (162), which in turn is based on de Certeau's arguments.

Bernstein contends that "any mapping of poetic terrain is at the same time a mismapping" (162). The analogy here of mapping and mismapping is relevant to my discussion of Majzels's novel. It is important to note the difference, as we did between strategy and tactics, between cartography and mapping. Cartography involves self-deception that a single map is all that is needed and can be considered a strategy. For a tactician, mapping is a practice important for the exploration of alternative pathways of comprehension, and for the exposition of contradictions within a system of conventions. Addressing the incommensurable relation between poetry and poetics, Bernstein proposes neither "to abandon cartography altogether,"

73

nor "to make more correct maps" (162). Instead, he takes poetics as tactics, that is, "the art of the weak," or to modify Deleuze and Guattari's terms, a "'minor' philosophy" (163). In the poetic terrain he further explores the distinctive features of strategy and tactics:

> For the strategist and his "strong" philosophy, deception is not a matter of tactics but a form of self-blindness: defending territory that belongs to no one, accumulating knowledge that would have value only in use. This is as if to say that syntax makes grammar, but grammar is only a reflection of a syntax that once was. The strategist-as-grammarian is the nomad, for he possesses his home in name only: his insistence on *occupation* and territorial defense precludes *inhabitation*. The syntactician makes her home where she finds herself, where she attends – and that is the only possession that's worth anything, a soil in which things can grow. (164, my italics)

Bernstein elaborates in this passage the two forms of occupation – that is, respectively, the strategist's "insistence on occupation" without any intention of inhabitation and the tactician's occupation of space as home "where she finds herself, where she attends."

Bernstein translates "strategy" and "tactics" analogically into "grammar" and "syntax." Remarkably, he attributes to the strategist(-as-grammarian) the traditionally stronger character of the masculine singular pronoun "he" in the symbolic order, while the weaker feminine pronoun "she" is linked to the (syn)tactician. He also notes the strategist's inevitable condition of self-deception or bad faith (or deception as "a form of self-blindness" in his words). A strategist clings to a favoured self-understanding that his knowledge, his vision, and his map will be steadfast and long-lasting, simultaneously leading towards both a practical end and an ideal world.

The shift here from the pronoun "he" to "she" is relevant to my interpretation of Majzels's City of Forgetting. Among the eight protagonists in the novel, five of them are male figures from history, each of which endeavours to maintain his heroic status as a significant "he" in history, to be celebrated and remembered. The other three – Lady Macbeth,

74

Clytæmnestra, and Suzy Creamcheez – are different models of heroines, as I shall explain in the later parts of this chapter. In the narrative's prose, they can be read as three different instances of the pronoun "she" who struggle to survive in the infrastructures of a contemporary city and to maintain their presence in the grammar of a male-dominated language.

In the above sentence, I deliberately associate city and language, as well as urban infrastructures and grammar. A strategist can be considered a grammarian, since he regards syntax as the demonstration of universal rules (grammar) – a mapping method that coheres to one ultimate and standard version. A tactician, on the contrary, resists these arbitrarily maintained rules. She looks for alternatives and subverts the normative. Tactics, therefore, are associated with syntax minus grammar. In poetic terms, it could further be understood as bold experimentation of syntactic possibilities. In relation to the city experience, I find it relevant to associate urban planners and bureaucrats to strategists and grammarians, just like the character Le Corbusier in Majzels's novel, who endeavours to read the city from a top-down perspective and to find perfect solutions to organise and govern the city.

Flâneurs, in this respect, are (syn-)tacticians, simply by virtue of their strolls' unplanned pattern in the city. Maps, for flâneurs and tacticians, are valued not because they illuminate, but because they visualise "imaginary constructions" of the ways a space can be read and reread (Bernstein 1992, 166). An urban planners or strategist usually tends to stick to one master map and endeavours to make it perfect in order to manipulate and exploit the resources in mapped areas, while a flâneur or a tactician idiosyncratically collects different maps from contested cartographies in order to seek her own counter-itineraries and to occupy the urban terrain.

As regards Montreal's map, the image of a divided city between the francophone east and the anglophone west easily comes into mind. While seeking to locate himself on this familiar map of the two solitudes in Montreal and in Canada, Majzels, however, resists any convenient positioning, speaking of himself as "a writer in English in Québec" (1996, 58), who has not necessarily joined the anglophone camp. Recognising the arbitrariness of linguistic categories such as "anglophone" and "francophone," he auto-persuasively proposes a self-invented category: "let me be a barbarophone" (1996, 59). The term "barabarophone" has the tendency to avoid any singular and straightforward connotation. It is a crisis category of "neither-nor," which embraces and acknowledges conflicts and contradictions to better approach and occupy the fissure spaces between the inadequate categories of anglophone and francophone without abandoning them.

The word "barbarophone," Majzels explains, is adapted from Homer, as an onomatopoeia referring to "those folks from Asia Minor whose speech, to Greek ears, was an incomprehensible bara bara" (59). The original usage of this term is therefore the mimicry of unintelligible mumbling to civilised ears. Its modern versions, "barbarian" and "barbarous," convey mostly derogatory implications. Majzels, nevertheless, adopts this sense of speech impediment not as an inadequacy but as a unique condition: in order to avoid submitting singularly into the language of either camp and being smoothly carried away by the flow of either mainstream, or led by any pre-set agenda, tactics of self-imposed obstruction or impediment play a favourable role. Majzels sees himself as a tactician and a playful syntactician in Bernstein's sense. He wittily outlines the objective of his literary endeavours in revolutionary terms:

Our programme: a careful attention to the detailed order of syntax combined with a

76

willingness to risk everything. To probe, to uncover the alchemical combination of words and phrases that will bring the entire symbolic order crashing down. Until borders collapse, governments evaporate, brussels sprouts vanish from our supper plates and sex organs sprout from our ears. (1994, 7)

To this end, he tactically occupies not the arbitrarily recognised "centre" of anglophone solitude but the porous borders between these conveniently defined linguistic zones.

Just as Bernstein sees in poetics a minor philosophy, Majzels understands the subversive potential in minor practice of literature in a major language. This minor practice essentially deprives the English language of both its hospitality on the local map and its dominance on the global one. As Lianne Moyes notes, Majzels writes in an English which is effectively estranging to the ears of anglophone readers: "an English which has French in its ears, an English which insists upon its 'deterritorialization' [Deleuze's and Guattari's word (1986a, 16)], its dislocation from major sites of English-language culture" (2004, 168).

Majzels uses not the lingua franca privileged by widespread and globalised influence, but a "broken language" which can hold the voices and chants of the dispossessed, and through which their dissonance, including noise and even silence, can be heard. His appropriation of different tongues through this "broken language" allows him to relinquish authorial ownership of his voice so as to ventriloquise the forgotten heroes and heroines. By not simply speaking for them but speaking them, Majzels or his narrator can be said to occupy their lost dreams and bring them back to life in a different context.[6]

In the fissure space of the barbarophone, two types of disappointments emerge in response respectively to the strategic act of occupation (including colonisation, manipulation, and control) and the tactical gesture of occupying a space (as inhabitation, irruption, and hiatus). On the one hand, there are the disappointments and matching denials of those

exhausted ex-heroic figures. They confront the disappointment that they would prefer not to acknowledge – that the perceived ideal to which they respectively devote their lives amounts to negligence and total irrelevance in the contemporary city. The cartographical means of occupation fails to take them to the anticipated promised end. Their denial regarding their own disappointment reveals their delusion: what they believe they see on their map is nothing more than the emperor's new clothes.

On the other hand, an air of subtle but inescapable disappointment can be perceived in the language of the narrative voice. This disappointment is self-aware and indeed self-acknowledged. It responds to the impossibility to achieve total severance from the strategic and prerogative institutions even though one is excluded and stands, outcast, in the margins. This disappointment, ironically, is the prerequisite for becoming a tactician. The tactical practice of illegitimately occupying a space arises from this disappointment as a means of self-adaptation to the city.

In either case, dislodgement is the precondition that triggers the sentiments of disappointment. Accordingly, the term that I coin in the title – "the dislodged occupant" – thus can be understood with respect to these two types of disappointment. Primarily, as a model of imperfect flâneur, the trope of dislodged occupant narrowly refers to the tactician meaning: that is, the past participle "dislodged" precedes the noun "occupant" and makes possible the latter as a mode of occupation for creating positions of transitional home and temporary inhabitation, however illegitimately. In a broader sense, nevertheless, the term in its reserve syntactical interpretation can also refer to those heroic figures who were once occupants in history and canonical names but are now brutally dislodged in the contemporary city – that is, the noun "occupant" precedes the past participle "dislodged". They self-deceptively deny their

dislodgement and believe that they still occupy their privileged positions.

Eventually they meet an impasse in their narratives and struggle in this imaginary urban space described by critics as "dystopic" (Beneventi 2005; Moyes 2008) or "purgatory" (Henzi 2011). However, it is not that the dystopian city keeps these heroes and heroines from reaching their perceived ideals or anticipated ends, but that their ideals and ends make them misrecognise the city as uninhabitable and dystopian. The city of everyday life could not accommodate their idiosyncratic and ideological versions of bigger-than-life heroism.

Contested Cartographies: Montreal versus Tutonaguy

The novel is dystopic, but not exactly because it portrays the urban space of Montreal as decaying and apocalyptic. In relation to the ideas of occupation that I have discussed so far, one crucial criterion in dubbing a place "dystopia" is that one's inhabitation therein becomes perilous, suffocating, and restricted to the extent that the inhabitants would seek to escape – that is to withdraw from it rather than to occupy it – at all costs. Ironically, it is such an escape attempt that turns the escapee into an (illegitimate) occupant who performs mapping tactics in order to seek a way out.

Majzels's novel deploys such mapping tactics, which are essential to the narrative structure of dystopian fiction, notably in works such as Samuel Butler's <u>Erewhon</u> (1872), George Orwell's <u>Nineteen Eighty-four</u> (1949), Margaret Atwood's <u>The Handmaid's Tale</u> (1985), Haruki Mukarami's <u>Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World</u> (1991 [1985]), and José Saramago's <u>Blindness</u> (1997 [1995]), among many others. In these novels, we find a protagonist – like Butler's narrator Higg or Atwood's narrator Offred – who takes pains to plan an escape route out of a society where an ideal model of citizenship is taken to the extreme. The protagonist takes huge risks to map the dystopia, and thus better understand her

surroundings. In each of these novels, the narrative progresses as the map expands. It is also through the protagonist's eyes, usually narrated in first-person, that the reader gets a fuller picture of the world, which this protagonist inhabits. To map is therefore to make clear and explicit the linkages and contradictions in a topographical representation, which in any dystopian (or utopian) space, would eventually reveal, as Murakami's character the Shadow points out, the system's irrationality:

> [The townspeople are] the ones who are wrong, absolutely. You have to believe that, while you still have the strength to believe. Or else the Town will swallow you, mind, and all […] Look at it this way. The Town seems to contain everything it needs to sustain itself in perpetual peace and security. The order of things remains perfectly constant, no manner what happens. But a world of perpetual motion is theoretically impossible. There has to be a trick. The system must take in and let out somewhere. (Murakami 2003, 248)

One should note that all utopias are potentially dystopian. In the light of Randall Amster's discussion (2004) on the urban development and renewal programmes in many American cities, Lianne Moyes argues that the "dystopic and the utopic […] are two sides of the same coin: the dystopian dream of clearing homeless people from the streets is propelled by a utopian vision of urban space, a desire for a kind of Disneyland perfection apt to draw tourists" (Moyes 2008, 134).

In City of Forgetting, each of the ex-heroes in the main cast embodies a particular model of utopia, of perceived perfection. The novel opens with a map of contemporary Montreal, neatly drawn in narrow scope, from a top-down perspective.[7] It is on this deliberately inadequate map that the urban space of contemporary Montreal is imagined, like a canvas upon which different narratives can be framed. One primary question that preoccupies the novel is this: how can the city be narrated in spite of its unreadability or unmappability? What story can its characters inhabit?

Following the steps of these characters, the narrator produces a text of alternative mapping in resistance and in response to each ex-hero's single-minded and singular "cartographical" perspective. The map that the narrator draws is never finalised but consists of shifting layers of palimpsests. It is potentially unreadable because all these texts, when put together, point in contrasting yet overlapping directions and generate dissonance and friction.[8] Thus, the reader is required to anticipate the inevitable moments of impasse and turnaround and to actively participate in mapping the city. In assuming this unusual posture, the narrator attempts to remap the literary terrain of Montreal through the writer's self-imposed minor practice of writing in English as a deterritorialised language. Rather than penetrating the landscape of Montreal, the narrative voice allows differences and contradictions to permeate its narrating perspective. This porosity allows the city to be narrated through a series of contested cartographies.

Regarding the cartographical practice of mapping and its insufficiency, one may be tempted to ask, "How many maps might be needed to deal exhaustively with a given space, to code and decode all its meanings and contents?" – such is indeed Henri Lefebvre's doubt in <u>The Production of Space</u> (1992 [1974], 85). However, in the context of Lefebvre's elaborate discussion, this question is mainly rhetorical. Instead of answering it, he offers a sympathetic view of the social geographer or cartographer's almost unfeasible task:

> It is doubtful whether a finite number can ever be given in answer to this sort of question. What we are most likely confronted with here is a sort of instant infinity, a situation reminiscent of a Mondrian painting. It is not only the codes – the map's legend, the conventional signs of map-making and map-reading – that are liable to change, but also the objects represented, the lens through which they are viewed, and the scale used. The idea that a small number of maps, or even a single (and singular) map might be sufficient can only apply in a specialized area of study whose own self-affirmation depends on isolation from its contexts. (85-86)

Here, Lefebvre points out the inevitable inadequacy in the cartographical approach to understanding social spaces. As with the map that opens Majzels's novel, he observes that any single map that insists upon its own functionality is unavoidably reductive because it caters only to a particular field of interest at the price of omitting other dimensions of a lived (and living) social space. In this light, literary and cultural texts can be similarly inadequate. They are but derivatives of abstraction, or topoi removed from their contexts. However, his question implies the undeniable indispensability (as in what "might be needed") of mapping as a survival skill for confronting, or living in, (as in the requirement of "dealing with") the uncertainties of any given space.

Taking issue with Lefebvre's protest, Patricia Yaeger defends mapping (and importantly, *re*mapping) in the literary imagination of cities – what she calls the "urban imaginary": "each plaited literary device gives the weird, defamiliarizing treatment of cities a space-mapping advantage Lefebvre overlooks" (Yaeger 2007, 22). Of course, Yaeger bases her defence on the idea of defamiliarisation in Russian Formalism. Literature, from this perspective, provides us with alienated and perverted maps for the rereading and rewriting of cities and the tactical occupation of different urban spaces.

For Lefebvre, the validity of any attempt at *reading* a city remains questionable. He considers a city not a text to be decoded and deciphered, but a space to be experienced and inhabited. He argues,

> that social space can in no way be compared to a blank page upon which a specific message has been inscribed (by whom?). Both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, "over-inscribed": everything therein resembles a rough draft, jumbled and self-contradictory. (1992, 142)

This self-contradiction points to the fact that the same social space has been, and continues to

be, mapped and remapped by contested cartographies. A single map, therefore, should be considered insufficient; but, an assemblage of different maps only highlights the contradictions, and Lefebvre proposes no way to approach them. The practices of map-reading and map-making are rendered obsolete and frustrating, and this line of argument seems to conclude that they produce excessive information – or junk – and unnecessary confusions.

I share Yaeger's optimism around the literary remapping of cities. Majzels's novel particularly represents the junk and confusion through the noise effects of the multi-mappings and over-inscriptions of Montreal – contradictory aspects that we cannot afford to totally overlook. Far from avoiding the dissonance and contradictions, Majzels tackles and confronts them in his literary endeavours, particularly in <u>City of Forgetting</u>, his second novel (1997a).[9]

Immediately adjacent to the opening map is a page showing an epigraph, two hard-to-decipher quotations comprising two poetic lines in Spanish by Federico Garcia Lorca and a short phrase in the Greek alphabet. The visual effects of these two pages – on which seemingly unrelated elements project tangential lines of "unexpected adjacencies"[10] – suggest that the narrative, its characters, and all the sentences in the novel, together with the reader, would potentially find themselves as out of context – if not out of place – on this map as these two illegible sentences. These two pages suggest that what we are supposed to hear in the city is a cacophony of plural voices, most of which could be incomprehensible, precisely and simply because of the inadequacy of our knowledge: we know too little about their backgrounds.

Although explanations and translations can be found in the endnotes, readers are not encouraged to constantly trace the numerous intertextual materials' sources and references. To do so would be like digging into the city's supposedly buried layers – an archaeological

practice that provides satisfaction only if the surface and the depth of a space can be clearly and conveniently separated and self-sufficiently mapped as a dichotomy. At least for Montreal, however, this is not the case.

Majzels humorously admits in the Acknowledgements that "[t]he text which follows is traversed by the writings" of many writers and resources, "among whom are many of which the author is not aware" (5). An important word to note here is "traversed," which suggests that the inter-texts are not static or dead like ruins or relics to be excavated but are very much present (if not alive, they are at least in a *haunting* state of afterlife) and interwoven with the footprints of those who occupy the urban space and those who enjoy citizenship claim privilege. Nevertheless, the "steps" and paths which these texts "traverse" are forgotten and neglected for different reasons. As Majzels's self-confessed unawareness of possible inspiration subtly implies, the main action in the narrative is, as it is emphasised in the title, *forgetting* – a common gesture perpetually taking place in the city yet rarely acknowledged properly.

We should note that Majzels, his narrator, and indeed most of the protagonists who traverse in the fictional urban landscape tend to resist naming the "City of Forgetting" straightforwardly as "Montreal." [11] The novel initially took shape as a multi-media performance, a project of collaboration between the writer and media artist Gail Bourgeois at the Université de Montréal in 1993. That performance carries a different title: "Cross(ing) Tutonaguy." An earlier working title for the novel, as Lianne Moyes notes in her interview with Majzels (1998), also bears this unfamiliar name: "Homeless in Tutonaguy." [12] Majzels explains in response how he perceives Tutonaguy and how it figures in the work (1998):

Tutonaguy is the name which the Iroquois, the Mohawks gave to the village which was

on the site where Montreal is now, the village discovered by [Jacques] Cartier. When Cartier arrived he heard the name Hochelaga, a name which actually referred to the region surrounding Montreal. So he misnamed the place Hochelaga – in the usual European way. They misnamed everything. (16)

Rather than signifying a place with its forgotten name,[13] in the titles of these earlier versions, the word "Tutonaguy" declares its status of being forgotten, undoes and resists the ironic act of naming as misnaming, and offers a vision of how the city's development and structure of overlapping layers – many of those now not so much buried as overwritten or erased. Ironically, as a name whose significance is now (almost) totally lost, Tutonaguy has little impact on the reader with respect to the collective act of forgetting, or the shared cultural amnesia that it endeavours to evoke. Therefore, instead of an unheard-of Tutonaguy, the gerund "forgetting" is made apparent in the final title, thus allowing two questions to rise to the surface: who enacts this forgetting? And, what has been forgotten?

There are no easy answers to these questions. Indeed, the act of remembering is not antagonistic to that of forgetting: they are always two sides of the same coin. Stathis Gourgouris argues in his Dream Nation (1996) that "the most sublime expression of common interest is for all to forget together" (238). He quotes Ernest Renan's famous assertion in his 1882 lecture "What is a Nation?": "The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things" (286 quoted in Gourgouris 238).

Nevertheless, it sounds ironic to associate Montreal – a city in Quebec, a province whose official motto is "Je me souviens" (I remember) – with the gesture of forgetting. Perhaps it is not so much a gesture as an inescapable side effect of remembering. Remembering, in turn, is a condition, which is usually accompanied by the gesture of naming. Naming the city as

"Montreal" ultimately situates and limits the ways of telling its stories within the frame of a grand narrative; said narrative is made official and rigidified by events that are remembered as historical. This frame is imperatively exclusive. In validating a singular version of narrative as history, many other stories and layers of living are written off, and in some cases, deliberately erased and excluded.

Majzels, we have already noted, considers Cartier's misnaming of the island one of the typical mistakes of European civilisation and colonisation. This mistake, nevertheless, projects the official history of New France and Canada as one single narrative and onto one single map. With respect to the city of Montreal, this grand narrative introduces Sieur Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve as the central hero, who is remarkably recognised as the Jesuit founder of Montreal and its first governor. In the novel, the historical figure de Maisonneuve is inserted as a spectre in the fictional space of contemporary Montreal. Interestingly, the name "Montréal" (with the accent mark) is only mentioned during the scenes involving this character. Notably, mentioning "Montréal," the city's French name, acknowledges the official and historical lineage linking the contemporary municipality known as "Montréal" and de Maisonneuve's foundation of Ville-Marie in the island during the colonial period. Its omission in the remainder of the novel, however, subtly suggests the current name of Montreal and its official colonial history are on many levels detached from what is left of the city.

Historically, de Maisonneuve also contributed to silencing the First Nations' indigenous voices and to obliterating the memory of their pre-colonial existence in history. The site of "Hochelaga" – a meeting place for the First Nations, who encountered Cartier – was abandoned and no longer in use when de Maisonneuve arrived. He nevertheless claimed the "uninhabited" area for the King of France[14] – that is, he did not see what was there, a condition

which Ackbar Abbas calls "reverse hallucination" (1997, 6).[15] Similarly, in the novel, de Maisonneuve is portrayed as a committed Jesuit missionary, who devotes his life to "convert[ing] the savages to the Word of God" (Majzels 1997a, 38). In the contemporary landscape of Montreal, the fictional character de Maisonneuve endeavours to achieve a goal *beyond* the reach of his perceived secured territory of colonial settlement. His voice, however, is constantly disrupted by the First Nations peoples' haunting chants, whose existence de Maisonneuve prefers not to acknowledge:

> What? What was out there, beyond the palisades? Beyond the parameters of his mission? What voices that frightened him because they were unlike the voices he had heard all his life? Voices outside his mission, outside the Church. Only the wind. Strange wind in a strange land. A whispering prayer, almost inaudible, but somehow drowning out his own prayers to the Virgin. *Kontirio, Otsi'tén':a, Ohonte'hshon:'a, Okwire'shon:'a. The animals, the birds, the green plants that heal and feed us, and the trees of the forest. Ratiwe:rahs. The Thunder Grandfathers charged by the creator to put fresh water in the rivers and lakes*. And the water. *Kahnekaronnion*. Always the whispering prayer calling down more water. *Kahnekaronnion*. Drowning out his own prayers. (74)

Just like barbarians were to the Greek, Etruscans to the Romans, savages to the Europeans, and aliens to the U.S. citizens, de Maisonneuve and the French settlers perceived the First Nation peoples at the frontiers as strangers. Richard Kearney notes a similar scenario in colonial America:

> when Pilgrim encounters Pequot on the shores of Massachusetts and asks "Who is this stranger?" Not realizing, of course, that the native Pequot is asking exactly the same question of the arrivals from Plymouth. Strangers are almost always other to each other. (2003, 3)

This instance in Majzels's novel epitomises the psyche of de Maisonneuve as a settler or as the Pilgrim facing the First Nations as strangers. However, he is not incapable of seeing the stranger as another self in the Ricoeurian sense, but of not recognising himself as a stranger in the land already inhabited by indigenous peoples.

As Sarah Henzi notes (2011), First Nations peoples are associated with the abject in the ideological formation of Canada as a nation of settlers' heritage, and remain largely misrepresented, if not unmapped, both in the cultural landscape and the national history of Canada. In this scene, the recasting of de Maisonneuve in the foreground and the voices of First Nations in the background stages what Henzi calls the "'inter-haunting' of the Canadian and First Nations paradigms": She notes that "having not listened to the voices of the Native Mohawks and participating in their silencing, De Maisonneuve finds himself not only haunting the purgatorial grounds of genocide, he is haunted by the voices of the Iroquois" (Henzi 194). In short, as Henzi puts it, de Maisonneuve is "a ghost haunted by ghosts" (195). In light of her reading, which focuses on First Nations representation, an open-ended ethical question arises: while "he remains haunted and unsure, perhaps, about the validity of his past actions" (197), would de Maisonneuve approve and embrace what he and the Jesuit Society did during their settlement in New France? Would he rather refuse to acknowledge the First Nations' existence, so as to avoid questioning his responsibility in silencing these peoples' voices in the founding history of Canada?

In this novel, one would tend to identify de Maisonneuve and the Iroquois voices respectively as the agents of forgetting and the forgotten. Forgetting in this sense can be considered as belonging to the politics of remembering, which ultimately involves expunging the abject and the incompatible stories from the grand narrative of history or from the memory of a unified nation. However, I believe that there are other dimensions of forgetting and of being forgotten which are more crucial to the underpinnings of the literary enquiries implied by this novel.

We should pay attention to the fact that to a certain extent, de Maisonneuve, as a

historical figure, has arguably also been forgotten in contemporary Montreal. It is true that the city of Montreal is full of signs of his remembrance. For instance, there is a monument dedicated to him on the Place d'Armes in Old Montreal; an east-and-west boulevard lying across the Island of Montreal is named after him; and a whole district in the city's east end bears his name. Despite the prominent status of these mementos of de Maisonneuve in the city, his presence remains thin and insignificant in the daily dimension of living. In other words, he does not haunt or occupy the city at all, but is instead attached to appointed moments of commemoration. Only tourists and visitors would care to find out where to go (Place d'Armes) to meet and greet (the monument of) Sieur de Maisonneuve in Vieux-Montréal.

By bringing de Maisonneuve back as a fictive ghost in contemporary Montreal, Majzels's novel grants him the mobility to stroll in his city and undoes his fixed status in history. This dis-appointment of his monumental presence in Montreal as a haunting spectre and a homeless subject, and the antagonistic dis-placement of Montreal in relation to its forgotten name Tutonaguy, both point to a particular conundrum in contemporary Montreal that makes storytelling exceptionally challenging. Indeed, there is no reliable narrative frame in which events can simply and passively be told as they are remembered. Narrating the city becomes a self-contradiction, if not an impossibility, in the landscape of collective amnesia, when everything gets eventually, and sometimes instantaneously, forgotten.

Collective Amnesia

In "Anglophones, Francophones, Barbarophones: Writing in a Broken Language" (1996), Majzels cites amnesia as one of the challenges that he encounters in his attempt at writing the city. This amnesia does refer not to the author's tendency to forget, but to a

collective symptom in the city. Majzels opens this article with a self-interrogation: "Why am I suspicious of linear plot, unified characters and representational claims for fiction, and how does this suspicion reflect my experience as a writer in English in Québec?" (58) A tentative and preliminary proposal immediately follows the question: "perhaps because anyone who lives in Montreal must deal with conterminous but radically conflicting fictions" (58). However, it is problematic to interpret every line of conflict or division in the city in terms of language politics – this, too easily and conveniently, reduces the issue to a single dimension with one border, Saint Lawrence Boulevard, which has been mythically and ideologically perceived as "The Main" dividing the city into Anglophone West and Francophone East.

The title of Majzels's short essay, and its evenly divided sections, thus parodies the perceived symmetry of these famous solitudes in Montreal and in Canada.[16] The three title words mock the official but arbitrary categories in the demographics of Quebec: Francophones, Anglophones, Allophones. Either way, as Lianne Moyes points out in "Unexpected Adjacencies" (2004), Majzels is not tempted to endorse a position of what Michael Greenstein calls the "third solitudes."[17] "To make such an argument," argues Moyes, "would be to affirm the internal coherence and symmetry of the first two" (168).

For Majzels, the tendency to map the cultural space into these famously perceived and symmetrically divided solitudes is not only passive and unoriginal but also symptomatic of amnesia. He insists that any story based on these solitudes could be referred to as "[an] amnesiac's tale" (1996, 58). "What's blanked out" (58), asks Majzels invitingly after his parodic diagnosis of the city. He offers "[a]nother reading" in self-response, a broken array of events that are generally edited out of this self-serving, limited plot (58): "Centuries of inequality, oppression by one nationality over the other: humiliation, Lord Durham, porteaurs

90

d'eau, Speak White" (58). However, Majzels tells us, "this story, too, mutes more ancient native songs" (58). This ironic remark diverts the agency of muting from the authority of writing to the readership in anticipation of passive consumption of literary works. Is the silencing of a voice the result of the writer's deliberate choice or the reader's deafness? Indeed, "the immigrants' stories of broken promises, colour barriers, crowded ghettoes" (58), while rich and worth telling, are potentially incompatible with each other; how then is it possible to fairly and all-inclusively address them in fiction, in narrative, and in storytelling?

In terms of collective amnesia, Terry Eagleton also delivers a comparable observation about the contemporary world in <u>After Theory</u> (2003), though he focuses less upon the inadequacies in the rhetoric of narrative than those in the methodology of critical theory. For both Majzels and Eagleton, "amnesia" serves as a key word in their response to each of their self-reflexive enquiries. Majzels, as a writer, is concerned with the question of *how* to narrate a city. Amnesia is both an inevitable condition within the urban context, and arguably within the (target) readers' shared impairment of memory. Eagleton, on the other hand, as a critic, asks *why* no contemporary theorist seems capable of producing a theory – that is, in Eagleton's words, "a reasonably systematic reflection on our guiding assumptions" – as adequately and remarkably as what the high theorists of the previous generation from 1965 to 1980 had done (2).

In the first chapter of his book, Eagleton pinpoints a phenomenon that can account for this generation gap between the heyday of high theory and our own – a phenomenon that he describes in the title as "the politics of amnesia." The politics of amnesia is exhibited in instances such as that the academic researchers "can remember little of world-shaking political importance" (6) and that the significant "collective revolutionary projects" are those "which

we have forgotten ever took place" (8). Specifically, in the aegis of Eagleton's discussion, this could be understood as a symptom or adversary effect of "the dreary decades of post-1970s conservatism," over which "the historical sense had grown increasingly blunted, as it suited those in power that we should be able to imagine no alternative to the present" (7). The implication that "[t]he future would simply be the present infinitely repeated" makes the proper remembering of these collective revolutionary projects or the world-shaking political events unnecessary.

However, "the politics of amnesia" in Eagleton's discussion should not be considered a compatible map that could help illustrate Majzels's interpretation of "an amnesiac's tale" (1996, 58). Instead, it can be interpreted as its flip side. Majzels points out how the passive reliance on the arbitrary and biased grand narrative can easily exclude the stories of others. For Eagleton, it is precisely those attempts at retrieving marginal voices, the silenced, and the other, as celebrated in branches of critical theory under rubrics such as poststructuralism, postmodernism, and post-colonialism, that condemn "a world-shaking political history" to oblivion (2003, 7). This is not the result of the deliberate erasure or exclusion of any political agenda, but the fact that contemporary intellectuals take for granted the notion that politics has given way to culture as the focus of contemporary theory and criticism (12). Eagleton notes that in the past few decades, culture and capitalism have become a new compatible duo, while "culture had traditionally signified almost the opposite of capitalism" (24). He searches for the missing puzzle pieces in this shift from politics to culture, so as to reintroduce the importance of remembering such world-shaking political events in intellectual thought.

From his Marxist standpoint, Eagleton has already anticipated an answer to his queries before he even addresses the issues. He notes that notions of class and class struggle as a

critical apparatus for world-mapping has been severely trivialised since the 1980s in favour of

pluralism, discontinuity, and heterogeneity. His complaint is blunt and candid:

> Most of the new theorists were not only "post" colonialism, but "post" the
> revolutionary impetus which had given birth to the new nations in the first place […
> T]o look beyond the nation seemed to mean looking beyond class as well; (2003, 10)

and that

> [s]ome of the new theory […] saw itself as shifting attention from class to colonialism
> – as though colonialism and post-colonialism were not themselves matters of class!
> (11)

What is at stake in these trends, for Eagleton, is the importance of being revolutionary. From

politics to culture, the critical vantage point shifts from a global and holistic perspective to

obsession with local interests. As a result, the perspective through which we map the world on

a planetary scale and to recollect world-shaking actions in history is either obscured or

avoided, because "[f]or some postmodern thought, consensus is tyrannical and solidarity

nothing but soulless uniformity" (13).

Nevertheless, Eagleton also acknowledges that "[h]uman history is now for the most

part both post-collectivist and post-individualist" and that "[t]here can be no falling back on

ideas of collectivity which belong to a world unravelling before our eyes" (21). Optimistically,

Eagleton suggests, "if this feels like a vacuum, it may also present an opportunity" for

"imagin[ing] new forms of belonging" (21). These new forms, he admits, are now "bound to

be multiple rather than monolithic" (21), but they are useful to us as we rethink the world in

global dimensions and to rekindle the revolutionary spirit in critical theory.

Theoretically, according to Eagleton, we could – and should – once again map the

world according to the Marxist dichotomy of rich and poor, if no longer in the traditional

terms of "bourgeoisie" and "proletariat"[18]:

The problem at the moment is that the rich have mobility while the poor has locality. Or rather, the poor have locality until the rich get their hands on it. The rich are global and the poor are local – though just as poverty is a global fact, so the rich are coming to appreciate the benefits of locality. (22)

Eagleton, here, makes an attempt to remap the world in terms of wealth and indigence. He reassuringly concludes, "the anti-capitalist movement is seeking to sketch out new relations between globality and locality, diversity and solidarity" (22). Above all and in spite of his optimism, is Marxism still applicable as a universal apparatus?

Majzels is sceptical of such a resolution. Eagleton's proposal of global mapping would seem strategic in de Certeau's diction. While Eagleton indulges in a moment of dystopian imagination and concocts a scenario in which "affluent communities of the future [are] protected by watchtowers, searchlights and machine-guns, while the poor scavenge for food in the waste lands beyond" (2003, 22), Majzels anticipates and imagines a similar dystopian scene not in futuristic terms but in a contemporary urban context. In City of Forgetting, all the protagonists are imagined as homeless scavengers, continually struggling for shelter and food. However, these protagonists, albeit poor, are too proud to identify themselves collectively and politically as the poor, or the dispossessed. The Marxist enemy – the rich, the bourgeoisie, or the ruling class – is largely absent in the novel's main cast. Indeed, by introducing both Karl Marx and Che Guevara onto the map of contemporary Montreal, the novel explores the extent to which Marxism becomes irrelevant in this dystopian city of forgetting.

Structurally, the novel seems to adhere to a view of class struggle by presenting a hierarchical landscape: the protagonists either share temporary shelter in a trench located at the foot of an abandoned tower near the Saint Lawrence River or occupy a makeshift shelter at the top of Mont-Royal. In her reading of this novel, Sherry Simon (2006) observes how the

difference in altitude between the mountaintop in the upper city and the trench in the lower city offers a different configuration of mapping. She notes how it should "remind us of the vertical divide, noted by Gabrielle Roy, between the geographically and socially 'higher' Westmount and the 'lower' Saint-Henri" (198). Simon goes on to indicate that "[t]his physical and social distinction […] is a variant on the traditional east-west division" (198).

However, the two groups are, in fact, not as polarised and far apart from each other as their geographical and historical positions seem to suggest. With respect to the city, the camp on the mountaintop and the trench by the river are similarly marginal. Regardless, as Eagleton doubts, "What if there is no clear division between margins and majority?" (2003, 19) Indeed, as he further suggests, "[f]or a socialist, the true scandal of the present world is that almost everyone in it is banished to the margins" (19), his remark conjures an image in which margins are crowded while access to the centre always remains highly limited and is thus reserved for a privileged class.

Che Guevara is perhaps the only protagonist in Majzels's novel who anticipates the arrival of a revolution. He sees himself as belonging to the camp in which the force of resistance is incubated. But what is this revolution or resistance launched against? By reproducing Guevara's letter to Fidel, the novel neither re-situates nor adapts Che to the contemporary context. He still expounds the "revolutionary spirit" in old and out-moded hackneyed terms: "the feeling of fulfilling the most sacred of duties: to fight against imperialism wherever it is" (1997a, 93). His bravura claim that committing oneself to the mission of revolution "comforts and sufficiently cures any wound" (93) is highly ironic, given that his revolutionary sloganeering is frequently interrupted by the lines in reminiscence of his mother and is further revealed to be another make-believe.

Che is not so much an embodiment of revolution as its ironic reincarnation in the contemporary world. Constantly overcome by his asthma, he is held back from moving forward in his project. His unconscious gesture of bringing his Ventolin inhaler to his mouth and "pump[ing] two quick bursts of stale nothing into his lungs" echoes his harangues to his camp at the mountain summit (18): "what is needed is a gesture. Something to remind the people that the revolution lives" (18). His words clash with his gesture, illustrating that the revolution itself appears to be short of breath.

There are no longer any obvious traces of imperialism left in the city. More ironically, Che finds himself in an embarrassing contradiction with his Marxist belief: as an insurance company officer, his main duty is to look for any reason, justified or unjustified, to deny or cancel the claimants' insurance benefits, that is, to dispossess the dispossessed. That "Karl Marx" happens to be his first victim further extends this irony: what does it mean to be a Marxist in a welfare state like Canada? It is true that he decides without hesitation to carry his impoverished client to his boss's office in the hope of restoring his insurance policy. But consider the insurance industry's capitalistic operation: to what extent could we say that his action still conforms to the Marxist logic? Isn't his fight for justice futile? Since Che's asthma constantly takes its toll on him and the librarian (Marx) is partially paralysed after his recent stroke, though they carry the revolutionary impetus metaphorically, it remains a bleakly stillborn project.

The character representing Karl Marx is never named in the novel, but is always referred to only vaguely as "the old man" or "the (retired) Librarian." Rather than being nameless, Marx is indeed unnameable, like the eponymous Macbeth, or as Majzels elaborates in an interview, "like the father, the name of the Father or the God in the Jewish religion that

96

you cannot pronounce" (1998, 22). Unlike other protagonists in the novel, the Librarian is initially sheltered. He dwells in a triplex located on the city's outskirts "on a sidestreet along the tracks between the Lachine Canal and the old Dominion Bridge plant" (1997a, 52), where he is supposed to unnoticeably fade from life and waste away. His apartment serves as a sheltered space that prevents him from inhabiting the city outside instead of protecting him.

Little is known about the Librarian, only scattered and vague ideas can be obtained from his neighbours, due to his health condition and self-isolation. As the narrator points out via Che's observation, there remains "no way to make the pieces fit into a clear picture" (53) – in other words, Marxism has sunk into an incomprehensible mess. The implications behind this portrayal and embodiment by an old man are that Marxism is no longer *à la mode* but dated and old-fashioned, shelved and archived in libraries, as if Marx himself has retreated from the frontier of revolution into an isolated shelter in the suburb.

Marx's unnameable quality is further suggested by the way in which he endeavours to speak. Orally, "he seems to be having trouble putting words together, and there is no wind in his throat, no sound but for a faint scratching of vocal chord" (62). And, when he does manage to articulate some words, all he can utter are some syntactically broken phrases such as his unintelligible final line, full of intellectual jargon: "Capitalist production… inexorability… a law of nature… its own… its own…" (119). His scribblings are equally feeble and unreadable:

> Faint traces, broken letters. And, in the mist of the mysterious hieroglyphics, what appears to be a complex mathematical formula resembling the old equation for surplus value, but with a strange radical, k, thrown in. (63)

These aspects of unreadibility are materialised by his appearance: "A large soft-fleshed male with wild grey hair and unruly beard, thick glasses, worn slippers and a bathrobe" (54): peripheral, passive, and in poor shape, Marxism is portrayed as disabled and faltering, a

soulless and aged body awaiting death.

In the novel, Marx the Librarian is put into contact with several other characters. These contacts, as Moyes points out, are intertextual and "fundamentally anachronistic." They allow the exploration of "the relationship between different moments in the 'building' of Western culture, different instances of colonization of peoples and spaces" (Moyes 2004, 175). One probably expects that the Marxist spirits of Che Guevara and the Librarian would enrich the debate between different versions of feminism as expressed by Clytæmnestra and Lady Macbeth. However, in the novel's rhetoric, these interactions only generate ironic juxtapositions and disappointments. When the two women offer different interpretations of their roles in plotting an assassination – a crucial scene in each of their narratives – Che attempts to reconcile them with this line from Mao Zedong: "The correct handling of contradictions among the people [...] requires first that we distinguish contradictions among the people from contradictions with the enemy" (Majzels 1997a, 111). The quarrelling women shout in unison, "Shut up" (111) – a gesture simultaneously and ironically executes Mao's previously mentioned revolutionary tactic, but also resists any intervention or interpretation of their actions in Marxist terms.

In the fragment "Tango Agamennon" (114-20), the Librarian meets Clytæmnestra and Lady Macbeth for a dance. Both women take the Librarian for their surrogate husband – Agamemnon and Macbeth respectively – in a tango just before his collapse. The dance's movement leads to a seamless collage of discourses, which radically relate to each other despite mutual contradiction:

> Power, merely the organized power of one class oppressing another. A father sacrificed his daughter, but against him – nothing. Didn't the law demand they banish him? – hunt him from the land for all his guilt? The proletariat… the ruling class never vanquish'd be,

until Great Birnham Wood to high Dunsinane Hill, sweep away by force the old conditions… But now they're ruthless judges. Threaten away! (Majzels 1997a, 120)

Phrases imbued with Marxist diction are intertwined with Clytæmnestra's expressions of dissatisfaction with her husband's impunity ("Didn't the law demand they banish him?")[19] and the prophecy of Macbeth's demise ("until Great Birnham Wood to high Dunsinane Hill"). The phrase "old conditions," thus, anticipates that Agamemnon and Macbeth will rule *until* their subjects overthrow them. This passage may appear to prophesise a Marxist-predicted fall of monarchy. However, at least in Marxist terms, the terms "proletariat" and "bourgeois" are out of context here, since in Macbeth's case, there is no revolutionary spirit. The monarchical system remains unchanged throughout the Shakespearean play's entire plot.

However, the prophetic line in <u>Macbeth</u> can indeed be said to invoke a reinterpretation of Marxist revolution. As Lianne Moyes puts it, "the conditions of Macbeth's demise […] – the impossible that nonetheless comes to pass – become, within the rhetoric of the text, the conditions of Marxist revolution" (2008, 127). Nevertheless, Moyes's argument should be modified to highlight the scene's ironic implication: actions are not so much carried out as suspended in the narrative disappointment of the novel, thus impossible conditions remain tenaciously impossible. They are like Godot in Beckett's play: his arrival is expected but never happens.

Throughout the novel, Che anticipates the revolutionary moment of a battle, but it never arrives, causing a disappointment equal to the anticipation of any drama in the novel. In the encampment, Che often mistakes a jogger for "a messenger [… w]ith news from Joaquin," his comrade (Majzels 1997a, 20). Like other characters who share the encampment with Che, the reader gets gradually used to this disappointment and eventually becomes alert not to Che's

call to arms but to yet "[a]nother of Che's false alarms" (147). A similar scene occurs when de Maisonneuve once mistakes Suzy Creamcheez for a Mohawk warrior: "young, no paint, but three rings dangling from the nose. The old Governor steps up and out into the open, ready to challenge, to defend the camp, to die" (40). Even though the imagined enemies of Che and de Maisonneuve are of course very different, each commander anticipates an ideal villain by whom their self-indulgent mission and their self-preoccupied vision can be validated.

Like other protagonists in the novel, Che and de Maisonneuve identify themselves as heroes in the plot of a grand narrative. In his diary entry, for example, de Maisonneuve writes how he is cheered and hailed by his peers as the "Hero. Singlehanded, pistol-packing hero" (76). These characters perform, similar to Eagleton's proposal, the cartographical strategy of mapping the world from a universal and *grand* top-down perspective. They are both symptomatic of delusions of grandeur and amnesia. Their amnesiac symptoms can be seen in their shared tendency to ignore the others and to completely disregard the mundaneness and banality of everyday life. In short, they consistently exhibit an indifference, or nonchalance, towards the very conditions of homelessness in which they have been thrown together. They respectively occupy no place other than the pitiful makeshift tent on the mountaintop and the vulnerable shelter in the trench near Saint Lawrence River.

In the novel, not only do Che and de Maisonneuve have to encounter the inevitable failure of their perceived ideals, but they are also exposed to the consequences of their own amnesia. Their state of obliviousness is tellingly illuminated by the crucial split between "bare life" (*zoe*) and "qualified life" (*bio*) remarkably observed by Giorgio Agamben (1995) in the practices of sovereignty from ancient times to the modern world.

In "Homelessness, Cosmopolitanism and Citizenship" (2008), Lianne Moyes highlights

homelessness as a key aspect through which to read Majzels's novel as a critical reflection on cosmopolitanism and citizenship. She points out, via Leonard Feldman's discussion on Agamben, that "[h]omelessness, then, is both necessary to, and a product of, the exclusions of citizenship" (Moyes 2008, 131).[20] In this light, Majzels's characters can be read as "figures of bare life" (131), but they also carry the active voices of "highly politicized subjects" (131). She thus concludes that "City of Forgetting resists the dream of a city purified of bare life," and at the same time "exposes the injustices and second-class political status suffered by those subjects the dream reduces to bare life" (131). Sherry Simon also observes such a discrepancy between "the narratives of twentieth-century ideological struggles and the sensory surfaces of daily life" (2006, 198). However, for Simon, the latter is not necessarily limited to "bare life." These "two realms of experience" and their perpetual confrontations with each other constitute Majzels's "configuration of the imaginative structure of the city" (198) in this novel.

Heroes and the Inexpressible

As both Moyes's and Simon's concluding remarks suggest, Majzels's novel basically offers an alternative mapping of urban space that exposes the essentially binary structure of one's experience of the city, namely the aspiration towards a political and qualified life on the one hand and the mundane dimension of everyday and bare life on the other. In this section, I argue that this structure relates to the difficulty in storytelling – or in other words, the conditions of the inexpressible – that preoccupies Majzels as a writer. The question that opens his 1996 essay concerns his resistance to "linear plot, unified characters and representational claims for fiction" (58), even if these elements may be more appealing to the reader. Although Majzles admits to being sceptical of all these elements, they point to a narrative frame that anticipates a hero's rise or fall. This frame, as Dirk Westerkamp notes, traditionally involves

the exploration of "the possibility (*dynamis*) of what life amounts to; about life not as 'bare life' (*zoe*) but as self-determined (*bio*)" (2007, 228). Similar narrative frames recur wherever a particular individual or a character rises up to become a hero, including ballads, tragedies, Bildungsroman novels, biographies, autobiographies, and grand narratives of history. In these hyperbolic plots, the hero, or in some cases the heroine, is easy to identify: their objective is to achieve a status in which his or her name will be respectfully and forever remembered.

Page Richards elaborates on this framework in her study of the topos of the inexpressible (2009). The framework, she notes, essentially provides for two parts in the narrative, which in dramatic tragedy are embodied as the hero and the chorus. The heroic character, she suggests, is the figure of the inexpressible "in the context of forces considered to be at the very edge of representation, such as God, transcendence, suffering, evil" (1).[21] The choral part, however, is "drawn from the humility of being human" and its self-aware inadequacy (50). In tragedy, the hero's aspiration towards an extraordinary status – sublime, victorious, wise, or paragon of perfection – usually results in his death or tremendous and irrevocable sacrifice. The chorus on the other hand survives but at the price of being ordinary, forgotten, and nameless. While the hero, as the figure of the inexpressible, cannot be represented, it is through the voice of the chorus that his story can be framed and told. In short, the hero and the chorus can be understood as the framed and the framer, the foreground and the background, the canonised and the ordinary.

I propose that this essentially binary frame of the inexpressible is helpful in understanding the urban experience in Majzels's City of Forgetting. The aspiration towards a political or qualified life (or simply an ideal) constitutes the heroic dimension in the narrative of the city, while the surface of everyday life of imperfection fades to become the chorus. One

102

example in the novel is the funeral procession for Rudolph "Rudy" Valentino (1997a, 149), which as Domenic Beneventi notes, "turns into a swarming crowd of political demonstrators" (Beneventi 2005, 116). Rudy's death transcends his role into a martyr available for different political agendas in which his image can play the required heroic role. The mourners who join the parade become the chorus, "blowing horns and whistles, chanting slogans, wailing and crying," that glorifies Rudy in the casket. The choral crowd includes

> [m]en in dark suits and fresh haircuts, black-shawled women, Shriners, gum-chewing schoolgirls, mascaraed flappers, trim socialites, gorgeous brilliant-plumed transvestites, drugstore sheiks, gauchos, toreros, James Deans, Marilyn Monroes, punks, bodybuilders, leather lovers. (Majzels 1997a, 149)

Any march, parade, demonstration, and campaign, as this scene portrays, could be seen as projecting a hyperbolic narrative with a political goal, or at least a political stance – whether it be emancipation, equality, gay pride, or nationalism. This narrative is politically framed, in which a hero is demanded as the central character.

All male characters in the cast of this novel are historical heroes borrowed from such hyperbolic narratives. Each of them aspires to embody a peculiar and larger-than-life version of a political ideal. Narratives unfold as though they could progress in this dystopian space as they do in their original contexts. There are two interrelated implications behind the unattainability of their goals. First, there is a dimension of beyondness: their perceived ideals are beyond the reach of human capacity and language. Second, they are aware of the inadequacy of the infrastructures of both the city and the language. They tend not to admit or accept their imperfections, but insist upon an unreachable goal imagined *beyond* the arbitrary limits of the city. The most obvious examples in the novel are Le Corbusier and de Maisonneuve. Both are ambitious and driven by their single-minded proposals.

Le Corbusier can be read as embodying a utopian model of an architectural city that mainly consists of geometrical lines and perfect shapes. Self-identified proudly as a "leading figure of the international modern movement in architecture" (22), Le Corbusier insists that "[m]an walks in a straight line because he has a goal" (98). He tries to keep himself in the image of his "real hero," who is "well-groomed and absolutely controlled" – a phrase of which he keeps reminding himself (65, 66) – as well as punctual, proper, and elegant, "neither unshaven, nor unkempt, nor bloodstained" (65). The names of all his remarkable constructions should well establish him as a hero in the history of modern architecture. But, to the ears of both Suzy and Clytæmnestra, they are nothing more than a chain of nonsensical phrases: "La Maison Citrohan, the Nestlé Pavilion, the Mundaneum, l'Unité d'habitation in Marseille, Ronchamp, Chandigarh" (26).[22]

Both home and language, according to Richard E. Goodkin (1984), can be respectively considered the essential "stable units" for tragic heroism and Symbolist poetry:

> where home provides the stable unit upon which the perpetuation of the heroic name is to be based […] language provides the stable units necessary for the expression of the Symbolist dream of absolute meaning. (xii)

As for Le Corbusier, he invents the Modulor as the stable unit upon which his utopian city can be built. This city is "The Radiant City," or a "city for heroes": "A city of harmony through gigantic works, standardization, mass production" (Majzels 1997a, 27). The Modulor is both a empirical unit for constructing home and a universal unit for measuring absolute values, and in Goodkin's words once again, one of the

> civilizing tools […] which attempt to impose order upon the inordinate, to structure the unstructurable so that human beings can have the impression of speaking and thinking and planning rationally about what is unspeakable, unthinkable, and ultimately irrational. (xii)

In City of Forgetting, Le Corbusier seeks to ameliorate the city from its defective condition to his ideal of perfection: "magnificent, stately, efficient, practical" (27), "no more filth, disease, homelessnesss, disorganization" (59), as in his Chandigarh project which "offers a clear and concrete demonstration of the value of rational city planning" (58). He endeavours to achieve this by bringing the Modulor to the attention of his ideal and target audience, Mr. Rockefeller,[23] hoping to obtain funding and financial support for his envisioned projects. Finally, although Le Corbusier is confident and proud of his Modulor, he reluctantly decides to adjust this ideal unit of measurement: he abandons the height of *an* average Frenchman as his reference, and instead adopts *the* average American hero's measurements, a decision which he takes when he suddenly realises that Mr. Rockefeller is not French but American.[24] Le Corbusier situates himself in the centre of the modern world as "the Architect-Philosopher" (27) – a position comparable to Plato's Philosopher-King. His utopian ideal resides in the realm of the absolute and beyond the limits of what he considers the imperfect city where he struggles to find shelter:

> "Mathematics […] is the door to the absolute, the infinite, the prehensile and the unknowable. But there are walls which bar our way. Occasionally a door appears; a man opens it, enters, he is in another place: a land of gods, a land of containing the secret keys to all the great systems. Door to miracles. Beyond this door, one no longer deals with men: one touches the universe." (92)

De Maisonneuve, similarly, is preoccupied with an ideal that exists beyond the inadequacy of the earthly world. His version of the ideal is religiously conceived and echoes Page Richards's medieval example of the inexpressible, when Christianity offered "high expectations of salvation in the face of earthly uncertainties: illness, plagues, and war" (Richards 2009, 5). Richards notes, via André Kukla, that both religion and mathematics allow us "to know certain truths which it is beyond the power of language to express" (36).[25] In a

religious context, she proposes that "[i]nadequacy is a measured failure, a direct contrast to the highest human verbal performance and its attempt at achievement" (40). This is reflected in the works of Augustine and Dante, who "draw upon this map [of the topoi of the inexpressible] for their preparation of a truth that is outside human time and space" (40). De Maisonneuve shares the faith in the same God and has similar preoccupations with a religious ideal that can only be imagined outside or *beyond* human time and space. This beyondness, thus, keeps him from inhabiting the city of everyday life.

In the novel fragment "Mermelade y Sangre" (72-76) – where "the sky is pouring down in a shower of long nails" (72) – de Maisonneuve succumbs to the physical difficulties of keeping the faith and remaining determined in his mission. He turns to God in prayer and attempts to articulate the holy purpose of his mission, even though this purpose is beyond his capacity for expression and beyond his earthly comprehension:

> *O darling Mary Mother of the world, sweet Lady in Heaven, holy Virgin Mary Mother of God, hear my solemn oath: let the waters subside, return the river to its banks, and as did Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, so shall I carry His cross upon my shoulders up through the tangled forest of this savage island, through a rain of flaming arrows to the summit of the mountain.* (73, original italics)

In his prayer, he persuades himself to perform a task that could bring him closer to the suffering of Jesus Christ in the Crucifixion. In other words, instead of wandering or flânerie in the city, he actually sets himself on a pilgrimage, hoping for sin and debt remission, and for the salvation of his city, his mission, or Montreal, which is drowning in the rain. He identifies himself heroically with Moses, "*Thus, long ago, Moses, Jehovah's chosen one, had become the only hope of Israelites in the midst of the desert*" (73). In effect, the adverb "thus" becomes a rhetorical instrument of self-persuasion – echoing what he earlier utters: "Faith is our only weapon" (22), through which he can be transcended from a "mere layman" to god's "chosen

one" (73).

During his pilgrimage, not only is de Maisonneuve preoccupied with the transcendent purpose of his mission, but he is also troubled by "voices outside his mission, outside the Church," something obviously out there that exists "beyond the palisades[, b]eyond the parameters of his mission" – the First Nations' "almost inaudible […] whispering prayer" that is forever haunting his mind and opposing his mission (74). His pilgrimage, in this regard, carries his soul *beyond* the territory which he traverses. As a pilgrim, he becomes transparent in the city, which ironically remains opaque and hard to penetrate despite his efforts.

Here, Majzels parodies the historical account in which de Maisonneuve ascended to the summit of Mont-Royal with a wooden cross on his back. Instead of the sacred wooden cross, the fictional character de Maisonneuve carries a similar crucifix-shape object at his back – "a jumble of metal, plastic, wood and glass, patched together with wire and rope" (73)[26] – in the hope of bringing it from the underground city to the mountaintop. While his body gets physically trapped in the urban infrastructure, he is also awkwardly and literally stuck both in his self-satisfying heroic plot and in contemporary Montreal. When he gets to the downtown underground mall, he is confronted by a physical border materialised as a glass revolving door, which he nonetheless perceives symbolically as a "transparent wall standing between him and his mission" (107). With his clumsy crucifix at his back, he considers the glass structure not so much a door to pass through, as a wall, or an obstacle, beyond which he must move. This scene also analogises how the city's religious heritage, as Sherry Simon notes, "finds itself being turned into surprising new uses" (2006, 121) as a phenomenon of the city's gradual secularisation.

Pilgrimage is a deficient mode of journeying through the city. It is not a movement of

getting *through* but an unachievable attempt at reaching *beyond*. Erín Moure regards with suspicion the spirit of pilgriming and the beyondness that it implies. In an interview with Dawne McCance (2003), Moure points out the difference between wandering and pilgriming. When being asked whether the idea of "wandering or 'pilgriming' relate[s] to [her] poetics," especially with reference to <u>O Cidadán</u>, she responds with reservation to the interviewer's intention to link wandering and pilgriming together as one same idea: "Wandering I like. Pilgriming, I'm not so sure of. 'Pilgrim,' to me, bears with it a notion that goes somewhere else than wandering" (McCance 2003, 1). She elaborates, in relation to Jean-François Lyotard's notion of peregrination:

> Whereas Lyotard's "Peregrinations" are wanderings in thought […] I prefer the word "peregrinate"; perhaps, it evokes more incessant movement than does "pilgrim," which requires a "beyond" – and is from an "elsewhere," has a goal, a transcendent purpose, and thus also implies a subject centred, not on the terrain through which it passes, but on that "beyond." This I find troublesome. (1-2)

Thus, Moure deems beyondness in pilgrimage problematic and undesirable, as it sets up walls of exclusion and projects a destination that is out of reach.

If the objective of these characters is to find permanent home for their particular versions of the ideal, the novel demonstrates how they occupy no place and are eventually unaccommodated in the contemporary urban space. Majzels explains this in an interview:

> There would be no place for them. Le Corbusier would not be received in the offices of Place Ville Marie. No one wants to hear his schemes, to hear de Maisonneuve's resistance to commercialism or Guevara's revolution or Clytæmnestra's anti-masculinism. These are discourses which have no place. (1998, 19)

In other words, they are imaginatively invited in the fiction but incapable of occupying any city forum.[27]

Real flâneur of today are thereby imperfect. Gail Scott ponders who qualifies as such

and suggests that today's imperfect flâneurs, are "the homeless people looking for cobblestones that aren't too bumpy to sleep on[,] the *sans papiers*, refugees" (Frost 1999, 58-9). The flâneur carries no map on his peregrinations, and mentally maps his experience of learning (or, in Benjamin's word, "*Erfahrung*") in the city along the random patterns of his wandering steps. However, can this imperfect flâneur model apply to Majzels's protagonists, dislodged on the map of contemporary Montreal?

As homeless people, their necessary confrontations with the city potentially put them in imperfect flâneurs' shoes. In order to survive, they have to depart from their self-sustaining positions and confront the city. For instance, we find Le Corbusier walking along Rue Notre-Dame in Vieux-Montréal. On his path, he digs into the neatly minded trash baskets, one every fifty yards, looking for "pure, clean shapes of progress" (Majzels 1997a, 24). Lady Macbeth comes down to the city and secures her usual spot on Prince Arthur Street for her daily ritual. She plays a small harmonica and gives a recitation in anticipation of donations, but remains indifferent to her audience. Clytæmnestra is disguised as an old woman, as she and Suzy look for their next planned theft victim whether on a subway platform or in an underground shopping mall.

As Sherry Simon proposes, they are potentially taking on the posture of wanderers who produce "subjective itineraries, passages through the metropolis" in a fashion similar to Robert Schwartzwald's recounting of his personal passage through Paris (Simon 2006, 199).[28] However, each of these characters' perverted versions of *perfection* ironically makes them mentally unprepared or incapable to experience the city through flânerie. In short, their urban steps are purpose-driven, not casual; instead of focusing on the city's interior, they project their attention beyond the imagined city borders. In so doing, they also neglect their own

inadequacies. They can only be read as "imperfect" flâneurs in an ironic way – indeed, not so much imperfect as antagonistic to flânerie.

The characters' preoccupations with their political actions and achievements do not address the physical homelessness and life-threatening struggles for basic needs in the dimension of everyday life. In other words, they take pains to distinguish themselves from the anonymity of the chorus, but fail to fully live up to their varying political ideals and expectations. Their self-determined actions, be they sacrifice, suffering, success, pilgrimage, martyrdom, or perseverance, are ironically and disappointingly reduced to inconsequentiality. (Indeed, it evokes, if anything, one of Marx's most famous lines about history: that history repeats itself "first as tragedy, then as farce.") In short, City of Forgetting presents a landscape of anti-heroism.

If, as Page Richards proposes, "[t]he rhetoric of the inexpressible [structurally and] traditionally depends upon an unbridgeable gap between inadequate human speech and its object of praise" (2009, 49), that is, between the chorus and the hero, then in Majzels's novel the inexpressible is at work in an unexpected reverse direction. It does not attempt to narrate the hero or articulate the ideal or "object of praise," but the imagination of this ideal, embodied by each heroic character, and its irrelevance to the everyday city life. It exposes the inadequacies of any perceived ideal and explores the possible acknowledgement of the often-underplayed choral dimension of everyday life and its inevitable mundaneness. It is a backward and less taken direction for a hero to turn back from a perceived destination and address the chorus that he has once deliberately left behind, or has even forgotten.

Heroines and "Le Rêve de Clytemnestre"

If I refrained from using the word "heroine" – albeit not entirely – up to this section, it is

110

because of the irreducible incompatibility between the two words "hero" and "heroine." In a hyperbolic narrative, while the hero emerges and arises from the chorus as the prominent and memorable name, the heroine is more often than not subordinated to the hero, and performs one of two archetypes: a bride, who would marry the hero, as the reward for his victory or achievement, or a femme fatale, whose death or punishment indicates the patriarchal order's restoration. In either case, she is identified as a heroine but, ironically, without heroic implications, whether her role is trivialised through possession by the hero or demonisation into a villainess or a femme fatale. In a conventional romance, for instance, Majzels notes, "women generally end up dead or married – or both" (1994, 14). Indeed, ironically, as Meredith Quartermain points out in her reading of Gail Scott's novel <u>Heroine</u>, "this term ['heroine'] has been inflected by masculinist novel forms" (2012, 114).

Kathleen Martindale, also in her reading of Scott's <u>Heroine</u>, offers a brief history of the critical reception of the term "heroine" in feminist criticisms. She notes that feminist literary critics have endeavoured to destabilise the binary opposition "between the hero/victim or the heroic/the ordinary" (1993, 74). On the terms "hero" and "heroine," she points out, "[s]ome reject 'heroine,' the female diminutive of 'hero,' outright, because of the '-ine' ending, which not only feminizes the word in English, but […] diminishes her accomplishments" (75). Concerning the resistance to those typical "endings of the nineteenth-century traditional heroine's plot of marriage or death" (75), Martindale references the projects of Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Susan Munt as examples in which the word "heroine" is rejected or avoided.

For instance, DuPlessis proposes the term "female hero" (1985); likewise, Munt prefers "hera" (1988). Along this vein of dissatisfaction with the word "heroine," Munt later coins the term "lesbian hero" (1995, 1998). Barbara Godard's self-image as "my hero" in her

autobiographical essay "Becoming My Hero, Becoming Myself" may probably serve another addition to Martindale's list (1990 [1986]). In this essay, Godard proposes a "feminist theory of reading" that is comparable to Michel de Certeau's tactics of making do: reading "is a gesture of self-inscription. Filling in the gaps, the reader (re)produces a life line. Self actualization *en procès*" (112). This process of becoming the hero through reading, according to Godard, can be understood as a "re-vision" in Adrienne Rich's description, as "act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (Godard 112).

In line with Godard's take on the term "re-vision," Martindale perceives Scott's use of the term "heroine" as an instance of "re-vision": "she re-visions its etymology to connect it with a cyclical narrative structure" (Martindale 1993, 75; Scott 1989, 123-4). In her essay "A Feminist at the Carnival" (1989), Scott elaborates her understanding of "a new kind of heroine" who relates to her novel:

> A new heroine who is not merely the feminine of hero […] Nor heroine as it was implied in the 70s wave of anglo-American feminist criticism. […]
> No, my heroine imagines a new heroine closer to an earlier meaning of the word: *At Delphi a[n] … ascension ceremony conducted wholly by women was called the Herois, or "feast of the heroine."* And this ascension represented Persephone's cyclical rise from Hades, not to "heaven," but to wander *about on the earth with Demeter (her mother) until the time came for her to return to the Underworld*. It is the notion of cyclical ascension, and descent (in contrast to the dominant pattern of linear rise to climax in patriarchal drama), that appeals to my heroine […] For this notion would permit her heroine (her set of heroines) to be both grandiose and humble, miserable and angry, not to mention any other imaginable contradiction without shame… (123-4, original italics)

This notion of heroine is inspired by Oedipus's tragedy, particularly the scene in which "Erinyes (the Furies) hounded Oedipus to death at Colonus in Attica" (122). In response to this punishment in the tragedy, Scott questions the assumed patriarchal logic and asks, "[what

is h]is crime?" The first possible answer is that "society was punishing him for unconsciously trying to substitute the matrilineal for the patrilineal line" (122). But, Scott hopes to consider the Furies on the side of anti-patriarchy, on the heroine's side:

> I like to think the Erinyes were furious at his failure. It's true that throughout history, they've always been somewhere in the picture: the witches, the suffragettes, and now the second-wave feminists. (122-3)

The three heroines in Majzels's novel could roughly be associated with three different and incompatible models of the heroine: Lady Macbeth represents the traditional heroine of marriage and death: her name suggests how she is only recognised as a subordinate to her husband. Majzels brings her back in the novel, as a villainess who cannot be housed in this contemporary urban setting. Her character originally embodies an ambition beyond humanity, wickedness beyond vice. On stage, her intentions could transcend human constraints as she passes from logical reasoning to irrational persuasion. However, in the prose of the novel the lines that she delivers are reduced to self-justification: "A woman's power should be clothed in the robes of submission" (Majzels 1997a, 111). Out of context and in the absence of Macbeth, her actions lack a strategic dimension. She remains in costume as a woman but loses any strategic role in the narrative and any permanent home for her identity.

Let us expand the comparison by noting that Suzy Creamcheez, a post-punk lesbian, comes very close to embracing the circularity that Scott identifies in Persephone's cyclical ascendance and descent between heaven and the Underworld. However, I shall focus on Clytæmnestra here and leave Suzy for the next section. If Lady Macbeth can be interpreted as a woman who is satisfied with her subordinate role to her husband, Clytæmnestra embodies one of many versions of feminist disappointment in a woman's life fictionally imagined by male writers.[29]

The novel opens with Clytæmnestra rising up from her sleep at her Mont-Royal camp. As a ritual which "she has done every dawn and every dusk for twenty-five hundred years" (Majzels 1997a, 10), Clytæmnestra walks to the lookout and scans the city. Similar to the heroes discussed in the previous section, here, from the vantage point of the mountaintop, Clytæmnestra assumes that the city below is her tragedy's chorus. This chorus, vaguely perceived as the ordinary people of everyday life, sings not the chants that praise her as an extraordinary heroine in her assassination, but the curses in affirmation of the patriarchal order that condemns her to death. In her soliloquy, she indulges in her illusorily privileged position:

> *Twenty-five centuries on these ramparts, watching for the enemy. Who knows the horizon better than I do? The towers of Troy piled the black river. Black river running past, to Aulis, where he murdered my Iphigenia for a breath of wind and a war. Who better than I knows the city below? City of daily life, war in a briefcase, death in a raincoat folded over your arm.* (11, original italics)

Through her eyes, the city below is perceived as the chorus, and comprises the citizens of Argos who deprive her of justice and betray her for the stability of daily life. Pessimistically, she sees no future when "hope collides with death" (12). She and those other scavengers on the mountaintop become the "[l]ast tattered band of heroes," the remaining survivors of ancient battles in this dystopian world of decadence: "Crippled, sick and dying, half-crazed from the sound of our own voices echoing off the steel glass towers below" (12).

Those "steel glass towers below" do not only block their voices from penetrating the city, they also gradually deprive the city of its capacity to dream. When Lady Macbeth self-mockingly murmurs that they are "the stuff of nightmares," Clytæmnestra remarks "but the city has long since ceased to dream" (18). This line subtly acknowledges that they still have dreams, while the others do not. Indeed, these heroic characters' dreams are their versions of idealisms: for instance, Le Corbusier's Radian City built upon the Modulor, de Maisonneuve's

114

salvation, Che Guevara's emancipatory revolution, Rudy's American dream. What then can we say is the dream of Clytæmnestra?

In Æschylus's trilogy, Clytæmnestra's dream is crucial to the plot of her tragedy. In that dream, she gives birth to a snake, which sucks her breast for milk and blood. This dream alludes to her repressed guilt regarding her plans to assassinate Agamemnon and usurp the Argive throne. In the trilogy, it prophesises Clytæmnestra's murder at the hands of Orestes, the vengeful son she bore Agamemnon. This feeling of guilt also situates her as the accused in the patriarchal law, awaiting her overdue punishment.

In Majzels's novel, there is a fragment titled "Le Rêve de Clytemnestre" (1997a, 121-4) which has little to do with the dream featured in Æschylus's version and instead makes possible Clytæmnesta's liberation from the patriarchal logic of Æschylus's tragedy. It is a dream of anti-masculinism and of liberation from of patriarchal law. Rather than milk and blood from her body, it is the "inkwell of the city" that spills over, as Æschylus lets down his heavy eyelids and falls asleep:

> even the great Æschylus wearies. And as the sea rises to meet the sky, the fog descends and Æschylus sleeps. In that moment of drifting chaos, free of the chains of her creator's mind, her heart takes flight from the black city and Clytæmnestra dreams. (121)

As a fictional character, Clytæmnestra bears an ironic implication: she is a woman – not to mention one with an anti-patriarchal stance – inserted into the logic of a Greek tragedy by a male writer. As the narrator notes, "The long sweep of Æschylus' pen scratches out her life. Day after day, the black ink of his hand pours into her veins" (121). In this scene, she is granted a rare moment of autonomy to wander away from the authorial control of Æschylus and into her own dream. She first dreams a dancer and is immediately troubled by her attempt to name her. Undecidedly, she murmurs, "How shall I name her?" (122) After several

sentences describing the dancer's movement, including her turns, re-turns, and spins, the narrative voice gives way to Clytæmnestra's answer: for the first time in the novel,[30] a name that relates to a historical female figure: "Spinning revolutions, Isadora…" (122).

In Clytæmnestra's autonomous dream, historical women emerge into the text, one by one, starting with Isadora Duncan, then Gertrude Stein and several others. As Majzels puts it in an interview, this implies that "if we look at the history of writing and women, the place of women in writing, it's a male vision. Woman is a fictional creation of man" (1998, 21-22). The underlying question behind this scene could be articulated as such: "how can a girl growing up, a girl becoming a woman […] dream her way out of the fiction?" (22)

After she imagines Isadora spinning, Clytæmnestra is also spinning, "Like a woman who never stops dreaming" (Majzels 1997a, 122). The spinning motion generates an invisible web of ironic and complex relationships between Clytæmnestra, Æschylus, and Isadora Duncan: "Dreaming a woman who dreams herself. Clytæmnestra, invented by Æschylus, imagines Isadora inventing herself" (122). The narrator offers at least two reading threads with which to untangle this web. First, in a sense of entrapment within a mise-en-abyme of representation: "So that even Isadora, this woman who invents herself, is invented by a woman invented by a man" (122). One can visualise that as a puppeteer (Æschylus) manipulating a marionette (Clytæmnestra) who creates another marionette (Isadora). On an optimistic note, however, there is a hint of freedom: "And yet, Isadora Duncan lives, for an instant, in Clytæmnestra's dream, in the spinning web of a long scarf, in the space of Æschylus's dozing" (122). Yet, this moment is only temporary: "Then, as Clytæmnestra spins faster and faster, Æschylus shakes his head, wipes the sleep from his eyes, and the moment is gone. The glimpse of Isadora fades and dies" (122). This spinning motion is antagonistic to the vectors of

masculine actions in linear plots of master narrative. The dance seems to produce a non-linear pattern of "spinning revolutions," in which "Men will die at her touch" (122).

The novel puts to a test whether Clytæmnestra could really free herself from "the chains of her creator's mind" and from the linear plot, and allow her heart to "take[] flight from the black city" below (121). Remarkably we soon perceive the difficulty and quasi-impossibility of Clytæmnestra's emancipatory dream. Her autonomy is only a delusion. Shortly afterwards, Æschylus wakes up and Clytæmnestra finds that she is still caught in the same "pitiful world" and "condemned to dream always of kings" (122). "Pitiful to live only in the brief batting of a heavy-lidded poet's eye. Pitiful to die spinning in eternity. [...] Condemned to dream always of kings. Of fathers" (122). The preposition "of" here suggests a lineage of fatherhood and kingship that diminishes the roles of women, just as the verb "beget" is used: Atreus begets Agamemnon who in turn begets Orestes and so on. Where then are the women and mothers? They too are of course forgotten in this patriarchal logic of remembering. In Clytæmnestra's soliloquy, she asks, "are we not of women born? Isadora, who was your mother? Have we forgotten her? As I, Clytæmnestra, dreaming of swans, have forgotten my mother Leda" (122).

In Æschylus's trilogy, after killing her husband, Clytæmnestra is murdered by her son Orestes. In the last play, she appears as a ghost in the Erinyes' dream and urges them to hunt Orestes for his crime of matricide. Finally, the Erinyes capture Orestes, but Athena intervenes and sets up a jury to judge whether he should be guilty of murder. The Erinyes act as Clytæmnestra's advocates while Apollo defends Orestes by pointing out that Athena was indeed born only of Zeus and without a mother, thus convincing Athena that Orestes should be pardoned.

In Majzels's novel, Clytæmnestra dreams that she is created without a father, through

her mother's writing. That is, she is born out of her mother's head rather than her womb:

> *She writes in the turbid of milk and blood. Alone, at night, unwinding the rope that drops her into sleeps, she writes carefully, steadily, lovingly. Line following line, curling tongues on the soft sheets of freshly cut pages, reaching out to me, her daughter – a book of caresses.* (122-3, original italics)

Clytæmnestra then collapses and utters more names of women writers "Murasaki Shikibu, Dickinson, Radclyffe Hall. Stein. Gertrude, writing machine […] Li Qingzhao, Al-Khansā', Barnes, Woolf. A thousand and one Scheheraszades…" (123). At this point, abruptly, an unrelated sentence interrupts her dream to describe where Clytæmnestra is spinning and collapsing: "The family of tourists scan the horizon, picking out the landmarks" (123). This scene references a similar one in Gail Scott's novel Heroine, wherein a black tourist is on the lookout of Mont-Royal trying to use the binoculars to enjoy a panoramic view of the city. When Scott was writing this novel, she admitted her failure in "relat[ing] to [her] poor secondary characters," among which is this black tourist (1989, 85). She humorously describes how these "poor secondary characters" traverse her text:

> Oddly, uninvited, almost mythical characters have stepped in, and are taking up more space than the minor secondary characters […] One is a Black man looking through a telescope on the mountain. I have no idea who he is or what he is doing there. (85)

Lianne Moyes recognises the reference of Scott's mythical black tourist trope in Majzels's novel. Moyes suggests that this scene atop the mountain, like those from Heroine, "draws attention to technologies of seeing, to the relation between seeing and not seeing" (2004, 178). In "Le Rêve de Clytemnestre," after Clytæmnestra collapses, the narrative perspective shifts from the heroine in the foreground to the tourist family in the background. A small girl of this family notably "drifts away from her brothers [and] parents" and approaches Clytæmnestra and attempts to offer help (Majzels 1997a, 123). Clytæmnestra, in response,

opens one eye and produces an almost inaudible word, the name of her daughter, "Iphigenia" (123). Moyes proposes that this scene begs different questions to "unsettle the systematic ways of seeing and not seeing difference" – each of which in turn "opens onto other questions" (2004, 179). For instance, "Is it a case of mistaken identity, the delusion of an old woman?" Moyes also notes that "if [Clytæmnestra] remains oblivious to those standing with her at the lookout," she may also be "unable to see the differences that constitute her visionary City of Women" (179).

Katheleen Martindale offers an interesting interpretation of Gail Scott inserting the black tourist in her novel Heroine. She reads Scott's novel as written in a "doubly framed narrative structure" (1993, 85). The two frames are figured by two minor characters, namely Sepia, another minor character, with whom the first person "I" indulges in imaginative dialogues, and the Black tourist, who attempts to obtain a panoramic view of the city via the telescope on Mont Royal. Martindale proposes,

> If Sepia represents the medium of photography which arrests time in separate and unchanging pictures, then the Black tourist suggests the medium of film which works like a narrative, moving through time. (85)

Above all, I contend that the reference to the black tourist and the telescope on Mont-Royal in Majzels's novel invite for a reflection on the incompatible narrative perspectives between a first person point of view and a third person omniscient position.

In her dream, Clytæmnestra conjures a litany of women writers' names, as though she were shuffling stills of them. Like Scott's narrator, she is in spinning motion towards her interior monologues with these names. However, throughout the novel, she also occasionally endeavours to acquire a top-down position to scan the city. Rather than a vision of the City of Women, Clytæmnestra indeed perceives the city below (poetically) as the "City of daily life"

(Majzels 1997a, 11) that "has long since ceased to dream" (18). Her dreams of revenge and anti-patriarchal law could never be seen through this telescope perspective. They are excluded from this view as defiant and mischievous. In the novel, Clytæmnestra is torn between the frustration of appearing as a villain or femme fatale in the third-person narrative perspective and the idiosyncrasy of her fragmented monologues (appearing in italics in the text) in her first-person anti-narrative.

However, the novel compensates her through the company of Suzy as her admirer and follower. Indeed, Suzy can be seen as a modernised and lesbian version of Erinyes (the Furies) who stands by her as a voice resisting the patriarchal chorus, the jury in Æschylus's play, and the city of daily life below. It is true that Clytæmnestra is narrated through a third-person omniscient perspective in this novel; however, she is not portrayed as a femme fatale as we perceive her frustration, hear her complaints, and observe her struggle to deal with daily city life down below – the city that would always exclude her and refuse to understand her. But, who is the narrative voice telling the story from this omniscient perspective?

I shall propose with a radical interpretation in the next section that this omniscient narrative voice could be interpreted as that of Suzy Creamcheez. Similar to the Erinyes in Greek mythology, she reads these heroic characters' stories as an alternative chorus and as the voice of devil's advocate. If temporary freedom and illusory autonomy could only take place in the dream of Clytæmnestra, that is, in the transient moment in which the logic of the male-dominated community can be elapsed, then the novel radicalises this dream and situates Suzy Creamcheez as a sleepwalker who traverses and occupies the city with troubled memory, alluding to the novel's the title: Montreal is seen as a city of forgetting through the eyes of Suzy Creamcheez, an amnesiac.

120

Suzy Creamcheez and the Omniscient Narrator

Majzels remarks in his conversation with Lianne Moyes that his first novel <u>Hellman's</u> <u>Scrapbook</u> (1992) is very consciously male, with little or no presence of women to the exception of the narator's mama, only mentioned in passing. He explains that he made this choice "because it was about undoing [his] maleness, [and] about trying to analyze and understand what it meant to be a man at this time" (1998, 23). The possibility of undoing maleness is again explored in his subsequent project <u>City of Forgetting</u>. I shall argue that the rhetoric of storytelling does not allow the omniscient narrator to occupy the text syntactically as a "he" or to take the strategic top-down narrative perspective as an obsessive observer shielded in his shadow under the sun. The story-told in the novel, I propose, encourages a mode of reading, not in the tactics of "making do" (*faire avec*) in de Certeau's term, but in the tactics of unmaking or undoing (*défaire*) in a radical sense.

This undoing results in reading possibilities in which the novel's end inevitably reaches an anti-closure or a moment of untelling. This untelling, in turn, invites for a re-imagination of the narrative voice's omniscience not one of the main characters occupying a position which is given, or taken for granted, but one which is a borrowed, or – to reference de Certeau's terms – poached position.[31] I propose that one possibility is the only surviving character in the novel's apocalyptic ending, the post-punk lesbian Suzy Creamcheez.

Domenic Beneventi reads Suzy as a postmodern and lesbian version of the heroine who "personifies the marginal, the ambiguous, and the excluded" and embodies "heterogeneity of meanings and identities" (2005, 117). Suzy, as the only survivor by the novel's end, "becomes the lone inheritor of the cultural ruins of modernism" (120). In Beneventi's interpretation, Suzy is a "cross-dressing lesbian flâneuse" who attempts to reappropriate urban spaces in a

"decidedly aggressive" manner (114):

> Her ambiguities of age, gender, and sexuality provide a counterpoint to those characters who seek to control the heterogenous meanings of the city, be it through science (Le Corbusier), religion (de Maisonneuve), political force (Guevara). (114)

For instance, according to Beneventi, Suzy can be said to launch "an ideological war" against Le Corbusier's modern vision of universal beauty (117). His reading of Suzy is illuminated by Sally Munt's lesbian flâneur model, a derivative of the lesbian hero[32] that she depicts in her book Heroic Desire (1998): "a borderline case, an example of a roving signifier, a transient wild-card of potential indeterminate sexuality, trapped in transliteration, caught in desire" (Beneventi 114; Munt 1998, 36; 1995, 117).

Peculiarly, this description of lesbian flâneur may be more relevant to another character Rudolph "Rudy" Valentino. Rudy, as Lianne Moyes points out in her close reading of the character, is

> a composite of Rodolpho Guglielmi, the Italian immigrant who arrived in the US with a dollar in his pocket; Rodolpho Di Valentina, the New York gigolo; Rudolph Valentino, the Hollywood star dressed up as gaucho or sheik, and the man who, in spite of several failed marriages, became known as the King of Romance. (2004, 180)

In other words, this is a make-believe character with an artificial identity perpetually and culturally fabricated and marketed as the masculine American hero archetype.

Suzy's identity is similarly shifting, but not because she is "trapped in transliteration" or "caught in desire" – to say that would omit her tendency not simply to construct, but also to resist and to deconstruct intelligibility, in the wake of her memory loss. To put it simply, she is anxious at the prospect that recovering her memory could imprison her in a coherent identity. The narrator humorously describes the vagueness of her identity: "Difficult to tell her age because she conforms to none of the ready-made female models" (Majzels 1997a, 11). She is

the only character who is not self-preoccupied with a single-minded proposal. Her symptom of forgetting her name and her recurring echolalia pertain to a different dimension of the inexpressible.

While interacting with those heroic characters, Suzy interrogates and challenges their ridiculous dreams through her echolalia. For instance, Marx the Librarian's and Che Guevara's broken phrases could be taken as a point of reference to illustrate the effects of Suzy's language. They demonstrate signs of aphasia: they articulate themselves inadequately. Their conditions – asthma and stroke-induced paralysis – are of course literal and physical, but these can also be read figuratively as the inadequacy of language itself. Neither Che's anticipation of emancipatory revolution nor the Librarian's criticism of capitalism can be adequately accommodated in the English language, which is sometimes perceived as "the language of commerce, work and art," or in short, the language of capitalism (Majzels 1996, 58).

Suzy Creamcheez's chants of occasional echolalia – another form of aphasia – exaggerate the inadequacy of expression in the Librarian's and Che's languages. The Librarian's line "The expropriators are expropriated" is repeated and contradicted in Suzy's echo: "Proprieties are appropriated" (Majzels 1997a, 116). In an earlier scene, when Che attempts to deliver his persuasive speech, Suzy interrupts with this line: "The duty of a revolutionary is to make revolution" (16), which only makes Che suddenly break off, "as though he has lost his place in the text" (17). The essential repeated syllables in both the Librarian's and Che's line – that is, the pairs "expropriators" and "expropriated", and "revolutionary" and "revolution") – sound self-contradictorily redundant. They remind us of Audre Lorde's famous claim that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house"

123

(Lorde 1984, 112) – a stance with which the character Clytæmnestra would very likely align herself. However, one may argue that the language that she speaks belongs to the patriarchal society that she endeavours to overthrow. Therefore, her self-doubt tends to submit her voice into silence and into a space of caesura, as it does in the opening scene:

> *Who will stop my mouth? Who will silence Clytæmnestra? Is that you, Orestes, come at last? Is it my son, come to murder his mother because she speaks? Speak what? The truth? A dream? What does it matter, so long as she speaks?* (Majzels 1997a, 12, original italics)

In the beginning, Clytæmnestra tends to dodge Suzy and get rid of her as a stalker. In the first scene, she climbs down from the sleeping post "[s]lowly, painstakingly, and without waking the girl [Suzy]" because Suzy "would only insist on following her" (9). In their hutment, Suzy once asks if Clytæmnestra is "going down to the city later," Clytæmnestra draws a line and claims a preferred position of solitude. She says, "I work alone" (14). Later, however, the narrator remarks that Clytæmnestra "has grown accustomed to the girl's presence" and to her "[h]overing in the background[, o]ffering a hand[, and, l]istening to Clytæmnestra's rememorizing" (129). Her affectionate response to Suzy's presence and to her echolalia in the background yields to the jouissance of textual pleasure, a blissful condition, as the narrator describes in the fragment "Syntactics of Love" (129-31):

> If I enter this wet clearing which is not a swamp but which is dangerous… viscous, how will we emerge? The surface of my self. The thin dry surface of your hand, a milky white phrase curling like birch-bark from the tree, the damp centre of my transitive palm on your soft inner thigh, the dark ellipsis, the callused heel, the future perfect eye. A bone, a nail, a soft cedilla. An ætatis. Moving into each other like the sea leaking back into a river, rain beating the surface of a pond, water breaking into memory. My dreams. (130)

The unexpected collocations of grammatical adjectives with body parts ("transitive palm" and "future perfect eyes") and of descriptive adjectives with the grammatical nouns for diacritic or

punctuation marks ("dark ellipsis" and "soft cedilla") produce the effect of visual wonder and syntactical excitement. But, what is more surprising here is the suggestive emergence of the first person plural "we" ("how will we emerge?") and the subtle appearance of the first person "I" that collides with the voice of the narrator.

Apart from this scene, the narrator uses the first person plural "we" only once in the novel:

> La Catherine just east of The Main. How did we end up back here again? She remembers the sun. And running. That makes sense, because I'm breathing as though she's been running, but no sun now, just black clouds and the air like wet dog fur. (83)

In these few sentences, the narrator shifts her voice from "we" to "she" to "I" and finally settles with the third person perspective again. The third-person singular "she" is Suzy Creamcheez. It could be argued that Suzy emerges out of the fissures among these pronouns – "I", "we," "she," and even "you" – in the fabrication of the text. In other words, what is put into question is the (communitarian) first-person plural "we" as represented by the city from which many characters find themselves excluded.

The sentences quoted above follow an early scene in the fragment "Le printemps rue Saint-Denis" (77-79), in which the narrator signals her presence and reveals some of her rhetorical decision in the act of storytelling. It also features the sun as an exceptional phenomenon in the novel: "Sun. There must be sun at least once during the story. So sun all along rue Saint-Denis" (77).

Throughout the novel, the narrator never appears as the first-person subject "I" but recedes into the background and becomes almost absent from the text. In such a case, to compensate the insecurity of not knowing whose voice narrates the story, it is convenient to assume the vague presence of a third-person omniscient narrator. Without question, the reader

would also attribute the masculine pronoun "he" to such a narrator. This invisible "he" – or the average man – can be aptly imagined as a white middle-class straight man, who conveniently camouflages himself with the background and easily secures a god-like perspective from which to tell the story. Allow me to exploit this image: this top-down viewpoint is like the sun, under which a universal ideal may seem possible and may even appear as a mirage, and a narrator thus can become "perfect" and cosmopolitan, just as Baudelaire collocates the noun flâneur with the adjective "perfect" (*parfait*).

As it has been raining through the story, in the above quoted sentence, the narrator is longing for this symbolic sun. Early in the first fragment, we are introduced to a city where "the rain [keeps] pouring down" (12). The rain serves as a constant reminder of these characters' homeless condition. It appears as an irreducible nuisance, as an obstacle to be dealt with in their everyday lives: "For roofing, most of the shelters use the best and cheapest defense against the rain: old plastic shower curtains" (13). Likewise, in their trench by the river, de Maisonneuve and Le Corbusier "have little in common, except perhaps this fear of flooding which keeps them busy fortifying their encampment against the river" (23).

The narrator introduces the proverbial sun above Rue Saint-Denis:

> Although both sides of the street [rue Saint-Denis] are bathed in the late morning light, it is the east side, the side that will remain in sun all afternoon, lined with café terraces, the side which is full of people, all the way from l'UQAM on boulevard de Maisonneuve up the steep slope to Sherbrooke, past le carré Saint-Louis and on as far as rue Saint-Joseph, (77)

The narrator, then, changes the perspective. Now on the street, in the posture of a flâneur, the narrator goes on to describe different people:

> people crammed together so tightly as though they were in line to get in somewhere except that the line itself is the event, people you haven't seen for a season and a half, everyone emerging from winter hibernation retrouvailles the café terraces all full

fashion show la Brûlerie five hundred grams of Kenya AA en grains Gilbert Boyer the quiet sculptor outside Le Pain Doré sunglasses faces turned to the sun soaking in rays croquet monsieur un allongé sans sucre un peu de crème everyone dressed casually to the aces so clever so cool isn't that the actor in Arcand's last film he's so much shorter… (77)

In this breathless long sentence, the narrator surrenders punctuation and allows the voices and phrases delivered by different people on the street to pervade narration at different rhythms and paces. This depiction of rue Saint-Denis in this passage alludes to a cosmopolitan space, which as Lianne Moyes proposes, is "composed of citizens and cultural practices from different parts of the world" (2008, 123). However, before the sentence reaches its final punctuation, we finally meet one of the homeless protagonists:

and outside the liquor commission on the corner of Duluth Suzy Creamcheez begging just a hand extended but wearing a worn-out woollen glove with the fingers cut off the nineteenth-century poorhouse look standing by the door to catch them coming out with a harmful of bottled guilt. (77)

Effectively, the narrator brings the cosmopolitans ("people") together with the homeless (Suzy) in the same urban location (corner Duluth and Saint Denis). The fine line between those who feel "everywhere at home" and those who are "not home" becomes less defined. It points toward the ambivalence of terms such as "emigré, exile, expatriate, refugee, nomad, cosmopolitan." One would almost unreservedly agree with Susan Rubin Suleiman's observation that "Over and above their fine distinctions, however, these words all designate a state of being 'not home' (or of being 'everywhere at home,' the flip side of the same coin)" (Suleiman 1998, 1 quoted in Moyes 2008, 123-4).[33] However, there is an incompatibility between the regular and festive crowd on the one hand and the underprivileged and the homeless on the other. When they appear in the same space, either the latter is ignored, or the former acknowledges their presence but maintains a distance. Later in the scene, we note, the

crowd displays their eagerness to spare some change. Suzy takes the money without smiling at them, silently calling them as "assholes" (Majzels 1997a, 77). This derogative remark signals the distrust between the two sides of the power imbalance and interrogates the morality behind the cosmopolitan spirit of "feeling everywhere at home" – a privilege that is enjoyed by many who yearn for cosmopolitanism and the perfect Beaudelairean mode of flânerie.

The sun symbolises the conditions in which a universal ideal may seem possible and a flâneur can become "perfect" and cosmopolitan. However, with the sun fading from the narrative, the narrator soon abandons this position: "The trouble with good things is not so much that they don't last forever; it's the way they get cut short before you have a chance to remind yourself they aren't going to last forever" (78). After this scene, a police cruiser appears. For Suzy, this is a threat. They could be after her, exert violence at any time, "their nightsticks ready," and remove her from the spectacle of the city streets (78). Figuratively, the narrator remarks, "the light in the sky has changed, gotten darker," yet it is not the return of the rain ("there are no clouds"), but the anti-climatic arrival of an eclipse: the symbolic sun of universal values has been blocked from the scene (78-9).

The sun's obscuration functions as an analogy implying that the story is not exactly narrated from an entirely transparent and omniscient perspective. Gail Scott once claimed,

> Now that the narrator is no longer omniscient, to write a novel is to confront the material of living at its most intense, to write out of a place where language, which is public, and the body, which wants to be private, spar it out. (Scott, Moyes and Frost 2002, 209)

Figuratively, she puts it in sexual terms, "if you think of the omniscient narrator as being the ultimate 'top' […], the other extreme might be a narrator as bottom" (224). In City of Forgetting, despite omniscient airs, the narrator should be considered on that far end of the spectrum, who constructs the story from bottom-up.

128

In order to make sense of the world around her, and to actively rebuild a would-be narrative in the wake of the destruction and of her memory loss, Suzy occupies the omniscient perspective of storytelling without owning it. Story can be shaped, Gail Scott proclaimed in her essay "Shaping a Vehicle for Her Use," like a sphere (she borrows this imagery from Julio Cortazar), as "a woman's form" (1989 [1983], 75). Scott considers sphere as

> a nice feminine shape to take off from, a shape that gives us the latitude to avoid linear time, that cause-and-effect time of patriarchal logic […] the better to decipher a memory blocked by silence, to leap from my discoveries towards a future not yet dreamed of. (70-1)

Majzels's project of undoing his maleness could be understood through how he drops his masculine pen in order to get a hold of a feminine sphere. He does this by diminishing the first-person "I" – the writing subject – and introduces the character Suzy Creamcheez in the third-person "she." Suzy shares with the reader the unprivileged position of a resistant story-reader rather than a manipulative story-writer, and thus can relate to the second person "you" in the way that she is first introduced:

> This is Suzy Creamcheez […] You'd expect the saved head and the three rings dangling from her pierced nose to complete the tough look she's obviously going for; instead, they evoke a kind of fragility. (Majzels 1997a, 11)

As Majzels explains, Suzy is a hybrid combination of different figures, among them, a fictive character by the same name in Frank Zappa's songs as a "California valley girl" who "floats mindlessly through his songs," the character C. from Gail Scott's 1993 novel <u>Main Brides</u> as "a young woman walking down the Main with a knife in her boot" who, in this intertextual context, moves further from one book into another book; and, in addition to this source, the fictional character bearing the same name Suzy Creamcheez in Kathleen Martindale's unpublished autobiographical writing, which Majzels co-authored (Majzels 1998, 23).[34]

129

Speaking of the premature death of Martindale,[35] Majzels goes as far as to suggest that the academic system somehow killed her.[36] Suzy Creamcheez, as I shall suggest, can be interpreted as the reincarnation of Martindale in the novel as a resistant and active reader of the texts surrounding her.

My reading that Suzy Creamcheez occupies the omniscient perspective refers to de Certeau's idea of poaching in The Practice of Everyday Life. In her paper "Paper Lesbians and Theory Queens," Martindale calls attention to de Certeau's claim that, rather than writing, the act of reading is a resistant practice of poaching with regards to her self-aware problematic position as a lesbian critic, who "inserts herself into the semeiocracy" (Martindale 1997, 36). She sees herself "a renter rather than an owner of cultural and other forms of capital" (36). Reading in this sense should become "a tactic of making-do," while the lesbian critic is "of necessity a plunderer […] making herself into what de Certeau, citing Witold Combrowicz, citing Musil, citing Freud, calls an 'anti-hero' of knowledge who haunts what de Certeau tellingly calls 'our research'" (36).

Unlike Martindale, Suzy is not an academic. Although she ends up in the library, she does not pretend to produce a scholarly research or construct a critical theory. Instead, she humbly attempts to tell fragments of a story. I would suggest that Suzy actually performs the tactics of undoing or un-making in her fictional encounters in apocalyptic Montreal or City of Forgetting, rather than making-do, which in the context of lesbian writing as what Martindale calls an "unpopular culture," may sound tricky and ineffective as a resistance practice.

Not only does Suzy plunder an omniscient perspective, she also borrows characters from other texts and undoes their respective stories. The resulting text is a collage of quotations and radical rewritings in which all these other characters emerge onto the map of

130

Montreal. Inserted in this collage are Suzy's occasional appearances in lieu of the first-person interruption. In those moments, she confronts or interrogates the model of utopia or idealism which each character embodies.

In the last scene, Suzy finds herself alone in the ruins of a library with a dog (de Maisonneuve's dog Pilote). Here, the narrator offers a sentence that describes the scene in a neutral and descriptive tone and accounts for this scenario in a simple cause-and-effect structure: "Inside, the random collapse of walls and shelves has transformed the already arcane system of the library into an unreadable maze" (Majzels 1997a, 158).

If the "arcane system" is the dominant way in which the library, and metonymically the city, used to be mapped and understood, the sentence offers a neat explanation that associates an earthquake – whether factual or imagined – as the surrogate source for the total destruction of this system. In its current state of chaos and messiness, the "unreadability" of the maze into which the library (or the city) has turned alludes to the tendency to refuse to read, rather than the absolute impossibility of reading. The following sentence, then, attempts to situate Suzy in this scenario, but only dissonantly in a concessive clause: "Still, she feels safe in here" (158).

The word "still" is a concessive adverb, it means "even so," that is, "in spite of the mess of unreadability" surrounding her, Suzy is safe and feels at home both in the text and in the library and city ruins for the first time. The concessive relation between these two sentences subtly subverts the convenient cause and effect logic implicated within the first sentence's structure. In other words, there is no implied casual relationship between the destruction of the library and Suzy's comfort there. The feminine pronoun "she" in the second sentence refers primarily to Suzy in the narrative, but it can also be interpreted as the

grammatical person "she" which finds itself better accommodated in the post-apocalyptic chaos than in the symbolic order or in the arcane system where the masculine "he" is usually privileged.

A sentence later, the narrator becomes speculative and formulates a series of interrogative assumptions: "What is she looking for? A clue? Something to fill the gaps in her memory? Or just a place to hide from the homeless patrols?" (158) The pronoun "she" in these questions does not only refer to Suzy, but also to the narrative voice, which can be heard here as arguably created by Suzy herself. Through this alienated voice as the third person speculative "she," the construction and deconstruction of Suzy's story becomes conceivable. In a later moment, almost the end of the novel, Suzy pulls a large volume away from the dog's mouth. The narrator describes the book only in terms of its appearance and emphasises again its unreadability: "The book is very old – half the spine crumbles in her hand when she opens it – full of scrolled letters and ancient French" (159).

The next sentence, however, suggests how Suzy tenaciously refuses to abandon any book, any text, despite its apparent unreadability. The word "Still" appears again connoting the rhetorical concession in the sense of "in spite of that": "Still, she can make out the title, Relations, that it was written by Jesuits and that they are talking about her city" (159). It turns out that the book happens to be the second volume of the 19ᵗʰ Century publication of Relations des Jésuites (1858) – a rare item that has been resting in the library and collecting dust.

The narrator then announces, "this is a surprise" (159). Yes, this is a surprise for Suzy. As the narrator explains, "There are thousands of books here. Yet the first one she's opened has, in some way, touched her. Is it coincidence?" (159) Yet, this also surprises the reader. Here on the novel's final page, it announces that the act of storytelling may start all over again.

The narrator refers to Suzy's random search in the library ruins for the next book and invites the reader in the second-person to imagine the difficulty, "At first, you don't know where to start. She moves, on all fours, down the row a little way to pick another volume at random" (159). But, read differently, this can also be an invitation to un-read the novel so far up to this point. The narrator, Suzy herself, poaches characters and sentences from different sources around her in the ruins and attempts to construct a narrative that would produce some clues to address these questions: where is she? How does she get here? And above everything, who is she?

The omniscient narrator, in this sense, is ironically not in the least omniscient. She knows almost nothing or as little as the reader does. It is because of her limited knowledge and troubled memory that she tactically plunders the omniscient perspective from which to construct a narrative and make sense of the messy space around her. At the end, the narrative is meant to undo itself for perpetual reconstruction. We should wonder whether she takes more books and extracts more characters from their contexts for her narrative, or if she finally departs from this library's shattered space and goes outside.

The Reader as the Heroine

In <u>Translating Montreal</u> (2006), Sherry Simon offers a figurative interpretation of the roles of the Reader, the Writer, and the Translator, respectively as the heroine, the hero, and the villain (119-20). These three archetypes, in turn, correspond to the following characters in Italo Calvino's novel <u>If on a Winter's Night a Traveller</u> (trans. William Weaver 1981 [1979]): they are Ludmilla (or the "Other Reader"), Silas Flannery (the Irish Writer of the "eagerly awaited novel <u>In a Network of Lines that Enlace</u>"), and Ermes Marana (the Italian Translator of Flannery's novel who is in fact a counterfeiter).

Simon's reading omits the actual protagonist's role, that is, the unnamed second person "you" ("*tu*" in the original Italian) or "The Reader" (not to be confused with the feminine "Other Reader" Ludmilla). "The Reader" starts out by reading Calvino's newly released novel, but ends up on a journey of interrupted reading as the copy of the novel that he gets from the bookstore is mixed and messed up with pages from another novel by a Polish novel in the earliest instance. A similar scenario of unexpected interruption comes up as soon as the Reader gets interested in the story of a new novel. At one point, encountering the same problem with the same book, the Reader and the Other Reader form solidarity of readership.[37] But, when the Reader suggests that they should "go to the publisher'" and "find again the thread that has been lost," Ludmilla the Other Reader coldly refuses to join him. She explains matter-of-factly,

> "There's a boundary line: on one side are those who make books, on the other those who read them. I want to remain one of those who read them, so I take care always to remain on my side of the line. Otherwise, the unsullied pleasure of reading ends, or at least is transformed into something else, which is not what I want […]" (Calvino 1981, 93)

The boundary that Ludmilla, the Other Reader, mentions corresponds to the binary of production and consumption, for which de Certeau points out, "one would substitute its more general equivalent: writing-reading" (1984, xxi). Mentioning this concern, Ludmilla convinces the Reader that she would prefer not to cross the line and risk undertaking the inevitable self-transformation. If there is anyone who should cross this line, she considers that it should be the writer's task. In other words, she demands that the writer take on the role as the hero who would make worthwhile her position as the reader. However, this hero is not the Writer in the process of writing, but the writer whose existence emerges from the books that he has written – that is, the Writer belongs to the realm of the written, instead of being the one who writes.

As she says, "the one who interested me was the other, the Silas Flannery who exists in the works of Silas Flannery," independent of the Writer himself who only serves as a medium through which the novels pass (Calvino 1981, 191-2).

Contrary to Ludmilla's imaginations of him, the Writer (Silas Flannery) finds himself always stuck with a writer's block and pathetically confined in the position of writing. As he says, "Since I have become a slave laborer of writing, the pleasure of reading has finished for me" (169). In the Writer's imagination, the ideal reader is either "transfigured in meditation, as if she saw a mysterious truth being disclosed" or gets absorbed in the "hidden meanings" of the book that she happens to be reading (174) – in whichever case, the book should be anyone's but his, or worse, one written by his (imagined) rival.

If, as Flannery the Writer suggests, "writing manages to go beyond the limitations of the author," it can only be achieved through the ideal reader in her pure act of reading: "Only the ability to be read by a given individual proves that what is written shares in the power of writing, a power based on something that goes beyond the individual" (176). In such a case, it would become possible and appropriate to conjugate syntactically the impersonal third-person subject "it" with the verb "to write," resulting in an expression of "something less limited than the personality of an individual" (176). From the perspective of the Writer, this ideal reader in the first-person of the proposition "I read, therefore *it* writes" is the heroine (176), who undergoes transfiguration like a martyr, transcends the subject of writing, and ultimately reaches the hidden meaning during the process of reading.

From the above instances we can deduce that both the (Other) Reader and the Writer require each other as the respective hero or heroine in their plot of self-identification and idealisation. The Translator, Ermes Marana, however, finds himself excluded in either

135

instance – just as when we mention Calvino's books with their English titles, we tend to put the translator's name William Weaver in parentheses. Marana cannot participate otherwise than as the villain. Jealous not only of the Writer, but also of all writers of different faces who step between him and the reader, he constantly endeavours to interrupt the text which he is translating in order to show his presence. His interruption, Sherry Simon suggests, "confirms the reader's worst fears" – that is, to elaborate, "that one can never be certain of the good faith of the Translator, that one can never control the dealings that go on in the shady zone where the translator operates" (2006, 120).

However, the unacknowledged fear of both the Reader and the Writer, on the top of Simon's proposition, is the inevitable transfiguration or self-transformation that one has to undergo in the process of writing or reading. If we understand the archetypes of hero and heroine – to say it paradoxically – as one who passes the "impassable" boundary, reaches the "unreachable" destination, or achieve the "unachievable" goal, both Ludmilla and Flannery are unqualified and unprepared for the heroic act of self-transformation awaiting them. Instead, it is Marana the Translator who, with his tenacious endeavour to prove his worth and importance, breaches the line between reading and writing and becomes the unanticipated hero in the process of perverse translation.

Therefore, Simon also recognises Ermes Marana more as the novel's hero than its villain.[38] The Translator demonstrates the possibility that "the manipulations of the translator" could become "constructive purposes" and that the texts' radical alternations during the translation processes could be "in itself an act of creation" (Simon 2006, 120). "Practices of deviant, disrespectful and excessive translation" – all these of which Marana could be easily accused – Simon exquisitely points out, "have indeed become a mark of experimental writing

136

in Montreal" (120).

The brief discussion on Calvino serves as an important introduction to Simon's chapter on the paths of creative and literary intervention in Montreal "where translation encounters the pleasure of perversity" (119). In a gesture of effortless transition, she shifts the discussion from the instances of translation in the fiction of Calvino's novel to the context of literary production in Montreal. As a multilingual city, Montreal offers "a breeding ground for innovative translation practices" (120). A number of acclaimed Montreal-based experimental writers, such as Gail Scott, Robert Majzels, and Erin Moure, are themselves literary translators.

Simon makes a stunning statement concerning these writer-translators' deconstructive effects of in the literary scenes in Montreal: "Writers have invaded the domain of translation, and wreaked a salutary havoc" (120). However, as is the case of writers who are also readers, translators are themselves active readers. As Simon also notes in the Introduction to her edited volume In Translation (2013), "translation is the deepest form of reading" (xv). What, then, is expected of the reader in the wake of translation or in situation in which the reader, like the protagonist in Calvino's novel, should also undertake translation in the process of reading? At this point, I am ending my chapter with a brief reading of Calvino's If on a Winter's Night a Traveller as an unexpected diversion, the goal of which is to highlight the reader's similarly troubled position in Majzels's City of Forgetting as an important participant or collaborator of storytelling.

In Calvino's novel, the reader finds himself caught in the novel as the second-person protagonist "you" in the main narrative. Like the Translator, the unnamed Reader "you" also emerges as a hero throughout the book. The Reader follows the Translator's footprints, despite remaining sceptical of the latter's projects of scam and falsification, and also ends up

137

participating in the process of trans-production. Unwittingly, in his actively engaged and troubled reading, the Reader radically translates the ten novels (their beginning chapters) into another novel. Combined, the titles become the first paragraph of a new and different story:

> "*If on a winter's night a traveler, outside the town of Malbork, leaning from the steep slope without fear of wind or vertigo, looks down in the gathering shadow in a network of lines that enlace, in a network of lines that intersect, on the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon around an empty grave – What story down there awaits its end? – he asks, anxious to hear the story*." (Calvino 1981, 258, original italics)

De Certeau suggests that the activity of reading cannot be understood as passive or entirely on the side of reception or consumption. "In reality," he proposes, "the activity of reading has on the contrary all the characteristics of a silent production" (1984, xxi). Reading involves the transformation of "the readable" into "the memorable": "A different world (the reader's) slips into the author's place" (xxi). This is an inevitable transformation that takes place in the process of reading. This "slip" can be understood, too, as a gesture of occupation, which de Certeau figuratively elaborates as the act of habitation through renting an apartment or "a space borrowed for a moment by a transient":

> This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient. Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories. (xxi)

Both the Reader and the Other Reader participate in this mutation as soon as they engage in the activities of reading. Their apartments are the spaces where they can read in an undisturbed environment. These spaces symbolise both the well-sheltered positions where reading a novel becomes a pleasurable activity of leisure and the texts that they temporarily inhabit during their reading. For instance, we note in the first chapter that the narrator persuasively proposes that the Reader "[f]ind the most comfortable position" before reading the novel (Calvino 1981, 3). Similarly, for Ludmilla the Other Reader, the arrangement of

books in her house reassures us that "[r]eading is solitude" in one's most private and comfortable space (147).

What interests me in Calvino's novel, however, is the scenario in which the sheltered position of reading is suddenly deprived. In other words, the Reader has to risk surrendering this comfortable position in the hope of reaching the novel's next episode. To borrow de Certeau's words, he could no longer occupy a text as a renter, but gets dislodged from the shelter of reading. Calvino takes this dislodged Reader's adventure very far in his novel. But, at the end, the Reader returns to another sheltered position: he and the Other Reader marry and become man and wife. They finally secure a new and shared comfortable position of reading: "Reader and Reader. A great double bed receives your parallel readings" (260).

What if the reader's comfortable shelter can no longer be taken for granted? How is it possible to speak of the reader's figure not as de Certeau's renter, but as a dislodged reader, like those characters in Majzels's City of Forgetting? Suzy, I propose, can also be read as the text's second-person protagonist. Just like Ludmilla in Calvino's novel, when the reader is named, she can no longer purely reside in the second-person's comfortable position, but also arises by way of occupation into the role of a third-person character.

De Certeau suggests that a text is made habitable through the activity of reading. However, in Majzels's novel, any sense of habitability is put into question. If the homeless conditions primarily reveal the characters' incapability to adapt to the contemporary city for their survival, the reader's dislodged position should not be automatically interpreted as a sign of inadequacy or deficiency. Instead, similar to the Reader in Calvino's novel, the disadvantageous position provokes the reader Suzy, both *in*-narrative and *of* narrative to undertake self-transformation. Ultimately, she becomes the only survivor, the heroine.

139

Coda: Spaces Like Stairs

In Part Seven of his essay <u>The Curtain</u> (2006), Milan Kundera discusses the relation between the novel, memory, and forgetting. He associates lyric poetry as "a fortress of memory," while the novel "is a very poorly fortified castle" (149). He acknowledges that the novel is fated to be forgotten by the reader and asks, "What should the novelist do in the face of that destructive forgetting?" (152) His answer:

> Snap his fingers at it and build his novel as an indestructible castle of the unforgettable, even though he knows that his reader will only ramble through it distractedly, rapidly, forgetfully, and never inhabit it. (152)

Majzels also wrestles against such forces of forgetting in his novel. But, he does not endeavour to build the novel in Kundera's simile as "an indestructible castle of the unforgettable." Rather, Majzels's novel could be analogised to what Gail Scott innovatively elaborates in the title of her essay collection as "Spaces like Stairs" (Scott, 1989). For Scott, the spaces in which she endeavours to experiment narrative possibilities could be architecturally described as stairs, specifically those spiral balcony stairs that have become the signature style in Montreal's urban space. First, these stairs provide a pathway which the writing subject of Scott's novel (<u>Heroine</u> in particular) uses to go back and forth – like Persephone in Greek mythology – between the private domestic sphere "in her third-floor apartment" and the public sphere, to "join the carnival below" (Scott 1989, 135), or between her intellectual space and the space of everyday life.

Such stairs are radicalised in Majzels's <u>City of Forgetting</u>. In one scene, for instance, the characters Suzy, Le Corbusier, and Che with the Librarian on his back, go up together from the city back to the camp atop Mont-Royal. They climb up the staircase in the park from Peel Metro Station downtown. The narrator describes these stairs as "[t]he dirt path winding

its way gradually around and up le Mont-Royal, or the two hundred and ten wooden stairs straight up to the Mirador" (Majzels 1997a, 94). This path symbolises the progress towards their self-obsessed vantage point on the mountaintop: it is muddy, dirty, tedious and unrewarding. Marx the Librarian would not be able to finish it without Che's help. On the other hand, Che suffers from his asthma and almost fails to make it to the top.

The novel shows numerous occasions upon which the characters casually go down to the city without much preparation or plan. However, climbing up this staircase is not as easy or casual as ascending the balcony stairs, simply because the uphill path requires more energy, both literally and symbolically, not to mention those unexpected obstacles along the way. Any necessary detour would become "a pain in the neck," as is illustrated in this scene:

> Suzy […] starts up the steps. The three men follow. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven. Twelve… suddenly Che remembers the old Librarian. Eleven. Ten. Nine, eight, sevensixfivefourthreetwoone. (96)

The phrase "sevensixfivefourthreetwoone" does not implicate a reverse path of progress but the gravity that constantly pulls these characters away from their obsessed and disproportionate position at a higher altitude. The upward movement is parallel to their aspiration towards the sun – the symbolic ideal that can also be taken as the "vanishing point" of narrative perspective in the novel. On the narrative plane, all the story's threads, plotlines and linear horizons inevitably lead toward this point.

In the exceptional sunshiny scene that I discussed earlier, Rue Saint-Denis becomes a Deleuzian *ligne-de-fuite* where different dimensions of urban experience meet on one narrative plane, in the same way that a landscape painting represents a landscape on a flat surface.[39] In his introduction to the 1994 Moosehead Anthology, Majzels observes how le Boulevard Saint Laurent, rather than "a preservative wall dividing the city" into two

141

symmetrical solitudes, can be seen more radically as "a *ligne de fuite*, a semi-permeable membrane allowing seepage from one side to the other" (1994, 6). In <u>City of Forgetting</u>, the *ligne de fuite* is extended to other streets and other perceived and not-so-well-perceived city borders. The map on the novel's first page does not so much attempt to show the district streets and landmarks, as to make visible these *lignes de fuite*, or interfaces of exchanges and conflicts.

The cross sculpture made of glass and steel and light-bulbs on Mont-Royal functions as another vanishing point of narrative perspective. Here, the familiar city landmark is a metaphor for the inexpressible. Page Richards insists that the inexpressible should be understood as a topos – a term which literally means "place" in Greek. Figuratively, she explains how this topos can be adapted in different literary contexts:

> Like a Romanesque church rebuilt by Gothic craftsmen, any rebuilt topos necessarily carries with it a foundation that can have different inflections in different times and places. (2009, 15)

Majzels's <u>City of Forgetting</u> associates the topos of the inexpressible both architecturally and geographically with the Mount Royal Cross on the mountaintop: "Mount Royal's cross, a Tatlinesque monument of steel girders outlined in electric white light and suspended in space above the city" (1997a, 9). Sherry Simon notes the rhetorical effect of the unusual association by which the narrator "strips the cross of its religious connotations and links the structure with the idealism of a secular religion – Soviet Communism" (2006, 195). The Tatlinesque monument refers to Russian architect Vladimir Tatlin's never-executed Monument to the Third International in the early twentieth century. Made with industrial materials of iron, glass and steel, this tilted and transparent structure was intended to symbolise modernity. If it were

ever constructed, the tower would also potentially symbolise a false "universality as vast as that sought by the builders of the tower of Babel" (Simon 2006, 195).

In addition to this sculpture of the Mont-Royal Cross and the association with Tatlin's Tower, I want to propose in this concluding paragraph another sculpture as the architectural metaphor of the anti-closure structure in Majzels novel: the aluminum sculpture in the form of a cloverleaf knot that Michel de Broin has made and installed behind Papineau Metro Station of Montreal in 2003. De Broin titles it "Révolutions," in plural, subtly embedding an irony within the structural perplexity that the sculpture entails. While the sculpture is similarly inspired by balcony stairs typical of Montreal, as the artist's statement suggests, the radicalised form of these stairs should remind us also of "the nearby Jacques-Cartier Bridge, the rides at La Ronde [an amusement park on Saint Helen's Island], and the infinite loop of the metro's escalators." Above all, it shows the irrefutable fate of a story that gradually gets itself told only to be untold at the end, as "what goes up must come down," and while we believe we are coming down, it is suddenly all going up again. The story of City of Forgetting is in a cyclical motion of being told and untold, being read and unread. The reader, like the narrator and her protagonists, swings between being dislodged and taking steps of occupation.

Chapter Two   The Unaccommodated Stranger

In an interview with Rohinton Mistry, Robert McLay suggests that Benjamin's arguments on Baudelaire and the flâneur – regarding "the city poet's special concern with ragpickers, beggars and suicide victims/heroes" – "points to some interesting continuities with Modernism in [Mistry's] work" (1996, 17). Before he formulates his question based on this observation, McLay adds that "[Benjamin] also spoke of the Arcades project as bringing together in complicated ways the interior and exterior lives of Parisiens" (17).[1] Then, he asks the novelist: "Do you think your treatment of the extended family [for instance, the uncle and nephew pair Ishvar and Omprakash Darji in the novel <u>A Fine Balance</u>] revisits these arguments making them interesting and fresh again?" (17)

The term "arcades" refers to the spaces of glass-roofed enclosures of nineteenth-century European cities, a significant trope in Benjamin's incomplete project. Although similar architectural structures could be found in late twentieth century Bombay (or Mumbai) – the context in which most of Mistry's stories are mainly based,[2] they do not necessarily provide the same kind of space as their nineteenth-century European urban models. Asking if Mistry's depiction of the city in his novel revisits Benjamin's arguments would inevitably assume that Benjamin's interpretation of the arcades could be conveniently applied to our understanding of a late twentieth-century Indian postcolonial city. This assumption is questionable, and should not be taken for granted.

Nevertheless, Mistry does not immediately point out the question's pitfall with a disagreeable "no." He also refuses to offer an affirmative "yes" to validate this easy, and perhaps careless, assumption. Instead, he answers with a humble phrase "Well I hope so." From here, he swiftly redirects the focus towards McLay's interpretation of the relationship

between "the family idea" and Benjamin's spatial perception of the interior and the exterior of the arcades in nineteenth-century Paris. Mistry does not refer to Bombay's arcades, but to his short story collection Tales from Firozsha Baag (2000 [1987]). He offers the apartment complex Firozsha Baag, as a comparable architectural space where interior and exterior are intersected and complicated with and by each other:

> the entire baag is a family or at least the individual blocks are families, we have to keep in mind that the people who live there sometimes find the proximity too much and the exterior intruding. I use the word deliberately because it can become utterly overbearing. There is a yearning at times just to be alone without anyone watching or knowing what you are doing. And of course the entire streets are occupied with families and people and I tried to show how the smallest plot of land can be occupied and how difficult it is not to become aware of their plight and difficulties. In the city everything can become everything else; homes, hostels, workplaces, prisons, doorways, streets, whatever. In this sense the city helps to inhibit line drawing. (McLay 17)

Firozsha Baag, like the arcades in Benjamin's project, can be taken as a synecdoche for the city wherein it is situated. Above, Mistry makes an important implication that the city, like the apartment complex, is a space both limited and occupied by strangers. Overpopulation incurs that the public sphere and private spheres are never clearly separate in this city. He emphasises the yearning for solitude, for anonymous lonesomeness, and for attention avoidance. In this context, instead of the individual intruding the city, the exterior intrudes on the privacy of personal zones. Consequently, a general tendency emerges: the city's inhabitants set up boundaries to protect the interior from the exterior.

Of course, the final words in the above-quoted passage are reminiscent of the dialogue between the protagonist Maneck Kohlah and the character Vasantrao Valmik during the long train ride in Mistry's third book (that is, his second novel) A Fine Balance (2002b [1995]), particularly Valmik's proverbial advice to the young protagonist:

"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." (301)

It is one of the few moments in which the eponymous metaphor "a fine balance" is explicitly articulated and explained, though vaguely. Hence, it is also subject to multiple interpretations. Tentatively, the character Valmik proposes what could be put contemplatively onto both sides of this imaginary balance: that is, hope and despair. Yet, in relation to the analogy of drawing lines and compartments, the question of how to maintain "a fine balance" should also refer to the attitudes in which we tend to draw a fine line between self and other, inside and outside, interior and exterior, and by the same token, that between the familiar and the strange, family and strangers.

As Peter Morey observes, "above all, A Fine Balance is a book about space" (2004, 110).[3] In this novel, the arbitrariness of such lines of demarcation is portrayed on many levels, most notably through the transition of the relationships among the four protagonists, while their lives and narratives intersect in the "City by the Sea." They are Dina Dalal – the Parsi widow who lives all her life in the city, Maneck Kohlah – the aforementioned Parsi student from the mountains in the north, Ishvar Darji and Omprakash "Om" Darji – the Hindu uncle and nephew cobblers-turned-tailors from the untouchable Chamaar caste in the "village by a river." At the beginning, Ishvar and Omprakash are Dina's newly hired tailors; and Dina is Maneck's hostess while he is her paying guest. In short, like most people in the city, all of them are strangers to each other. However, during the course of the novel, they for a short period share the same living space in Dina's flat and build strong relationships among themselves like members of a family unit. Although it is "impossible to explain," as Dina

notes near the novel's end, there are signs of such relationship transitions: that "Maneck and Om had become inseparable"; that "Ishvar regarded both boys like his own sons"; that "the four of them cooked together and ate together, shared the cleaning and washing and shopping and laughing and worrying"; that "they cared about her, and gave her more respect than she had received from some of her own relatives"; and remarkably that "she had, during these last few months, known what was a family" (Mistry 2002b, 718).

Before McLay throws in the questions referencing Benjamin in the aforementioned interview, Mistry mentions one particular instance from A Fine Balance which points to these transitions and the way in which such arbitrary lines between interior and exterior get crossed and sometimes would be better off crossed out like an unnecessary or redundant sentence in a writing draft:

> The tailors seem so good to her [Dina], so concerned about her well being and yet is she keeping them there on her veranda because she wants to feel tied to them or is it because she needs them for their labour. She has been told by the export company and her friend Zenobia to differentiate rigidly her life as an employer from theirs as employees and to draw a line between them or she will not be respected. But, she cannot maintain that line and eventually she must cross it and it is her need to love as well as to be loved which makes her become a family and give to what is inevitable. I think that means that all such lines are artificial and there are stronger forces at work and if such a line is made to persist it will lead to chaos or lead to even more problems. Partition was just such a line and history has amply shown this. (McLay 17)

The advice that Dina receives – that she should draw a line to establish the clear difference between herself as an employer and the tailors as her employees – points to questions of hospitality and encounters with strangers or strangeness. In Dina's case specifically, to what extent, for instance, should she welcome and receive in her household someone from a very different cultural and caste background such as her hired tailors, who are going to work closely with her in her verandah? Similarly, in her anticipation of Maneck's arrival as her

paying guest, though Maneck is her childhood friend's son, the fact that he is going to share her domestic space as a paying guest generates a sort of anxiety, linked to maintaining her role as a gentle and generous hostess.

In the light of the question of how hospitality and hostility, its flip side,[4] operates in the city, this chapter picks up the thread of critical enquiry in McLay's interview but with a modification: how does Mistry's work, especially the novel <u>A Fine Balance</u>, revisit Benjamin's idea of the flâneur? While Benjamin's flâneur is based on Baudelaire's dandy model of "the perfect flâneur," it is important to redirect the question of hospitality toward the latter's anticipated privilege in the city: "to be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world" (1995 [1863], 9).

Baudelaire's model of the perfect flâneur takes up the double role of a stranger who is both guest and host in relation to the city and its people. In other words, he anticipates the perfect hospitality in the city: that is, as a guest, he could feel at home and be accommodated and welcomed everywhere. In return, as a host, he would also mentally accommodate any strangeness he perceives in the city. The choice of verb in the previous sentences – "to accommodate" and its passive voice "to get accommodated" – is a deliberate one. This verb, as I am going to elaborate in this chapter, should be interpreted and deconstructed with respect to the impossibility of both the perfect flâneur and of perfect hospitality.

The perfect flâneur's impossibility is illustrated in Mistry's novel through the three mobile protagonists: they are Maneck, Omprakash and Ishvar, particularly the former two, as adapted models of coming-of-age newcomers in an unfamiliar urban context. In short, they experience their life transition by moving from the hinterland to the city. In this context,

Patricia Yeager's comment that "in many cities to be urban is to be unhoused" (2007, 19) rings a bell. Indeed, Mistry's protagonists are destined to be unhoused, or analogically, to be unaccommodated in the "City by the Sea." In particular, both Maneck and Omprakash illustrate two different examples of unaccommodated strangers.

I should note that I borrowed the adjective "unaccommodated" from Shakespeare's King Lear. Lear delivers his contemplation on the nature of man in the sight of Edgar in the disguise of Poor Tom:

> here's three on's are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. (3.4.103-6)

The "unaccommodated man" is "the thing itself" – that is the nature of man, as opposed to being "sophisticated." Lear's line suggests that man is born without comfort, shelter, or clothes. Therefore, the implications behind this phrase cast doubt on the anticipation of accommodation in both the active and passive voice: whether to accommodate or to get accommodated. In either case – to accommodate or to be accommodated – one anticipates a "comforting framework" that inevitably conjures a figurative and spatial sense of a shelter or a house. I shall elaborate in the following sections what I mean by "the unaccommodated stranger" in relation to Mistry's adaptations of the flâneur in A Fine Balance.

To begin, I want to address the idea of accommodation and its inevitable limitations by way of a discussion on hospitality. Dina Dalal's flat, as an exemplary shelter in the novel, offers an interesting point of reference. It is the locale where Dina spends most of her life and where the protagonists in the novel meet and interact in most scenes. Like Firozsha Baag, this flat is shelter where the lines of demarcation between interior and exterior are arbitrarily drawn and maintained.

Hospitality and "*Pas d'hospitalité*"

In her editorial introduction to <u>PMLA</u>'s special issue on cities (January 2007) Patricia Yaeger insists that "the city is above all a place that gives shelter" (18-19).[5] Therefore, she proposes the premise that "a focus on shelter (a general rather than a place-specific human need) be part of a scholarly apparatus aimed at cities" (19). In Yaeger's article, the idea of shelter is metonymically associated with the word "infrastructure(s)," which she elaborates as such:

> *Infra* means beneath, below or inferior to, while *infrastructure* represents the equipment, facilities, services, and supporting structures needed for a city's or region's functioning. Airports; communication systems; computer grids; highways; gas, electric, and water systems; mass transit; public toilet; sewers; streets; waste management: infrastructure may be taken for granted in global cities (unless it breaks down) but represents each city's "fixed capital," its "measure of social wealth." (Yaeger 2007, 15)[6]

Noting the inadequacies in empirical parameters addressing the city,[7] Yaeger asks these questions:

> How can our ethical and imaginative engagements with others around the world be worked into our scholarly infrastructures? How do we create taxonomies for cities and citizens that are at once off the grid and overly taxonomized? What is it like to be stuck, night and day, dreaming of infrastructure? (15)

Importantly, her first question introduces the collective image of "others around the world." This image can be read as one of alterity in a global context, which specifically refers to those city-dwellers, who, as she notes shortly before these questions, "survive despite all odds" (13). The phrase "despite all odds" implies the irrationality, incommensurability, and incomprehensibility of the urban reality that could not be accommodated within the intellectual frameworks of common sense which usually emphasise empirical data and scientific reasoning. The implication of the unaccommodated others, here, marks the necessity

to address the strangers and to comprehend or mentally accommodate their stories of suffering and survival "despite all odds."[8]

To understand the city as a shelter is above all not a question of infrastructures but one of a structure – a structure which essentially sets up the spatial demarcation between the interior as a space of privacy, safety and security (that is, the inside of a shelter), and the exterior as one of danger, threat and strangers (the outside). In the context of the City by the Sea, the unprivileged, the unrecognised, the stateless, the homeless, the beggars, the *sans papiers*, the untouchable, or the strangers are normally denied access to these infrastructures and thus always remain unaccommodated.

Yaeger specifically frames a critical perspective from which to read cities in literature in terms of "dreaming of infrastructures," that is, in other words, an alternative critical model to accommodate irrationality and the urban underprivileged in the field of literary criticism. She focuses on those city-dwellers who fail to get accommodated and yearn for a physical shelter. However, her focus on the shelter should also open up the discussion of its insufficiencies. We should interrogate whether the shelter can really serve perfectly as an all-encompassing end towards which all inhabitants strive. Shelter, I propose, could in many cases become intimidating and hostile to strangers, or to those who are simply not the owner, master or legitimate occupant, of the space. I postulate that shelter is an unreachable dream. For many, the price for one to get accommodated in a city is practically unaffordable.

In Mistry's A Fine Balance, Dina's flat, like Firozsha Baag, is exclusively established and maintained as a limited space of shelter for its landlord, tenant or occupant. It can therefore be considered a synecdoche for the city where similar lines of spatial demarcation between interior and exterior are conveniently drawn and occasionally violated. The flat's

door is the threshold between these two artificially separate spaces through which Dina comes to meet strangers, or more often the other way round, that is, the threshold through which strangers come to meet her.

Throughout the novel, there are moments when Dina is greeted by different strangers on her doorstep, including the rent-collector, the goondas sent by her landlord to destroy her place, the Beggarmaster who later becomes the protector of her flat, the police sergeant and constable who finally empty her flat, among many others. As Dina recollects near the novel's end, "[d]isappointment, betrayal, joy, heartache, hope – they all entered her life through the same door" (Mistry 2002b, 723). Most remarkably, the other three protagonists all initially appear as strangers at this same door in the novel's opening scene: "when the doorbell rang, Dina welcomed her change of fortune with open arms" (90).

Nevertheless, does Dina really *welcome* Maneck, Ishvar and Omprakash as enthusiastically and unreservedly as she opens her arms to "welcome her change of fortune"? Indeed, this scene raises some important questions concerning the reception of strangers – that is whether they are welcomed, tolerated, kept at bay, abandoned, rejected, attacked, or removed, to name a few possibilities. In this scene, Dina's initial cold reaction when she opens the door points to the usually taken-for-granted customs that a door remains always closed to guard against strangers as potential intruders rather than open to welcome others into one's home.

In the novel, by the end of the Prologue, Dina encounters three *expected* strangers – the paying guest Maneck, and the tailors Ishvar and Omprakash – whose appearances at her door, however, are *unexpectedly* simultaneous:

"But I need only two tailors," said Dina Dalal.

"Excuse me, I'm not a tailor. My name is Maneck Kohlah." He stepped forward from behind Ishvar and Omprakash.

"Oh, you're Maneck! Welcome! Sorry, I couldn't recognize you. It's been years since I last saw your mummy, and you I have never, ever seen."

She left the tailors on the verandah and took him inside, into the front room. "Can you wait here for a few minutes while I deal with those two?" (10)

The division between the front room and the verandah in Dina's flat analogically illustrates the differentiation between two plateaus of hospitality that Dina provides to strangers: the verandah into which the door opens is for receiving the strangers from whom Dina would maintain a distance, while the front room that leads towards the interior of her flat is an intimate space for receiving guests whom Dina would take as friends. The difference here points not only to the arbitrary character of the lines of demarcation, but also of hospitality.

Hospitality, in short, is tainted with bias and prejudice, and is dependent on the relationship between Dina – the hostess – and the strangers she encounters. In her reading of this novel, Gillian Roberts (2011) carefully points out that Dina's "assumption of the host power," that is "her attempt to dictate how the flat's space will be used and who will occupy it," becomes the reason for her landlord's punishment and a pretext to issue the eviction order (140). Importantly, as Roberts emphasises, "[t]he hierarchy of claim to Dina's flat privileges the landlord, but also includes Dina, through her lengthy occupation of it" (140).

With her hostess power, Dina sets up the terms of hospitality conditions. She welcomes Maneck and lets him into her front room, because Dina used to be a close friend to his mother and is prepared for his arrival. Thus, Maneck arrives by invitation (as opposed to an unannounced visitation).[9] He is, in short, an invited guest of a similar background, to whom Dina could comfortably relate and for whom she would willingly take up the role of a hostess,

or host mother. In a later scene, when she is preparing the room for Maneck's move, the narrator recounts, "Giving Maneck the bedroom was the only concession she would make" (Mistry 2002b, 254).

Dina also meets Ishvar and Omprakash on her doorstep in the opening scene. However, her hospitality to these tailors is significantly limited. Comparatively, her gestures towards Maneck are warm and intimate. Not only does she greet him with a warm "Welcome!" (13), she affectionately addresses him by his first name and insists that he should not call her "Mrs. Dalal," but by her first name as "Dina Aunty" (13).[10] To Ishvar and Omprakash, however, she withholds such intimate gestures and talks to them in a distancing and indifferent tone. Indeed, she indirectly identifies them as "those two" to Maneck. Rather than to greet or to talk with "those two," she tells Maneck that she is going to "deal with" them. This verb underscores the idea of a business affair – that is, any sort of a deal, a transaction – and rhetorically increases the distance she tries to maintain from the tailors.

Similar to Maneck's retainer as a paying guest, Ishvar and Omprakah's arrival also contributes towards Dina's financial security. Indeed, as soon as Dina opens the door, they immediately identify themselves as tailors answering to Dina's recruitment call (which she wrote on little squares of paper and delivered to different shops). Albeit to a lesser extent, the tailors are also expected and invited. They are received, but with conditions consolidated as "terms of employment" (11). However, they are not as welcomed as Maneck because of Dina's distrust and stereotypical presumptions about them. Dina takes seriously the advice she gets from Mrs. Gupta, the export manager of a large textile company (Au Revoir Exports), for whom Dina acts as a contractor: "You are the boss. You must make the rules. Tailors are very strange people – they work with tiny needles but strut about as if they were carrying big

swords" (86).[11] The adjective "very strange" annihilates any possibility of relating to them. In other words, Mrs. Gupta's advice implies that there will be of no use and no benefit in any attempt to understand or empathise with the tailors.

Initially, Dina tries to maintain a distance with the tailors and to establish her upper hand in the relationship as a boss: she lets Ishvar and Omprakash work only in the verandah and does not allow them to get anywhere else inside her flat. The front room, where she initially receives Maneck, is a forbidden to the tailors.[12] A significant difference in terms of the conditions of hospitality emerges when comparing Dina's attitude to Maneck and her indifference to the tailors. This difference illustrates the fact that strangers are not, and can never be, equally or unconditionally welcomed in one's home. It also points to Dina's initial unwillingness to relate to the tailors, to understand them, or to learn about their lives or their problems.

In one particular instance, when Ishvar and Omprakash fail to make it to Dina's flat for their daily sewing task. The narrator then describes Dina's emotional state as follows: "Her worries continued to bubble like indigestion after dinner" (434). However, her worries do not primarily focus on the safety of the tailors but on the security of her contract with Mrs. Gupta:

> What would happen if the tailors did not come tomorrow even? How could she get two new ones quickly enough? And it wasn't just a question of these dresses being late – a second delay would seriously displease the high and mighty empress of Au Revoir Exports. This time the manager would place the black mark of "unreliable" next to her name. (434-5)

For Dina, the tailors are mere business units. In other words, they are like two sewing machines, technically replaceable or worse: they could be less reliable than machines. Her dialogue with Maneck later in this scene further reveals her initial indifference to these tailors' lives:

155

> "Ishvar and Om wouldn't stay absent just like that," said Maneck. "Something urgent must have come up."
> "Rubbish. What could be so urgent that they cannot take a few minutes to stop by?"
> "Maybe they went to see a room for rent or something. Don't worry, Aunty, they'll probably be here tomorrow."
> "Probably? Probably is not good enough. I cannot *probably* deliver the dresses and *probably* pay the rent. You, without any responsibilities, probably don't understand that." (435, original italics)

Dina's tone conveys irritation. She is irritated by Maneck's failure to understand her problem. However, ironically, her complaint also reflects her incapacity to understand the problems of others, and in this scene specifically, those of the tailors who have actually gone missing. Dina is irritated by the word "probably," because in order to maintain her survival and her financial independence, she must limit her mental hospitality to such an extent that any accident cannot be accommodated or tolerated. Dina is only capable of welcoming expected and calculated circumstances. Chance, accident, and the unexpected are all unwelcome in Dina's flat inasmuch as they bring unforeseeable disaster or unpleasant situations into her limited space of shelter.

Importantly, this shelter's maintenance also depends on a number of conditions that result in more specific limitations. For instance, Dina has to pay rent to maintain her status as a legitimate tenant. Indeed, the rent-collector's monthly visits and her appointments with Mrs. Gupta mark the rigid deadlines which Dina is forced to meet on a regular basis to sustain her income and shelter. She has come to terms with the conditions of this difficult schedule but has become intolerant to any accident or unplanned incident.

Here, I want to emphasise the implications of unconditional hospitality in relation to the three instances of inhospitality that take place at Dina's flat as discussed so far in this section. First, they are Dina's line drawing gestures and her distancing reaction to the sight of

three strangers on her doorstep in the opening scene; second, Dina's indifference to the tailors' lives; and, third, her irritation with the word "probably."

My understanding of unconditional or absolute hospitality is based on my reading of Derrida's philosophy, notably his book Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond (2000a [1997]). Opening our doors and welcoming a stranger into our home is a gesture of hospitality. Yes, we provide food and shelter and perhaps entertainment, but upon the condition that the stranger is not here to destroy our place, to steal anything, or to take over our role as master of the house, and in some worse scenarios, to hold us hostage, and to hurt or kill us after we let them in. These conditions sound necessary and very reasonable. But, to Derrida, they are not enough in the face of justice.

It seems radically demanding: justice demands that we offer absolute or unconditional hospitality to anyone (the other, the alien, or the stranger). It demands pure form of generosity towards any stranger, and requires that, to quote Derrida in English and in his hypothetical first-person scenario, "I open up my home […] to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other" and that "I let them come, let them arrive [...] without asking of them reciprocity […] or even their names" (Derrida 2000a, 25). Richard Kearney summarises Derrida's idea in his discussion, "in order that hospitality be just we must allow some way for the absolute other to enter our 'home'" (2003, 70).

For Derrida, all forms of hospitality are conditional but they all point to the impossible ideal of absolute hospitality. Unconditional hospitality is impossible, because it is unbearable to take up the position of pure generosity and to welcome any sort of unexpectedness of a stranger. Back to my discussion here on Mistry's novel, Dina's initial unfriendliness in the opening scene is a defensive gesture against unexpectedness. However, it is not the

unexpectedness of the three strangers but of their simultaneous and unannounced arrival that alerts Dina to a potential threat.

Nevertheless, after Dina exchanges worries and dialogues with Maneck, the tailors' hospitality conditions are open for negotiation and become adjustable. Her change of attitude towards the tailors happens shortly after Maneck finds out why the tailors are absent from work – that "they were mistaken for beggars [and] dragged into the police truck" (436) – and redirects the question to her when she asks,

> "How long have they been sleeping outside the – what is it, chemist's shop?"
> "Since the day their home was destroyed. Don't you remember, Aunty? When you wouldn't let them sleep on your verandah?"
> She bristled at the tone. "You know very well why I had to refuse. But if you were aware of it, why didn't you tell me! Before something like this happened?"
> "Suppose I had. What difference? Would you have let them stay here?"
> She avoided the question. "I still find it hard to believe this story. Maybe the watchman [from whom Maneck learns of the accident of the tailors] is lying – covering up for them. And in the meantime I will have to go begging to my brother for the rent."
> Maneck could sense the things she was trying to juggle, conceal, keep in proportion: concern, guilt, fear. (436-7)

In this dialogue, Maneck's questions push Dina to ask herself if she could actually offer more hospitality to the tailors, and hypothetically *what if* she had temporarily let them sleep in her place when their slum home was destroyed. Importantly, as the narrator notes, "She avoided the question." Indeed, she avoids the question in order not to expose herself to the dilemma of unbearable guilt and unbearable self-disappointment.

If she says "yes" – that she would have let them stay at her place – the guilt of leaving the tailors no choice but to sleep in the street inevitably emerges since she could have accommodated them. Nonetheless, if she says "no" – that she would still not let them stay in her home – she then has to justify to herself that she really cannot offer them temporary shelter. Indeed, although she claims it to be a very clear fact that Maneck should also know, it

158

is indeed very hard to justify. Explicitly spelt out, every reason reveals its arbitrariness. While Maneck observes that Dina is "trying to juggle, conceal, keep in proportion: concern, guilt, fear" (437), she is also negotiating in her mind the possibility of sheltering the tailors. Her conditions of limited hospitality are measured against the ideal of unconditional hospitality that Maneck's questions subtly suggest. This mental negotiation finally leads to her offer of temporary accommodation to the tailors.

When the tailors return to Dina's flat after their sudden absence, she lets them sleep on her verandah "[o]nly till [they] find [them]selves a place" (504). Again, we should note, she is drawing a line. In suggesting that they could stay temporarily, Dina is pleased "at how neutral her statements were – the line drawn precisely" (504). In other words, her hospitality to the tailors is still conditional:

> And she made it clear that their comings and goings had to be reduced, the risk with the landlord was too great. […] "You can bathe and have tea here. As long as you wake up early, before the water goes. Keep in mind I have only one bathroom." […] "And remember, I don't want a mess in there."
> They agreed to all her conditions and swore they would be no bother. (504)

This significant change of Dina's attitude towards the tailors and the adjustment of her hospitality conditions constitute an exemplar illustration of what Derrida suggests in a pun in French as "*pas d'hospitalité*" (1997, 71). In her English translation Rachel Bowlby renders its double meanings in two separate phrases as "no hospitality" and "step of hospitality" (Derrida 2000a, 75). The negation of hospitality in the interpretation of the phrase as "no hospitality" points to the impossibility of absolute or unconditional hospitality. Nevertheless, to say the phrase in French as "*pas d'hospitalité*" also introduces the figurative sense of a *step* (as in the word "*pas*"). It could be a step "from transgression to transgression"; but, as Derrida insists, it

could also be considered a step "from digression to digression" (75). Upon his formulation of the phrase "*pas d'hospitalité*," thus Derrida asks,

> What does that mean, this step too many, and transgression, if, for the invited guest as much as for the visitor, the crossing of the threshold always remains a transgressive step? if it even has to remain so? And what is meant by this step to one side, digression? Where do these strange processes of hospitality lead? These interminable, uncrossable thresholds, and these aporias? (75)

Derrida makes the distinction between the law (in the singular) of absolute, unconditional, hyperbolical hospitality and the laws (in the plural) of hospitality, that is, "the conditions, the norms, the rights and the duties that are imposed on hosts and hostesses, on the men or women who give a welcome as well as the men or women who receive it" (77). While the absolute form of hospitality is defined by its impossibility, negotiating between the law of hospitality in its absolute form, and the laws of hospitality in their imperfect and derivative forms, makes *possible* the transgressive step of hospitality.

This can be understood in two opposite yet interrelated ways. First, the law of unconditional hospitality "command[s] that we transgress of all the laws (in the plural) of hospitality" (75-6), that is, the transgression of all conditions in the limited forms of hospitality. Dina's adjustment of her hospitality terms is an instance of this transgression. Faced with the ethical demands of unconditional hospitality, Dina contradicts the initial terms she has made in dealing with the tailors and crosses the lines that she has arbitrarily drawn.

Yet, the transgressive step can also be understood from the other way round. That is, the laws or the conditions of hospitality as a means of marking limits and of drawing demarcations become the very source for "challenging and transgressing the law of hospitality" (77). This alludes again to Dina's subtle sense of guilt. It emerges upon the realisation that the conditions which she has set in limiting her hospitality terms turn out to

transgress the implied but unspoken law of absolute hospitality. She could have unconditionally welcomed the tailors, but she has not. And, her failure to accommodate them reveals the inadequacy of her unconditional hospitality offer and also exposes the tailors to the city's hostility.

The transgressive step of hospitality in the context of Mistry's novel also un-fixes the static trope of "shelter" and sets it in motion. Without necessarily stepping out of her flat, Dina manages to take the transgressive steps by which she redraws her lines of hospitality and changes its terms and conditions. Analogically, these steps also call into question the hospitality of the city where her flat is situated, that is, the unnamed "City by the Sea" where Dina spent her entire life and where she feels relatively sheltered in her interior space and her home.

Interestingly, to a certain extent, she attempts to disavow any interpretation that the city is hostile or inhospitable to strangers. In the same scene when the tailors are absent and Dina gets very worried about not meeting the sewing work's deadline, Maneck explains to her that Ishvar and Omprakash were "mistaken for beggars" and "dragged into the police truck" (Mistry 2002b, 436). However, in response, Dina insists that "there's no law for doing that" (436). Maneck then offers an explanatory note, not only to Dina, but to the readers, concerning the context of this "City by the Sea" in the year 1975: "It's a new policy – city beautification plan or something, under the Emergency" (436). In an earlier scene, when the tailors come late to work, she had already shown her positive bias towards the city. After Ishvar explains that "There was an accident, train delayed" (100); Dina still doubts and argues, "Under the Emergency, government says railway runs on time. Strange that your train keeps coming late" (101).

However, for Ishvar and Omprakash, the city is always the exterior where they are literally unhoused. When Dina invites the tailors to sleep on the verandah, Ishvar "[falls] on his knees before her and touch[es] her feet" and says,

> "O Dinabai, how to thank you! Such kindness! We are very afraid of the outside… this Emergency, the police…" (499)

His spontaneous reaction overwhelms and embarrasses Dina. Exceptionally, it also brings the object of his gratitude into association with that of his fear: because of Dina's generosity and hospitality (the object of his gratitude), Ishvar and his nephew Omprakash can be sheltered from the danger of the city (the object of his fear). The broken phrase about their experience with the city outside Dina's flat tells us a lot about its hostility to strangers: "the outside… this Emergency, the police" – they are not simply unwelcoming but also life-threatening to the tailors. This threat is overwhelming to the extent that Ishvar could not even talk about it in the syntactical order of a simple sentence.

Importantly, the tailors' city experience prompts us to address the discrepancy of urban experience in general, as noted by Yaeger (2007), between the anticipation that "the city is above all a place that gives shelter" (18-9) and the disappointment that "to be urban is to be unhoused" (19). The dialectics between anticipation and disappointment corresponds to the intertwining yet contradictory relationship between the city's interior and exterior. In this sense, the flâneur embodies this discrepancy. He anticipates getting sheltered but ultimately realises that it is impossible to be housed in the city. Each of his steps corresponds to the step of hospitality: in the city, those steps always involve a subtle negotiation between the dream of being sheltered and the adventure of remaining unsheltered.

Mistry provides two incompatible models of the imperfect flâneur that deal with this paradox in A Fine Balance: Maneck and Omprakash. In the next section, I pay particular attention to the ways in which Mistry adapts the flâneur figure in his re-imagination of 1970s Bombay as the "City by the Sea." While nineteenth-century Paris is conventionally considered the flâneur's birthplace, we might ask how this figure is accommodated or unaccommodated in an Indian post-colonial city, or in the Asian context in general.[13]

Mistry's Adaptations of the Flâneur

Rajeev S. Patke provides a critical trajectory towards addressing the possibility of accommodating Benjamin's flâneur model in an Asian context. In "Benjamin in Bombay? An Asian Extrapolation" (2003), he innovatively speculates upon the intellectual relationship "between Benjamin and any Asian city" (192), or specifically and alliteratively in this case, between Benjamin and Bombay. Patke notes that Benjamin's critique of the European nexus between modernity and urbanism could potentially project an "extrapolation into Asian contexts" (193). This extrapolation is open to speculation because many of these Asian contexts share a historical kinship with the European model, as they are "shaped first by European colonialism, and then by nationalism" (193).

This potential extrapolation conjures a critical model of what he calls "Baumgartner in Bombay," borrowing Anita Desai's 1988 novel title (192). Anita Desai's protagonist Hugo Baumgartner is a Jew from Berlin who comes to Bombay to escape the Nazis. The fictional character of "Baumgartner in Bombay" therefore suggests the figure of a flâneur of European background who resettles himself in Bombay and endeavours to take up residence in the unfamiliar city.

163

In another article, "Benjamin's Arcades Project and the Postcolonial City" (2000), Patke imagines the possible "mitigation" that Benjamin would have exercised if, due to his interests in Europe, his ideas were limited or confined:

> he mitigates the force of the first – that he was Eurocentric – with the counterproposition that the cities he wrote about were formative of a discourse that can be transposed to other cities whose patterns of urban development were shaped by forces analogous to those he studied in the period of their inception. (2000, 3)

This imaginative mitigation can be rhetorically interpreted as a concession.[14] It concedes that the European (perfect) flâneur may not easily come about in a postcolonial or Asian context. What interests us here, however, is not the manner or extent of the convergence between Benjamin's ideas on the cities and the Asian postcolonial city phenomena. Rather, specifically with reference to Mistry's novel, we want to ask if Bombay, the postcolonial city, or any Asian city, can accommodate the flâneur figure, as he seems to thrive in European cities exclusively. Again, the deliberate choice of the gerund "accommodating" in this line of critical enquiry is both crucial and problematic, and therefore, subject to deconstruction.

Let us look at a particular fragment entitled "A Poetics of Shock" in Patke's "Benjamin in Bombay" (2003). Patke first quotes Benjamin's view on Berlin's poor population as "the exotic world of abject poverty" (Benjamin 1999b, 600 in Patke 2003, 203). In response, Patke provides the impoverished city-dwellers' counter-perspective, simply by imagining a similar scenario in Bombay and noting that "no one who has walked the pavements of Bombay would use the word 'exotic' to refer to 'abject poverty'" (203). While Benjamin claims that he saw "sunset and dawn" but never slept on the street in Berlin, and still managed to find himself a shelter (1999b, 612); Patke points out the contrasting reality in Bombay that "over half the

twelve million inhabitants of [the city] meet every sunset and dawn on the pavement, and not by choice" (2003, 203).

From here, Patke moves on to Benjamin's poeticisation of bazaars and arcades in Paris. He quotes this passage from Benjamin's Arcades Project:

> the whole series of the arcade's concrete historical forms […] emerge[s] like a leaf unfolding forth from itself the entire wealth of the empirical plant kingdom. (Benjamin 1983, 50 in Patke 2003, 203)[15]

Benjamin's gesture of poeticisation in this passage, Patke suggests, is a luxurious one, which could not be possible or affordable if the city in question were not Paris but Bombay. His example features the Bombay Crawford Market in a scene from Mistry's first novel Such a Long Journey (1993 [1991]): paraphrasing the description of Mistry's narrator, Patke argues that "[w]hen economic facts are treated as effect instead of cause, [the bazaars] become a slippery floor, 'and smelly air abuzz with bold and bellicose flies'" (Mistry 1993, 33; Patke 2003, 204). Benjamin, on the contrary, considers that the bazaar is "the last hangout of the flâneur":

> If in the beginning the street had become an *intérieur* for him, now this *intérieur* turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city. (Benjamin 1973, 54 quoted in Patke 2003, 204)

Patke notes irony in the manner of Benjamin's flâneur: "He [the flâneur] resists the commodity as fetish only by consuming it as an object of study" (2003, 204). Hence, the description of Crawford Market in Bombay delivered by Mistry's narrator provides an interesting counterargument: it is a bazaar where the flâneur not only refuses to be taken in by the commodification of value, but where he would also withdraw from the visual consumption

of its interior spectacle. The Crawford Market, in short, "is a bazaar seen from the other end of the telescope" (Patke 2003, 203-4).

The word "telescope" allegorises the Eurocentric perspective from which to experience and understand the city in an Asian context. It implies a distance. However, in the context of Patke's discussion, one wonders: who actually lies at this other end of the telescope? Patke does not offer any answer. Either way, both Patke's speculation of "Benjamin in Bombay" and Anita Desai's fictional imagination of "Baumgartner in Bombay" conjure a flâneur figure with a similar background: that they both come from Europe.

In Mistry's novel, Crawford Market is described through the omniscient narrator's voice. The narrator, in turn, shares the perspective with a Bombay-born and raised Parsi bank clerk, protagonist Gustad Noble:

> For Gustad, Crawford Market held no charms. It was a dirty smelly, overcrowded place where the floors were slippery with animal ooze and vegetable waste[.] (Mistry 1993, 32)

In other words, Mistry addresses how the flâneur can be accommodated in Bombay without bringing a European model into the context, contrary to Anita Desai. Instead, Mistry innovatively explores possibilities of Indian (or postcolonial) flâneur adaptations. To put it simply, he deliberately imagines an indigenous flâneur of local background. In Such a Long Journey, Gustad is one example of such adaptations. However, in the novel, he finally departs for a long journey which does not take him out of poverty, as he had envisioned, but which removes him from Bombay and, eventually, India.

In his subsequent novel A Fine Balance, Mistry introduces not simply one but at least two protagonists who can be read as deliberate flâneur adaptations in an Indian city – Maneck and Omprakash (and Ishvar). Unlike Gustad and Dina, these characters spent most of their

lives in the country before they came to the city. Thus, to a certain extent, all their narratives are developed as a long journey, like Gustad's, but in a reverse direction, that is, from a faraway place in the country into the city.[16]

I put Ishvar in parentheses because Maneck and Omprakash share a particular similarity which excludes Ishvar. They are young adults of the same age and are thus reminiscent of nineteenth-century bildungsroman coming-of-age protagonists, such as Thomas Hardy's eponymous character in Jude the Obscure (2006 [1895]) and Honoré de Balzac's Eugène de Rastignac in Le Père Goriot (1991 [1835]).[17] Similar to these remarkable literary figures of the nineteenth century novel, Maneck and Omprakash also transit from childhood in the country to adulthood in the city. Nonetheless, the historical contexts in which their narratives are set are utterly different.

In the second half of the twentieth century, capitalist modes of exploitation and mass production swept through India and many other "developing" countries. Consequently, people from rural villages or small countryside towns such as Maneck, Omprakash and Ishvar do not share Balzac's protagonist Rastignac's optimistic anticipation that he could luxuriously afford to project onto his plans. Rastignac expects to use Paris as an important stepping-stone[18] from which he could socially ascend from rural proletariat to bourgeoisie and finally to aristocracy.[19] Nor do Maneck, Omprakash and Ishvar dream of coming to the city as enthusiastically and innocently as Hardy's protagonist Jude does in Victorian England, he who, from an distantly elevated position on top of a ladder, beholds his dream city Christminster with self-deceptive anticipation as though it were the mirage of a shining clump of topaz (Hardy 21).[20] For Jude, this "gorgeous city" has long been fancied as the heavenly "new Jerusalem" (22), as a "city of light" where the "tree of knowledge grows" (25).

Instead, Mistry's "City by the Sea" becomes intimidating and ugly, rather than welcoming and glorious, in the eyes of those who come from the hinterland. Arguably, such is the case of many other cities in "developing" countries – particularly those transitioning from colonialism to globalism in the late twentieth century. Though Maneck and Omprakash come to the city on similar quests for a "brighter" future, they are not following a calling. By contrast, for Jude, the city has already "acquired a tangibility, a permanence, a hold on his life" (Hardy 22) – he is answering the call. Comparatively, Omprakash's tailoring apprenticeship in town and Maneck's dream of inheriting a family-owned convenience store are both threatened by the hidden capitalist forces.[21]

To use a chess analogy, the city becomes the only square where they can get out of checkmate. This common threat has been increasingly shared by people all over the world roughly in the second half of the twentieth century. Giovanni Arrighi (1994) describes this menace through the metaphor of "unplugging":

> [T]he current revival of a self-regulating market [...] has already issued unbearable verdicts. Entire communities, countries, even continents, [...] have been declared "redundant," superfluous to the changing economy of capital accumulation on a world scale [... T]he unplugging of these "redundant" communities and locales from the world supply system has triggered innumerable, mostly violent feuds over […] the appropriation of resources that were made absolutely scarce by the unplugging. (Arrighi 330 quoted in Yaeger 2007, 12)

However, with regards to the flâneur adaptations in Asian city, I am less interested in the question whether Mistry's protagonists eventually succeed or not[22] in their respective plan of resisting the inevitable unplugging from the economy and will focus on the issues of hospitality which these two protagonists embody.

To a certain extent, in A Fine Balance, Maneck and Omprakash can be read as Mistry's deliberate adaptations of Balzac's Rastignac. Rastignac, in turn, can be understood as

a stranger in the city, who perfectly performs the double role of the guest who finds shelter in Paris, specifically in the boardinghouse Maison Vauquer[23] and the host who offers hospitality and mentally accommodates all the stories that he encounter in the city, particularly the eponymous character Père Goriot's pitiful life.

However, Mistry does not strive to fully adapt the Parisian dandy (or Rastignac) into the Indian context. Rather, through Omprakash and Maneck respectively, he exposes the inevitable failure of hospitality that his young protagonists encounter in the City by the Sea. Owing to their diverse backgrounds, their experiences in the city are significantly different from one another. In short, Omprakash embodies a stranger who could not be accommodated officially and hospitably. Through Omprakash, Mistry explores whether it is possible for an untouchable youth to thrive in the city.

Maneck, on the other hand, embodies the failure of (absolute) hospitality. Hospitality here concerns Maneck as a character who initially embraces hospitality unconditionally and naively. For instance, as discussed above, he questions Dina's hospitality terms by forcing her to step closer to absolute hospitality. The thread of Maneck's story in the novel leads us to the alarming failure of absolute hospitality and the ironic end where Maneck finds himself a stranger – the unaccommodated man – in a world of sheer cruelty and hostility. Hence, the two young protagonists, Maneck and Omprakash, can be read as unaccommodated strangers of different stripes, for whom the anticipated accommodation or sense of secure at-home-ness in the city turns out to be an impossible ideal.

Omprakash and his uncle Ishvar's story is told in a flashback narrative – mostly in the chapter "In a Village by the River" (121-214), which encapsulates the misfortunes their family has endured before they move to the city. In this flashback chapter, we learn that the two

tailors come from an untouchable caste – "the Chaamar caste of tanners and leather-workers" (121) – in a village by the river. However, Ishvar's father, Dukhi Mochi, takes a deliberate step through which their fortune changes. He sends his sons Ishvar and Narayan (Omprakash's father) to a tailoring apprenticeship with his Muslim friend Ashraf in the nearby town, and changes their family name to Darji, as if their family's fate could be altered accordingly.

However, this step does not guarantee stability or good fortune, but ironically brings further changes and increased uncertainties to the family's prospects. Since Ishvar's birth, the family is detested by the upper caste community in the village. Complaints such as these are common: "Why two sons in an untouchable's house, and not even one in ours?" (128) The successful transition that the family undergoes from Chaamar to tailors further upset these people, and particularly Thakur Dharamsi, the tremendously powerful village magnate. He is indeed a stereotypical villain, officially in charge of the voting process in the village during elections (187). To him, this family has committed the crime of "distorting society's timeless balance" (192) – an ironic remark on the novel's title. To pay the price for this crime, Ishvar's brother Narayan (that is, Omprakash's father) is tortured to death after he heroically betrays the cheating custom in the voting process as the landlord and his men enforce them. His corpse is displayed in the village square, then in front of his family, while the villain's goondas massacre all the remaining Darji family members.

Ishvar and Omprakash survived the massacre because they were living with Ashraf at the time. They made the decision to start a new life in the city right after this disaster. Nevertheless, there is another reason for their decision to head to the city: Ashraf's tailoring townshop declines, after a new store selling ready-made and mass-manufactured clothes opens in the vicinity. Observing the gradual decline of their business, Ashraf expresses his

170

pessimistic view on their prospect in the face of this suddenly emerged rival: "Those lower prices will defeat us. They make clothes by the hundreds in big factories, in the city. How can we compete?" (196) The "city" in his comment remains out of reach physically and mentally, and generates more anxiety and questions in his store: "Strange, isn't it? [...] I mean the factories in the city. How big are they? Who owns them? What do they pay? None of this I know, except that they are beggaring us" (197).

Ashraf then offers the tentative speculation – "Maybe I'll have to go and work for them in my old age" (197). Ishvar replaces it with a spontaneous counterproposal that he and Omprakash should go to the city instead. The idea, together with the still vaguely perceived "city," is coated auto-persuasively with short-lived sweet optimism: "They say you can make money very quickly in the city, there is so much work and opportunity" (197). Of course, as we learn, they never really experience the city as welcoming. For instance, when they first arrive in the city by train, the narrator describes their sharp disappointment and cultural shock: "The sense of adventure that had flowered reluctantly during the journey wilted" (200). Within ten syllables, the emotion has gone from having "flowered" to being "wilted." The hair-collector's warning to the tailors adequately summarises the perceived threat of the city: "Sometimes the city grabs you, sinks its claws into you, and refuses to let go" (224).

In the novel, the tailors once make a metanarrative comment on their harsh life in the city. In this instance, its intended audience is the cook at the Vishram Vegetarian Hotel, a place close to Dina's flat which they frequent for meals and relax and chat during their work breaks.[24] This cook always looks forward to the tailors as regular providers of new stories: "Everything happens to you only. Each time you come here, you have a new adventure story to entertain us" (501). In response, Omprakash amends the statement: "It's not us, it's this city

171

[...] A story factory, that's what it is, a spinning mill" (501). Self-reflectively, Ishvar also comments, "Stories of suffering are no fun when we are the main characters" (501). They are the protagonists in their stories of urban adventures which they tell in the fashion of storytellers. They are nonetheless unprepared and reluctant to enjoy their self-consciously unqualified positions as the protagonists. In other words, they do not penetrate the city, but are instead constantly threatened with being removed from the city. Unlike Benjamin's flâneur, they struggle to get accommodated in the urban space. Indeed, while they perceive the threat in the city, the city perceives them as a potential threat since they are from the untouchable caste. The tailors and the city, therefore, constitute complex dialectics between being threatened and being perceived as threatening. As this relates to the imaginings of the monster in the City by the Sea, the next section will see this further elaborated.

Here, I want to make a few remarks here on Maneck as the embodiment of failure to accommodate. With a Parsi background whose family was once rich and very well off in a mountain town, Maneck is not only much more fortunate than Omprakash and Ishvar, he indeed gains increased accessibility to the city infrastructures, and, like Baudelaire's perfect flâneur, could easily find shelter and enjoy the privilege of feeling everywhere at home.

Maneck, as we learn in another flashback chapter "Mountains" (255-331), comes to the city to earn a diploma at a technical college. However, the decision belongs to his parents. If he were given the chance, he would aspire to inherit the town convenient store from his father. In the mountains, this family-owned General Store is also eliminated by the rival from the city, like Ashraf's shop Muzaffar Tailoring.[25]

Similar to Ashraf and the tailors, to Maneck's father Mr. Kohlah the city is the origin of the business-threatening capitalist invasion: "These big companies from the city can behave

like barbarians if they want to. Here we are civilized people" (287). Associating the terms barbarian and civilisation respectively with the city and the country generates irony. The city, commonly perceived as the product or the centre of civilisation is ironically associated through the term "barbarians" with all its implications of brutality and incomprehensibility. Mr. Kohlah's comment expresses a retrospective Romanticist sentiment that the idyllic countryside, in contrast, is where the civilised resides. No matter how successful the General Store once was,[26] the business declines as the "[b]rands which had been selling for years in the big cities arrived to saturate the town" (287). The initial prospect that Maneck would soon inherit his father's store (as did previous generations before him) finally evaporates. This prospect is indeed abruptly replaced by a radically different plan: that Maneck should get a diploma in the city "[p]referably in an industry that would grow with the nation's prosperity" (288).

The field of refrigeration and air-conditioning comes up during a neighbourhood discussion between his parents and their friends, because it seems to promise more possibilities of success "in a country where most of the population lived in tropical or subtropical climates" (288). Parents and friends encourage and persuade Maneck, calling him "a lucky fellow," reminding him to be "grateful for the opportunity," and describing the City by the Sea as "the most modern, most cosmopolitan city in the whole country" (289). Yet, from the start, Maneck is unmotivated.[27] Therefore, Maneck's one-year stay in the city is his passive response to the city threat which prevents him from staying in the mountains and inheriting his father's shop. Moreover, this one-year stay signals the initial step of Maneck's uprooting.

In short, Maneck's city experience is heavily clouded by nostalgia and acedia. He is reluctant to take initiative in his study and, unlike the other protagonists in the novel, tends to withdraw from actively planning his future. Prior to Maneck's settlement in Dina's flat as a paying guest, he stays for a few weeks in the college hostel. On the first night that he sleeps there, Maneck shows symptoms of nostalgic disappointment. He wakes up in the dark and wonders,

> Why had his bedroom window shrunk? And where was the valley that should lie beyond it, with pinpoints of light dancing in the night, and the mountains looming darkly in the distance? Why had everything vanished? (306-7)

These questions reveal his mental refusal to receive the changes that he is going to encounter.[28] Maneck shows no initiative to adapt to them or to reject them because he simply lets things happen around him. On that evening when he first enters Dina's flat, he is again overcome by this disappointment and is "saddened by the place in which she resided" (13). For Maneck, the hostel and Dina's flat are inadequate home substitutes. He compares between the two and deduces that the flat is "[n]ot much better than the college hostel" (13).

All these symptoms point to his incapability to welcome and mentally accommodate changes and unexpected circumstances, particularly those that would threaten his physical or mental sense of security. They also reveal Maneck's unawareness that accommodation which he could enjoy is luxurious and that it remains largely inaccessible to others who struggle to survive in the city, such as Ishvar and Omprakash.[29] I shall come back to this in the final section of this chapter, which again should be pursued as a question of hospitality, or from a different perspective, as an enquiry about the possibility of the perfect flâneur.

City by the Sea and Its Monsters

The city in Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u> is never explicitly named throughout the book, but is referred to simply as "the city" or occasionally as the "City by the Sea." Peter Morey in his reading of this novel suggests that the generalised "City by the Sea" is an example of "a palimpsest-like 'everyspace,' and can be read as both "Bombay and not-Bombay at the same time" (2004, 122):

> Although the City by the Sea has the topography and many of the characteristics of Bombay, it is also allowed to resonate with the unexpected dangers of a Kafkaesque cityscape, and contains obfuscating legal labyrinths reminiscent of Dickens's Inns of Court. More pertinently for the India of Mrs [Indira] Gandhi's time, it allows the author to bring together on one stage, so to speak, regional patterns of oppression[.] (122)

For instance, the government campaigns for sterilisation and slum clearance that Mistry references in the novel were more prevalent in cities such as Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh during Gandhi's India. Morey therefore proposes that "the novel is consciously symbolic rather than historical" (122).

According to Morey, postcolonial fictions, and notably those of India, tend to be misread as "national allegories in which texts provide a focus for exploration of national experience and characters take on a representative quality" (122), for instance, by Frederic Jameson in his "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multiculturalism" (1986).[30] The problem with such readings is that it imposes "the tautological idea that since India is a huge baggy monster, the novels that accommodate it have to be baggy monsters as well." Consequently, such readings assume "a mimesis of form, where the largeness of the book allegorizes the largeness of the country it represents" (Chaudhuri 2001, xxiv quoted in Morey 122).[31]

Morey reads Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u> as a novel about "cultures and localities that are

both situated in, and disperse the idea of, the nation" (Chaudhuri xxiv quoted in Morey 122). The key word here is the verb "to disperse" in addition to "to be situated in" – that is, the narrative and its characters do not simply represent and reflect the nation's reality, but also provide, in Morey's words, "an oblique commentary on the processes of identity formation the Indian nation has undergone pre- and post-1947, based, of course, on selective inclusions and exclusions" (Morey 2000, 183 quoted in 2004, 123).

While the nation of India tends to be perceived as a "huge baggy monster," any authorial intention to accommodate the "monster" in a narrative – be it a history[32] or a novel – potentially projects an overwhelming size. The difficulty in one's attempt to accommodate the "monster," however, is not only a matter of size. It derives from the impossibility of absolute hospitality. I believe that it is important to take both Chaudhuri's analysis and Morey's argument further and in association with hospitality.

"Monster" is a word we use to designate a potentially threatening alien or stranger, but whose features and behaviours transcend our limited scope of comprehension. To call India a "monster" suggests that understanding it in the neat category of a nation-state, particularly concerning its huge and diversified population, is impossible. Richard Kearney elaborates on this word in his book Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness (2003). He suggests that the term "monster" signals and implies "borderline experiences of uncontainable excess, reminding the ego that it is never wholly sovereign" (3).[33] This interpretation does not only apply to the ego, of course. It also relates to the nation and its sovereignty as Chaudhuri's analysis suggests. In the Indian postcolonial context, because in the monstrosity of the nation's perceived largeness, it is inevitable that there are "selective inclusions and exclusions" taking place in the formation of the nation and of the national identity. In McLay's interview, Mistry

mentions his ambition to include as much of "the social reality of India" as possible in the

novel <u>A Fine Balance</u>. He says,

> I made a conscious decision in this book to include more than this [the Parsi community], mainly because in India seventy five per cent of Indians live in villages and I wanted to embrace more of the social reality of India. And so I made the tailors come from a small village and Maneck come from a hill station in the North. So while the city is certainly important I wanted to give a strong sense of the different locales and I wanted to root the reader in those places so that she has a very clear sense of where these people are coming from and what their difficulties are now. (McLay 18)

In the shadow of the nation's largeness, the novel inevitably and deliberately fails to

measure up to full scale of the nation. Excesses of the nation are simply impossible to contain

in a single narrative.[34] While the main narrative takes place within the City by the Sea, the

novel's limitation is analogised in the city's insufficiencies to provide shelter for everyone,

particularly for the unrecognised, underprivileged, homeless, beggars, and specifically in the

novel's main narrative, the tailors from the untouchable caste. This unhoused population can

be described as an aspect of the city's monstrosity which leads to further problems related to

hygiene, security, unemployment, beggardom, and illegitimate housing.

"Monster" is also figured in the flâneur's city experience, notably in Benjamin's

account in the essay "Central Park" (2003 [1939]). Benjamin figuratively describes the city as

a labyrinth. At the centre of this labyrinth, a flâneur would sooner or later encounter "an image

of the Minotaur" (189). The Minotaur personifies the city's potential dangers. However, for

Benjamin, what makes this image so crucial in the flâneur's urban experience is not so much

the threat that it provokes, as the newness that it inspires:

> That he brings death to the individual is not the essential fact. What is crucial is the image of the deadly power he embodies. And this, for inhabitants of the great cities, is something new. (189)

This creature, as Elizabeth Wilson elaborates in her reading of Benjamin, takes the form of the "downs and outs: the ragpickers, the semi-criminal and the deviant" (Wilson 1991, 54) or "some horrible love object – a decayed prostitute, an androgyne" who "waits around every corner" (1992, 110) and threatens to efface or erase the flâneur's existence.[35] Benjamin's flâneur, Wilson argues, remains a detached observer who is simultaneously made fearful and fascinated by "the underside of the city of gaiety and pleasure" (1991, 54). "[J]ust as the scavengers searched the dust heaps for hidden silver cutlery," the perfect flâneur "seek[s] out the forgotten or unnoticed treasures of urban life to record and embellish" (Wilson 1991, 54). In her article "The Invisible Flâneur," Wilson further proposes that "in the long run [the flâneur, just like the first person narrator in Poe's "Man of the Crowd"], too, becomes sinister and dangerous; the flâneur himself becomes the Minotaur" (1992, 110).

In her book about the relation between women and the city, Sphinx in the City (1991), Wilson questions the Minotaur's validity as the figure of the threatening creature inhabiting the city. She conjures a different image and insists that the urban threat be imagined as a female monster:

> At the heart of the urban labyrinth lurked not the Minotaur, a bull-like male monster, but the female Sphinx, the "strangling one," who was so called because she strangled all those who could not answer her riddle: female sexuality, womanhood out of control, lost nature, loss of identity. (7)[36]

While the Minotaur is the metaphor of the city's otherness, which both threatens and fascinates the flâneur, the Sphinx represents women who are traditionally perceived as an urban menace and whose presence in this regard should always be restricted.

Wilson proposes that there is a war between masculine and feminine "principles" at the heart of the city. The city's "masculine" side is seen in its "triumphal scale": that is, the

"necessary routinised rituals of transportation and clock watching, factory discipline and timetables" and "its towers, vistas and arid industrial regions" (7). While the "masculine" aspects of the city impose order and control in the logics of urban planning, the disorder can be considered the city's "feminine" side by default: the "pleasure, deviation, disruption" in "its enclosing embrace, in its indeterminacy and labyrinthine uncentredness" (7). Therefore, Wilson goes on to suggest that "urban life is actually based on this perpetual struggle between rigid, routinised order and pleasurable anarchy, the male-female dichotomy" (7-8).

The gender-based dichotomy in Wilson's claim sounds perhaps oversimplified.[37] Nevertheless, it relevantly corresponds to the struggle within the urban context or the social reality portrayed in Mistry's fictional interpretation of Bombay in the 1975 as the "City by the Sea." On the one hand, there are the legitimised forces of urban planning to impose order, to reinforce discipline, to control the society from a top-down scale, and to remove the abject or excessive aspects from the nation and city, most notably in the Prime Minister's campaign of "Emergency" and project of "Beautification" in the context of Mistry's novel.[38]

Minor characters such as the manager of Au Revoir Exports Mrs. Gupta, Dina's landlord (like the Prime Minister, his presence is always implied but never shows up in the narrative), and Dina's brother Nusswan Shroff (a businessman in the city) are representatives of those who willingly and triumphantly welcome these strengthened measures and manipulative forces in the city. For example, in response to the Internal Emergency declaration which results in the incarceration of "the parliamentary opposition, along with thousands of trade unionists, students, and social workers," Mrs. Gupta actually beams with happiness and genuinely exclaims, "Isn't that good news?" (Mistry 2002b, 93-4) Nusswan makes a similar comment in the Emergency's favour. He explains his stance with an anecdote:

"People sleeping on pavements gives [sic] industry a bad name. My friend was saying last week – he's the director of a multinational […] business – he was saying that at least two hundred million people are surplus to requirements, they should be eliminated." (488)

By "eliminated," Nusswan really means extermination, as he further explains:

Counting them as unemployment statistics year after year gets nowhere, just makes the numbers look bad. What kind of lives do they have anyway? They sit in the gutter and look like corpses. Death would be a mercy. (488)

As Nusswan's comment suggests, there are the uncontrollable excesses in the city, as represented by the jobless and others who are unwanted or considered a burden. Their existence could hardly be accommodated in the official "statistics" (those empirical parameters which Yaeger finds insufficient for our understanding of cities) or in the city's legitimate shelter. In an unplanned manner, this population collectively and unsystematically contributes to the city's expansive and organic growth. For the government, they are the abject poverty and the monstrous other that should be removed from the urban spectacle.

These uncontrollable excesses are part of the city's chaotic aspects, which also include, but obviously are not limited to, Ishvar and Omprakash, for whom "it's almost impossible in this city to find a house" (211),[39] just like the beggars on the streets and the people they meet in the slum. The government's imposed orders and disciplines benefit and smoothen the lives of Mrs. Gupta, Nusswan, and "a politician or a blackmarketeer" (212) among others. Ironically, it also creates inconvenience and obstacles for the tailors and their neighbours. Indeed, this urban population's everyday life is comprised of roadblocks and unexpected challenges that constantly deprive them of basic human needs, such as home and accommodation.

The tailors can only keep wandering in search of a shelter or a dwelling place in the city. Their constantly restless status is sharply contrasted by those who could take for granted the privilege of a static shelter. Thus, their steps in the city can be understood as the reverse pattern of Dina's "steps of hospitality" that I discussed earlier via Derrida. Unlike those of Dina's, the tailors' steps are literally taken during their long and unrewarding strolls on the streets. While they endeavour to get themselves accommodated, their steps also interrogate the city's capacity to provide shelter for everyone. By taking these steps, the tailors come to transgress arbitrarily drawn lines of demarcation in the city and demand that they be welcomed and received as strangers. Therefore, while an adequate shelter is hardly reachable, their strolls in the city involve many shocking and disappointing turns and detours, as is the case of their first city experience.

The first time Ishvar and Omprakash arrive in the city, it is already evening. Their first task is to locate the home of Ashraf's friend Nawaz (who, they were told, would be able to host them). After they manage to leave the train station, as the narrator tells us,

> They wandered around in a daze, making inquiries, asking for assistance. People fired back hurried answers to their questions, or pointed, and they nodded gratefully but learned nothing. It took them an hour to discover they needed a local train to reach Ashraf's friend. The journey took twenty minutes.
> Someone they asked for directions pointed them down the right road. The shop-cum-residence was a ten-minute walk from the station. The pavements were covered with sleeping people. A thin yellow light from the streetlamps fell like tainted rain on the rag-wrapped bodies, and Omprakash shivered. "They look like corpses," he whispered. He gazed hard at them, searching for a sign of life – a rising chest, a quivering finger, a fluttering eyelid. But the lamplight was not sufficient for detecting minute movements. Relief began replacing their fears as they neared the home of Ashraf Chacha's friend [Nawaz]. The nightmare of arrival was about to end. (200-1)

On their first night in the city, they encounter not the enigma but the "nightmare of arrival" (201). The city is a labyrinth where they constantly fail to find their way. Omprakash's

181

shocked reaction to seeing the numerous people sleeping on the pavements signals the city's perceived danger. More importantly, it also implies their fear of becoming one of these corpse-like bodies, ending up unaccommodated in the city.

However, signs of inhospitality become apparent in Nawaz's flat. To quote a couple of instances: "They [Ishvar and Omprakash] could smell food cooking, but Nawaz did not invite them to eat" (201); and that "[t]here was no offer of morning tea from inside the house, which Omprakash found quite offensive" (202). Accordingly, Ishvar soon adjusts his expectations, with the comment that "Customs are different in the city" (202).

Throughout the novel, because of the city's failure to provide adequate shelter, the tailors are driven to wander and drift from one place to another and are forced to adapt to a nomadic lifestyle. From Nawaz's place, they move to a slum colony, which is later destroyed by the government in the name of Beautification. They then temporarily occupy the entrance of a chemist shop, before Dina allows them to sleep in her verandah until they find a new place.

It is during their short time living in Dina's flat that they feel accommodated in the city for the first time. They can enjoy the luxury of leisure to "idle[] away the time at Vishram Vegetarian Hotel" after Dina goes off to Au Revoir Exports and Maneck leaves for college (501). Their search for a home also becomes not a problem of urgency but a ritual of urban adventure where the process itself matters more importantly than the result:

> Ishvar and Om usually set off on their housing hunt after dinner, and sometimes before, if they were not cooking that day. [Dina] wished them good luck, but always added "See you back soon," and mean it. […]
> And when the evening's wanderings were later reported to her, her advice was: "Don't rush into anything." It would be foolish, she said, to pay a premium for a place which might be demolished again because it was illegally constructed. […]

A tip about a possible half-room in the northern suburbs led them to the neighbourhood where they had searched for work on first arriving in the city. By the time they reached the location, the place had already been rented. They happened to be passing Advanced Tailoring Company, and decided to say hello to Jeevan. (534-5)

Dina's comment in the above passage reminds us of earlier, when the authority's goondas destroyed their temporary home and the rest of the slum colony.

The slum colony, where the tailors settle for only a very short period of time, makes visible and signifies the disorganised and organic development in the city's architecture. Through the novel, we are introduced inside of a slum space via Ishvar and Omprakash's first-hand experience, as they are first led by Nawaz during their own living space search in the slum, only to stay there until its sudden demolition.

After the tailors are successfully employed by Dina, Nawaz takes the tailors to potential long-term accommodation, which he calls "the new colony," as the narrator explains: "indicating the field which was in the process of being annexed by the slum" (211). The tailors are then introduced to two different spaces for their dwelling, the latter with slightly better conditions and therefore more expensive.

The first space, a "corner house," has "a hole in the back" and its mud floor is "partially covered with planks" (211). The narrator further outlines its poor shape:

The walls were a patchwork, part plywood and part sheet metal. The roof was old corrugated iron, waterproofed in corroded areas with transparent plastic. (211)

Despite its inadequate condition as a shelter, the comments that it receives from both Navalkar the person-in-charge and Nawaz are surprisingly positive: "This is a nice place [...] Newly developed, not too crowded" in Navalkar's words, which are affirmed by Nawaz's genuine compliment: "Well built." To persuade the tailors to rent it, they suggest that the place is well worth the rent of "one hundred rupees per month" (212).[40]

The second space is inside "a set of eight brick-walled huts" which are hidden "behind the rows of tin-and-plastic jhopadpattis":

> The roofs once again were of rusted corrugated metal. "These are two hundred and fifty rupees per month. But for that money you get a pukka floor, and electric light." [Navalkar] pointed to the poles that fed wires to the huts, pirated from the street-lighting supply. (212)

This time, Nawaz's approving remark is at least one degree higher than the previous one: "Very good quality." He even suggests that the tailors should "move to this one" after they earn enough money to afford it (212).

In both cases, slum shelter spaces are illegitimately established. The luxury of electricity in the second one, for instance, is admittedly "pirated from the street-lighting supply" (212). Rather than a landlord, the slum is owned and managed, but without formal documents or leases, by a slumlord called Thokray, who, per Nawaz, "controls everything in this area – country liquor, hashish, bhung. And when there are riots, he decides who gets burned and who survives" (213). His short depiction of power structure behind the scene prompts Ishvar to ask, "But then, whose land is this?" (213) From the perspective of a local, Nawaz's response serves as a conclusive explanation of slums emerging in the city:

> "No one's. The city owns it. These fellows bribe the municipality, police, water inspector, electricity officer. And they rent to people like you. No harm in it. Empty land sitting useless – if homeless people can live there, what's wrong?" (213)

His question at the end is intentionally rhetorical. It implies that the slum development, though it is maintained illegally and involves bribery and lawbreakers, makes the city hospitable to homeless people. It is survival tactic, particularly when the city's population expansion outgrows the government-approved implementation of infrastructures and the inefficiently slow-paced urban planning.

However, from the government's perspective, or in the eyes of those in the city who benefit from the imposed disciplines and the regulated pace of urban development, there is a legitimate answer to Nawaz's question. Indeed, "what's wrong" with the slum is that it is deformed, irregular, unsafe, unhygienic, illicitly managed, illegally built, and invasive to the other city areas because of its potential for expansion. The slum structure, in short, appears incongruous and threatening, particularly because it falls short of the city's anticipated perfection. From lawmakers', urban planners', and privileged perspectives, the slum and its inhabitants are therefore perceived as an unwanted monster to be expelled. Gillian Roberts highlights the slum colony's ironic existence in the city:

> The city has tolerated without legitimating the jhopadpatti colony, accommodating without overtly endorsing its presence in a kind of passive, but lucrative, hospitality that offers the colony's residents some sense of "at home." (2011, 148)

This monster, similar to what Wilson discusses as "the Sphinx in the city," is the figure of disorder and potential threat, whose riddle, rather than "female sexuality, womanhood out of control, lost nature, loss of identity" (Wilson 1991, 7), points to issues of hospitality which those sheltered and privileged ones are reluctant to acknowledge.

In the novel, we learn that the government-initiated Beautification project aims to demolish such slum structures of hutment colonies and remove them from sight. It happens not long after the tailors have settled in their shabby unit without prior notice. The authorities approach the slum with the required instruments of destruction. The slum dwellers exchange dialogues outside the slum, observe its unavoidable destruction at these people's hands, and piece together the information concerning the indiscernible logic of this governmental destruction:

"They said it's a new Emergency law. If shacks are illegal, they can remove them. The new law says the city must be made beautiful."

"What about Navalkar? And his boss, Thokray? They collected this month's rent only two days ago."

"They are here."

"And they're not complaining to the police?"

"Complaining? Thokray is the one in charge of this. He is wearing a badge. Controller of Slums. And Navalkar is Assistant Controller. They won't talk to anyone. If we try to go near them, their goondas threaten to beat us."

"And all our property in the shacks?"

"Lost, looks like. We begged them to let us remove it, but they refused." (386)

The Beautification project as portrayed in this scene is launched with the primary objective of restoring the city's "beauty." This vague idea of "beauty," however, is unsurprisingly based on aesthetics of symmetry, simplicity, and neat order. The Controller of Slums later elaborates in his instructions to the workers: "Levelled smooth – that's how I want this field. Empty and clean, the way it was before all these illegal structure were built" (389). Navalkar and Thokray – that is, the previous slum affairs person-in-charge and the slumlord who "controls everything" (213) – can swiftly and conveniently adapt themselves by taking up similar roles as the Assistant Controller and the Controller of Slum in the Beautification project. All the previous slum-dwellers, however, are brutally unhoused and dispossessed of their homes and belongings.

As the project is part of the newly launched Emergency policy, actions are efficiently carried out, while their immediate consequences are overlooked or ignored.[41] These dwellers are turned into homeless people. Again, to the government, the homeless population is a potential threat to the city's imposed order and a source of contamination which deforms its perceived beauty. Instead of receiving a housing allowance or gaining access to basic infrastructures, the beggars and pavement-dwellers are removed from the city: they can be dumped "in waste land outside the city" in the literal sense (419). In other words, after their

slum gets destroyed, its previous dwellers actually face the threat of double removal, first from their home, then from the city. Strolling in the city in search of new accommodations becomes the only means of survival when one is caught in this limbo, that is, in the tailors' case, between having their home destroyed and before being banned from the city.

The national government and the municipality consider the hutment colonies, the homeless population, and the beggars, as the excessive other, or figuratively, as uncontrollable and incongruous monsters. For the unprivileged, the unhoused, and the dispossessed, however, it is at the government's hand that the city is turned into a monster, particularly under the Internal Emergency's effect. Ishvar, as I have mentioned, once remarks, "We are very afraid of the outside… this Emergency, the police…" (499). In the opening scene, Ishvar puts into words his unpleasant first impression on the city:

> "What is the use of such a big city? Noise and crowds, no place to live, water scarce, garbage everywhere. Terrible." (8)

Ishvar's remarks on the urban threat can be elaborated with reference to the two different city aspects, again, in Wilson's terms as the "masculine" side imposing and maintaining order, routine and symmetry, as well as the "feminine" side embracing disorders, unsystematic movement and organic expansion. Ishvar's comment – that the city is terrible, full of noise and crowds, with garbage everywhere – hints at his yearning for a clue, or a pattern, by which he could comprehend the city's logic and order. Here, the city's threat is perceived through its chaotic and organic aspects. Later, however, after he and Omprakash are removed from the city by the forces of authority as Ishvar names them, the police, the Emergency, and the city itself become the objects of his fear. These objects of fear all point to

187

the imposition of order and discipline. He is well aware of the fact that he participates in the city's chaos, but at the same time he anticipates being accommodated or at least tolerated.

Attempts to make order out of chaos, to remove the abject from the city, as we see in the novel, do not beautify or ameliorate the city. Instead, as the Prime Minister futilely tries to impose order and discipline by launching the notorious nationwide campaign known as the Emergency, all these attempts produce another monster. A character states: the Prime Minister "created a monster […] and the monster swallowed her" (759).[42] Mistry's portrayal of "City of the Sea" shows the city's two different monster faces: namely, the uncontrollable monster that born of the excessive population and the overwhelming monster that emerges out of the authority's superimposed manipulation and abusive power.

As I discuss earlier, we assign the word "monster" to name the otherness that we refuse to comprehend or mentally accommodate. The perceived impossibility to accommodate the monster, in turn, sets up the perpetual gestures of selective inclusion and defensive exclusion. These gestures also questions hospitality in terms of our mental capacity to accommodate – that is to welcome, to understand, and to relate oneself to – others' stories.

City as the Frame of Storytelling

In King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy (1983), Stephen Booth argues that it would be more appropriate to consider the tragedy to be that of the audience rather than the that of the character's or that of the hero, even though he admits that it is "in the interest of human comfort to insist that dramatic tragedy happens on the stage and not in the audience" (85-86). "A successful tragedy makes tragedy bearable," he suggests, because

> it lets us face truth beyond categories by presenting the unmanageable and undiminished truth inside the irrationally comforting framework of the absolutely man-made, man-suited, and man-limited order of the play. (86)

In particular, King Lear pushes the audience's limited framework of theatrical anticipation. Booth submits that King Lear is celebrated deservedly among the dramas of Shakespeare as his greatest achievement because "it is the greatest achievement of his audience, an audience of theatrically unaccommodated men" (5).

The idea of "unaccommodated men" relates to the "unaccommodated stranger" trope that I proposed in this chapter as one of the imperfect flâneur models. Importantly, however, I want to stress how the paradoxical feeling of being "unaccommodated" in a "comforting framework" should inspire us to formulate the question of hospitality as concerns the reader's position in Mistry's novel. As the epigraph to A Fine Balance, Mistry quotes a passage from Balzac's Le Père Goriot, in which the narrator effectively puts into question the physical and mental comfort in the position of an imagined reader, his position emblematised as a soft armchair, in which this reader refuses or is mentally reluctant to welcome and accommodate the tragedy that he is reading as a true story.

For Booth, the theatre stages the tragedy within the framework of an "absolutely man-made, man-suited, and man limited order" (86). This framework is not plainly described by the adjective "comforting" alone, but with a modifying adverb, as "*irrationally* comforting" (86). This adverb, I believe, can be interpreted in relation to the paradox of fiction: that the audience would become capable of receiving the overwhelmingly "unmanageable and undiminished truth" precisely because this truth is presented within a fictional framework. The adjective "fictional," as my previous sentence implies, should be interchangeable with "irrationally comforting" because it is in the fictional staging of events that the tragedy in King Lear, Le Père Goriot and A Fine Balance become bearable. This points to the way in

189

which the reader's comfort position in the "soft armchair" would lead us to deny the credibility of the great misfortunes narrated in the novel, as Balzac's narrator predicts. Whether it is in Balzac's <u>Le Père Goriot</u> or in Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u>, "the absolutely man-made, man-suited, and man limited order" or the narrative's "irrational comforting framework" is intrinsically yet complicatedly related to the city, where the lines of demarcation arbitrarily mark the finitude of shelter and the inhabitants' limited hospitality.

The persuasive optimism in the prose of the novel is greatly unsettling or discomforting for the reader of <u>A Fine Balance</u>: despair is gradually built up to promise hope; but the sequential development in its plot cruelly contradicts it, and hope turns back into despair cyclically. In short, rather than *what* actually happens, or more profoundly *how* and *why* it happens, the reader is challenged by *where* and *when* these traumatic events take place in the plot.[43]

Nonetheless, the metaphorical comfort in the soft armchair should also relate to the characters in the novel: those seek to deal with their own misfortunes, and those who perceive the stories of others within a limited storytelling frame. By the end of the chapter titled "The Bright Future Clouded," that Dina has already been living for a while with her paying guest Maneck and her tailors and temporary co-occupants Ishvar and Omprakash, she opens up and tells them "a very long story" of her life. This deals with Ishvar's question, "[b]ut, why were you denied an education, Dinabai?" Indeed, she brings the reader back to the beginning of Chapter I ("City by the Sea") and she reminisces about her past. With a similar rhetorical opening of persuasive optimism, she tells her immediate audiences and the novel's reader,

> "I never like to look back at my life, my childhood, with regret or bitterness."
> [...]

"But sometimes, against my will, the thoughts about the past come into my head. Then I question why things turned out the way they have, clouding the bright future everyone predicted for me when I was in school, when my name was still Dina Shroff..." (Mistry 2002b, 557)

The novel would have ended almost perfectly here with its story arc coming full circle. The first time the reader comes across her story is via the omniscient narrator's voice. It begins almost in the same passage with slight wording variations. Instead of "never like to look back" (557), it reads "seldom indulged in looking back" (17); rather than "clouding the bright future" (557), the narrator uses a different gerund, which Dina deliberately avoids in her first-person narration – "cheating her of the bright future" (17). In these two narrations of the same story, the dictions' discrepancy, albeit very minute in degree, tells the change of attitudes, or more precisely of rhetorical strategies. Case in point, it is seen in Dina's reflection about the past at different moments.

At the novel's beginning, Maneck, Ishvar and Omprakash all stand at her flat's door as signs of her secured income sources. Their arrivals are timely solutions to her daily struggles. However, with all these protagonists, the reader is uncertain of what to expect in this narrative, which is just about to begin. In this instance, unaccustomed to the new situation, Dina's recollection of the past forewarns herself and the reader that what lies ahead may not turn out into a bright future as it might seem to promise. She tries to be prepared for possible misfortunes by anticipating the disillusionment that would naturally and unpredictably occur, as experiences in the past have taught her. Elaborated via the narrator's words, Dina concludes, "[w]hat was the point of repeating the story over and over and over, she asked herself – it always ended the same way; whichever corridor she took, she wound up in the same room" (17).

Later, she contradicts herself by recollecting the past once more. This time, though, she retells her life story not reflectively, but interactively with an audience. Rather than to perform a pointless repetition, the rhetoric of retelling the same story is adapted for several purposes, encouraging Maneck to study harder and rekindling the harmonious atmosphere that has been ruined by the "cold war" between Maneck and Omprakash. The verb "indulge in" implies an irresistible inclination towards the past, as we hear it in the first chapter's beginning. However, Dina negates the temptation in her first-person narration with "like to" and suggests that the focus of anticipation should be projected onto the future: "I never like to look back at my life" (557). To this compelling introductory remark, Ishvar responds with an affirmative nod (557). At this point, the reader already develops empathetic anticipation towards a hopeful and bright future for each protagonist, just as these main characters develop theirs for each other via their developing friendship. Had the novel ended at this moment, the reader would have felt invited to sustain the expectation that the clouded future was only momentary, that "clouds" – be they Maneck's poor academic results or the obstruction of friendship between Maneck and Omprakash – would be cleared, in the same fashion as those "small obstacles" for Ishvar and Omprakash were finally overcome earlier. Dina's first-person narration, then, can be considered a self-persuasive translation of pessimism of life's enduring disillusionment into optimism of persevering anticipation.

However, the fact that at this point the narrative echoes the beginning scene of reminiscence without really ending here suggests that the continuance of disappointment will outlive the perseverance of anticipation. What immediately follows is an unexpected scene of "heavy opposition" (559), unprepared for and unwelcomed by the protagonists, when the rent-collector Ibrahim comes to meet Dina at the door with two hired goondas, and claims that the

landlord's office sent him. Not only does Dina receive the verbal threat that she has to "vacate in forty-eight hours [for] violating tenancy terms and regulations" (559), upon this abrupt "final" notice her flat is ruthlessly damaged beyond repair.

In the preceding peaceful moment of reflection, Dina and her audience, including the reader, would think that a happy ending will finally come for each protagonist and that "a fine balance" of lives would then be maintained in the flat and in their lives. However, this heavy opposition effortlessly shifts them into an imbalance. It shatters these protagonists' shelter and their "simple routines," which gradually and constantly build up "a secure and meaningful shape to all their lives" (558).

For Dina, particularly, the flat also symbolises the financial independence from her brother and the treasured past of her married life that she could not afford to let go. Rather than criticising or simply representing the injustice in a social dimension, this scene stages itself as an analogy to the inevitable bankruptcy of any anticipated promised end to the narrative. Dina's self-narration rhetorically forecloses the narrative and temptingly shuts the door to any possible arrival of disappointment. Dina and all her audiences are cheated by the harmonious atmosphere that seems to isolate the flat from the city's misery. Ironically, what turns out to be temporary is not the murky signs of uncertainty that obscure any vision of the future, but the anticipated future's perceived brightness.

Although Dina's life remains entirely within the City by the Sea, the other three protagonists' stories, especially Ishvar's and Omprakash's, expand far beyond city limits. Upon learning that Ishvar and Omprakash were cobblers and part of the caste of Chaamar in a village before they earn the sewing skills and become tailors, Dina is overwhelmed by their suffering which she can only describe by repeating "horrible, horrible"[44] while shaking her

head "as though in disbelief" (444). She realises that "all those newspaper stories about upper- and lower-caste madness [are] suddenly so close to [her]," and that the weight carried by Ishvar and Omprakash is now in her own flat (444). Dina then admits, "[c]ompared to theirs," her life in the city is "nothing but comfort and happiness" (444). Therefore, Ishvar and Omprakash not only struggle to be sheltered in the city, they also encounter difficulty to have their stories accommodated or heard in the city of strangers, which tends to refuse to receive them.

If their past in the village, that is, their story's *beginning*, could not easily be accommodated in the city, the same could be said about their ending. Near the novel's end, the Beggarmaster makes a relevant comment in response to his shocking discovery that Shankar the limbless beggar actually is his half-brother:

> What chance do we have, when our beginnings and endings are so freakish? Birth and death – what could be more monstrous than that? We like to deceive ourselves and call it wondrous and beautiful and majestic, but it's freakish, let's face it. (601)

The beginning and ending of the tailors' story could similarly be described as freakish and monstrous. By following the tailors back home, the reader is reminded of the reason for which they had to leave in the first place. This unspoken reason, indeed not so much unspoken as unspeakable, is the threat, which they would meet and could not endure, were they to remain living in the vicinity of Thakur Dharamsi.

The first homecoming trip back to the small town signals their return to an inescapable fate. While the trip's primary purpose is to look for a wife for Omprakash, it turns out that they end up meeting face-to-face with Thakur, who upon saying "I know who you are," unleashes the final step of their destruction (682). Rather than die, both Ishvar and Omprakash are forced to undergo sterilisation, with the insistence of the person-in-charge Thakur that

Omprakash in particular must have his testicles removed, so that the Darji family should cease to reproduce after his generation.

Indeed, in the narrative's rhetoric, the destructive end of the tailors' story can only take place outside the city. Omprakash is turned into a eunuch. Ishvar suffers from a bacterial infection as an aftermath of his poorly conducted vasectomy surgery and subsequently has both legs amputated. The horror is as freakish and monstrous as their lives prior to entering the city, if not more. Let us remember that Dina found their lives in the village horrible, that is, hard to imagine and beyond her comforting framework of comprehension.

The irreversible and inevitable ending leads to Omprakash's mumble, "We could have been safe in the city, on Dinabai's verandah" (705). Irony should be noted here when we compare this sentence to Ishvar's exclamation in the face of the city's hostility which renders them both homeless – "We are very afraid of the outside... this Emergency, the police...." (499). In this later scene, Omprakash indeed finds it difficult, well-nigh impossible, to put words on a piece of paper, when Ishvar reminds him to send Dina a letter and tell her what happened to them during their traumatic homecoming trip. Omprakash's worry exceeds the limits of the paper edges: "but he did not dare attempt the task. What would he write? How could he even begin to explain on a piece of paper?" (707)

What remains peculiar in this scene is their decision to return to the city, after their lives have been very much destroyed. When Ishvar totters on the edge of suicide, he blurts out this request to Omprakash, "[j]ust throw me in the river that runs by our village" and exclaims that he "[does not] want to be a burden" (707). Omprakash, in response, reminds his uncle that he still "has both hands" and can still sew (708). Hence, he endeavours to make arrangements to go back to the city and to Dina's flat, despite his uncle's dispirited conditions, Ishvar

exclaims in bitter amazement, "You are a crazy boy. I can't sit, I can't move, and you are talking of sewing" (708). Yet, what is the point of going back to the city?

Let us note the self-persuasive words Omprakash uses: "We'll soon be returning to our city" (708). Rather than the neutral determiner "the," Omprakash expresses a sense of belonging to the city with his possessive pronoun "our," which is immediately reinforced by the verb "return." The city gives them final consolation by offering them the illusion of a convenient beginning and a self-imposed ending to their story: that it begins and ends here. In other words, they come back to the city to set limits to their lives, however artificial they would be, and to frame their narrative within these limits. They go back to the city, albeit with the prospect of becoming beggars, as an attempt to seek closure or perfectly end their miserable lives.

At the end, instead of going back to sew for Dina, they become beggars. Rather than getting a new piece to complete the quilt and give it to Omprakash as his wedding gift, as she initially intended, Dina decides to leave it incomplete and let Ishvar, now amputated, use it as a cushion for the platform on which Omprakash drags him by a string. The softness of this quilt, in which Ishvar seems to eventually find comfort in the novel's final scene responds and makes another cyclically hermeneutic return to the image of "soft armchair" in the epigraph, an excerpt from Balzac's Le Père Goriot in English translation:

> Holding this book in your hand, sinking back in your soft armchair, you will say to yourself: perhaps it will amuse me. 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. (Balzac, Le Père Goriot quoted in Rohinton Mistry, A Fine Balance, n. p.) [45]

196

The Passive Passenger and the Failure of Storytelling

Throughout the novel, most characters take turns telling their life stories, either reflectively to themselves or interactively to others, particularly the protagonists Dina, Ishvar and Omprakash. Maneck remains the only one who presents with symptomatic incapacity to tell his own story. Maneck's deficiency in self-narration becomes apparent in the Epilogue when he returns home for his father's funeral after he spent eight years working in Dubai. During this homecoming trip, he also makes a short visit to the city where he accidentally bumps into Valmik the proofreader, now the assistant to the pseudo-prophet Bal Baba, who is in fact the Haircollector in disguise. They have a brief conversation and discuss the importance of telling one's own story:

> "Excuse me, you're the proofreader, aren't you?"
> "Erstwhile," he said, "Vasantrao Valmik, at your service."
> "You don't recognize me because I've grown a beard, but I was the student on the train with you, many years ago, when you were travelling for specialist treatment for your throat problem."
> "Say no more," said Mr. Valmik, smiling with delight. "I remember perfectly, I've never forgotten you. We talked a lot on that journey didn't we." […] "You know it's so rare to find a good audience for one's story. Most people get restless when a stranger tells them about his life. But you were a perfect listener."
> "Oh, I enjoyed listening. It shortened the journey. Besides, your life is so interesting."
> "You are very kind. Let me tell you a secret: there is no such thing as an uninteresting life."
> "Try mine."
> "I would love to. One day you must tell me your full and complete story, unabridged and unexpurgated. You must. We will set aside some time for it, and meet. It's very important."
> Maneck smiled. "Why is it important?"
> Mr. Valmik's eyes grew wide. "You don't know? It's extremely important because it helps to remind yourself of who you are. Then you can go forward, without fear of losing yourself in this ever-changing world."
> [...] "I must be truly blessed, for I have been able to tell my whole story twice. First to you on the train, then to a nice lady in the courthouse compound. But that was also many years ago. I'm thirsting to find a new audience. Ah, yes, to share the story redeems everything." (789-90)

Vilmak praises Maneck for being "a perfect listener." His assertion that "it's so rare to find a good audience for one's story" subtly questions hospitality, that is, whether one's story can be well received and accepted in the mind of a reader or a listener. However, just like Baudelaire's perfect flâneur model, or Derrida's notion of unconditional hospitality, the perfect listener is an illusory ideal, an impossibility.

Maneck is unmotivated to reciprocate by telling Vilmak the story of his life. If there were such a thing as an uninteresting life – an idea that Valmik opposes as an oxymoron – Maneck would probably admit that it would be his, and therefore not worth telling at all. In other words, he is reluctant to frame the storytelling of his life according to the same question that all other characters have had: how he did end up like this at this point in life?

In response, Valmik suggests that telling the story of one's own life "helps to remind yourself of who you are." He continues, "Then you can go forward, without fear of losing yourself in this ever-changing world." Maneck surrenders any possibility of self-narration and remains a listener who passively responds to the frame of anticipation in the other's story. I shall argue that this passive position should appropriately and analogically be described as a passenger comfortably seated in a moving vehicle. Valmik's final words predict that Maneck's despair remains unredeemable in the end – be it loss, suffering, or disappointment.

This eight-year absence in the city should inevitably give rise to some scenarios of misrecognition. For instance, Maneck anticipates that he will be misrecognised – he prepares the reason that it is mainly because of his beard that others might not easily recognise him. However, he is not in the least prepared for the scenarios in which he would also fail to recognise things and people in the city after all these years. Similar to Ishvar and Omprakash, Maneck's decision to go back to the city is driven by an urge to seek perfect closure to the

stories of the people he met there – and significantly not a closure to his own story – that he has put aside after so many years of absence. It all starts with melancholic reminiscences of good old days, when he is back in the mountains for his father's funeral:

> His eyes closed. He could see the masseurs in the city, eight years ago with Om at the beach, where customers sat in the sand to have their heads kneaded and rubbed and pummelled. Waves breaking in the background, and a soft twilight breeze. And the fragrance of jasmine, wafting from vendors selling chains of milk-white flowers for women to twice in their hair.
> […]
> It did not always have to end badly – he was going to prove it to himself. First he would meet all his friends: Om, happily married, and his wife, and at least two or three children by now; what would their names be? If there was a boy, surely Narayan. And Ishvar, the proud grand-uncle, beaming away at his sewing-machine, disciplining the little ones, cautioning them if they ventured too close to the whirring wheels and galloping needles. And Dina Aunty, supervising the export tailoring in her little flat, orchestrating the household, holding sway in that busy kitchen.
> Yes, he would see all this with his own eyes. If there was an abundance of misery in the world, there was also sufficient joy, yes – as long as one knew where to look for it. (781)

In this passage, Maneck imagines in detail the would-be happy endings of his friends Ishvar and Omprakash and his host mother Dina in the city after his eight-year absence. These details become the markers on which he relies for recognition, when they would soon and finally be reunited. It is not just the recognition of long missed friends. Such happy endings in his imagination also prepare for the recognition – "he would see all this with his own eyes" – that these would-be happy endings are not only imagined in the subjunctive sense, but also agree with the reality. As he insistently believes, to see this picture with his eyes would be the source of sufficient joy, while the city is the place where this closure and this anticipated end should be reached.

However, Maneck's imagination fails to collide with what actually happened to the other three protagonists. All anticipated moments of recognition fail to occur. As soon as he

arrives at the address of Dina's old flat, he is disappointed that Dina no longer lives there and that the flat has changed into something else beyond recognition. Then, when he manages to find Dina's brother's address in a directory, gets there, and finally meets her, he is greeted by a series of disappointments that bring him to an unrecoverable shock. A moment of non-recognition follows another moment of non-recognition.

First, Dina is unable to recognise him partly because of his beard and more so because of her worsened eyes: "I've grown a beard. That's why you don't recognize me" (791) – the beard is a mask for him to fit in Dubai, and now it functions as a shield to fend off immediate recognition. Second, Dina herself has become almost unrecognisable:

> The stick-wristed figure looked nothing like the Dina Aunty he had left eight years ago. Eight years in passing were entitled to take their toll; but this – this was more than a toll, it was outright banditry. (791)

Third, the tailors are stripped of their tailor status. Maneck only perceives this fact indirectly via Dina's words: "They are not working [...] There is no wife, no children. They have become beggars" (792-3). Fourth, the horrifying picture that Dina paints him annihilates any possibility of recognition,

> You wouldn't recognize them if you saw them. Ishvar has shrunk, not just because his legs are gone – all of him. And Om has become very chubby. One of the effects of castration. (793)

Finally, the prospect that he can soon meet them in person if he stays in her place for thirty minutes longer becomes exceedingly horrifying and makes him wish to escape from any further opportunity of recognition, or worse, of non-recognition as Dina offers: "If you are not in a rush, you could meet Ishvar and Om. They will come here at one o'clock" (794).

Maneck is confronted by his vulnerability in anticipating a prospect that causes him great anxiety. Rather than stay there and wait for them, Maneck makes up an excuse to

withdraw and finds his way out of Dina's place: "I cannot stay […] I have so many things to do … before my plane leaves tomorrow. My mother's relatives, and some shopping, and then to the airport" (794). As we see in the novel's final scene, Ishvar and Omprakash perceive Maneck's vulnerability or cowardice as his inhospitality towards his long lost friends.

However, it would be unfair to accuse Maneck of hostility or inhospitality. Ironically, it is his naïve belief in (absolute) hospitality that puts him in an unresponsive (and in this scene, irresponsible) come-what-may attitude. Nevertheless, in this scene, Maneck's hope of meeting Ishvar and Omprakash is not completely extinguished. This hope is so disquieting in his body that he cannot find any words, or any way at all to express himself:

> He glanced at his watch: twenty to one. Ishvar and Om would be arriving soon. If he spent a few minutes here, he could see them. And they would see him. But – what would he say?
> In the quiet street outside the house, he began strolling along the footpath. Up, towards the end of the street, then down again, to Dina Aunty's house. After several turns, he saw two beggars rounding the corner from the main road.
> One sat slumped on a low platform that moved on castors. He had no legs. The other pulled the platform with a rope slung over his shoulder. His plumpness sat upon him strangely, like oversized, padded clothes. Under his arm he carried a torn umbrella.
> What shall I say? Maneck asked himself desperately.
> They drew nearer, and the one on the platform jiggled the coins in his tin can. "O babu, ek paisa?" he pleaded, looking up shyly.
> Ishvar, it's me, Maneck! Don't you recognize me! The words raced uselessly inside his head, unable to find an exit. Say something, he commanded himself, say anything!
> The other beggar demanded, "Babu! Aray, paisa day!" His voice was high-pitched, challenging, his look direct and mocking. They stopped expectantly, hand held out, tin rattling.
> Om! Sour-lime face, my friend! Have you forgotten me!
> But his words of love and sorrow and hope remained muted like stones. (795)

It is ironic that Maneck manages to recognise them, based not on his memory but on Dina's descriptions. What he actually fails to recognise, however, is his own image in the eyes of these old friends. Do they still recognise him? How do they perceive him now after all these years? These are some questions that he could not mentally afford to pursue. Therefore, he

also fails to recognise the intention of the line Omprakash delivers when they approach Maneck, "Babu! Aray, paisa day!" (795) – as Omprakash later tells Dina about this scene and explains that he intends to say this line to get his attention: it was the favourite line of their beggar friend, Shankar, who was also the first beggar the three friends met on their way from the train station to Dina's flat in the novel's Prologue. For Maneck, the narrative thread is irreversibly broken by all these moments of non-recognition.

After this scene, Maneck continues on an aimless stroll along the streets and finally finds himself on the train platform, where he jumps off and instantly kills himself. I shall come back to this remarkable and shocking scene later. Here, I want to follow Ishvar and Omprakash whose steps lead us back to Dina's place in the novel's final scene. They chat with her and mention that they passed by Maneck on their way. While Omprakash expresses his disappointment that Maneck did not greet them on the spot, nor did he wait at Dina's place for them, Ishvar defends Maneck, acknowledging how far he has gone:

> "But he went so far away. When you go so far away, you change. Distance is a difficult thing. We shouldn't blame him." (802)

"Distance" is a key word here concerning Maneck's ultimate undoing in the novel. To a different extent, it reminds us of the distances which initially separate the three protagonists (Maneck, Ishvar and Omprakash) from the city. When Ishvar suggests "distance is a difficulty thing" (802), it could be elaborated as the difficulty to accept the tremendous disappointment in the destination, the distance between dream and reality. Distance generates all sorts of sweet anticipation and illusory imagination. In the journey towards it, this destination simply gets more beautiful in one's imagination and one keeps looking forward to it. However, while the anticipation is delicious, the disappointment at the moment of actual arrival could be

dangerously irrecoverable and overwhelming, as would be the ironic and complicated feeling of arrival without really reaching the anticipated end.[46]

Ishvar experiences this tricky difficulty when he first arrives in the city. Both he and his nephew are almost paralysed by their shock and disappointment with the crowds and rapid traffic flows in the city. Maneck experiences similar scenarios, including the final scene. There are both the actual distance that keeps Maneck from receiving any updates of the city and a symbolic distance between Maneck's imaginings of his friends' current lives and reality.

Mistry's novel implies two ways to overcome this distance. The first is to take active steps to initiate confrontation. Ishvar and Omprakash take steps to participate in the city and resist being excluded. As discussed earlier, in Derrida's terms, these are "steps of hospitality," by which the two protagonists confront and overcome the hostile city's disappointing reality as they endeavour to get received and accommodated.

The second is storytelling.

Benjamin in the essay "The Storyteller" (2002 [1936]) proposes the medieval image of the storyteller as a journeyman returning home:

> If peasants and seamen were past masters of storytelling, the artisan class was its university. In it was combined the lore of faraway places, such as a much-traveled man brings home, with the lore of the past, as it best reveals itself to natives of a place. (144)

In short, Benjamin suggests that travelling to a faraway place should potentially turn a man into a storyteller. In his hand is the story a gift from abroad which in turn symbolises the journeyman's role as both a guest in the faraway place and a host back at home. Storytelling is a skill by which he bridges the distance between the two positions; he stitches together the lives of others, with his ventures abroad as his own stories.

Critics tend to explain Maneck's suicide by cowardice in facing Ishvar and Omprakash and his incapacity to adapt and move forward. For instance, Peter Morey accounts for his suicide in simple cause-and-consequence logic:

> Unable to cope with changes that aggravate his already depressive disposition, he cannot bring himself to speak to the tailors and pretends not to recognise them […] Disconnection leads to death – for Maneck – or death-like experiences. (2004, 103-4)

In the final scene, Maneck's failure to greet Ishvar and Omprakash shows not his cowardice in the face of concrete and unbearable cruelty, but instead exposes his reluctance to take up any pretentious position as a storyteller: he finds no way to overcome the distance between himself in his comfortable and sheltered position and his tailor-turned-beggar friends' unhoused and unbearable conditions. In the end, Ishvar and Omprakash's survival contrasts sharply with Maneck's suicide. This contrast points out Maneck's passivity and indecision towards laying out participating steps as he travels.

Like Maneck, Ishvar and Omprakash have also gone back and forth between home and the city. Although they travel very far from their hometown and village, their stories' substance is not the actual distance which sets them apart from their home but their active steps of participation in a foreign city that tends to expel them. These steps are materialised by the actual footsteps, laid in the city across their job and shelter search.

These "steps" I mentioned in the previous sentence, figurative as they may sound, are necessary steps as they strive to maintain "a fine balance between hope and despair" (Mistry 2002b, 301) to quote once again Valmik's words from the novel, inasmuch as the challenges and obstacles in the city forcefully make them their own narratives' protagonists. Again, as discussed in the previous sections, in Derrida's terms these steps can be understood as steps of hospitality ("*pas d'hospitalité*"), by which these protagonists either draw boundaries or cross

lines of demarcation, thus to manage the unexpectedness in their lives and the brutality in the city. Such important and inevitable steps, however, could not be accounted for concerning Maneck's part in the novel.

Maneck's city experience could be described in terms of a passenger's experience in a mass transportation vehicle – a position that gradually dissipates Maneck's ability to tell his own story. The railway and the train bring Maneck from the mountains to the city. The distance is vast between his point of departure and destination. Yet, the narrator does not detail the distance in units of spatial measurements but in terms of train travelling hours: "It was thirty-six hours after leaving home that Maneck arrived in the city" (305). Phenomenologically, these waiting hours in the train turn one into a passive passenger who cannot gain experience during the long journey.

In "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (2004 [1940]), Benjamin distinguishes the clock and the calendar as two contrasting modern concepts of time with reference to Baudelaire's "Spleen et idéal": "The *idéal* supplies the power of remembrance; the *spleen* musters the multitude of the seconds against it" (335). Jeremy Tambling interprets this in his reading,

> While the *idéal* remembers, and so is linked to the Proustian notion of *mémoire involontaire*, which we may call a form of the posthumous, the *spleen* (anger, melancholia) results from the "inability to experience" that Benjamin diagnoses as being "at the heart of rage." (Tambling 2001, 124)

Here in Benjamin's idea, the annihilation of any experience is relevant to Maneck's train journey during thirty-six hours. Those hours are running emptily onwards while the train steadily heads towards the city, the anticipated destination. The realisation that listening to Valmik's story subjectively shortens the journey suggests that the boring hours are filled by a secondary experience through a stranger's story.

In their first arrival scene,[47] Ishvar and Omprakash slowly adapt to the reality upon reaching the train station: they leave on foot, in search of their first place of settlement. By contrast, when Maneck first arrives alone in the city, he immediately hops into a taxi to get to the college hostel:

> Maneck's taxi from the train station to the college hostel made a small detour around an old man had been hit by a bus […]
> Filtered through his exhaustion, the city seemed to roll past the taxi window like the frames of a film reel. On the pavement, children were pelting pebbles at a dog and bitch joined in copulation. Someone emptied a bucket over the animals to separate them. The taxi narrowly missed hitting the dog as it darted into traffic.
> At the next signal light, police were arresting a man who had been beaten up by a gang of six or seven young fellows […]
> It was late evening when Maneck reached the hostel. (305-6)

Maneck's first city experience,[48] therefore, is this short taxi ride from the station to the hostel. During this ride, Maneck enjoys the perfect flâneur's shifting perspective, who takes "a small detour" into different streets (305). The views are montaged "like the frames of a film reel" (306). Through the taxi window, Maneck witnesses one urban street scene after another. Importantly, however, unlike a flâneur, Maneck is not strolling on foot. His steps in the city are annihilated by his reliance on public transportation. He is carried in a vehicle, towards a particular destination.

The taxi's and the train compartment's inner spaces physically separate a moving interior space of comfort from the unfamiliar exterior. From a passenger's perspective, the exterior keeps moving at the vehicle's speed. Therefore, what Maneck views through his window is a series of fast-moving street scene images, on which he sets his eyes in a manner similar to the way one watches a big screen film or television advertisement. His interest is momentarily sustained, but he disengages as soon as the taxi takes him further towards the destination.

Here, in relation to my enquiry of Maneck's failure as a storyteller, it could not be said that Maneck's life lacks a threaded straightforward and linear narration. Maneck transits from one means of transportation to another and moves forward in his career development. His journey remains largely smooth, with some small detours and trivial halts. For instance, the train journey which opens the novel comes to a halt after a body is found on the railway tracks. His inadequacy as a storyteller is analogised to his tendency to remain in the passenger's seat in the journey of his life, which results in passive indecision.

Socratic Silence on a Checkerboard

In his reading of <u>A Fine Balance</u>, Eli Park Sorensen (2010) points out that the decision to go to the college in the city and the decision to work abroad in Dubai after his studies, both important moments in Maneck's life, are made for him by his parents. His only independent decision is his suicide. Sorensen reads this as ironic: "The suicide appears as a strange awkward (rather than tragic) and somewhat unresolved denouement of the novel" (Sorensen 133).

Sorensen picks up a particular novel scene, in which Maneck's indecision leads him to absurd inactivity. In this scene, Dina's flat is just destroyed by the goondas. When Dina worries that her landlord might throw everyone out, she suggests that Maneck should pack up and go to check if the hostel has room for him. Instead of taking action, Maneck "had the chessboard set up, and was staring at the pieces" (Mistry 2002b, 575 quoted in Sorensen 133). Addressing Maneck's absurd inactivity, Sorensen asks,

> Why this inactivity, not only at this critical moment, but also more generally about Maneck's Hamlet-like character – his pathetic melancholy and his chronic inability to face the brutal realities of the world? (133)

Sorensen further relates Maneck's chessboard to the suicide scene at the novel's end. The chessboard, for Sorensen, carries a subtle but significant political-symbolic meaning:

> It means action, political action, struggle, confrontation. The chess set symbolically embodies Maneck's call for action, his chance to participate in the game of the state of emergency, to play the role of the opponent in a world where everything is politicised, which is precisely what Maneck has avoided by going to the Middle East […]
> By the time Maneck returns eight year after he left the country, it is too late to act […]
> The chess set at this particular moment [that is, Maneck's suicide at the end] represents Maneck's failure, his *undoing*; the last thought that passes his mind before he dies, "was that he still had Avinash's chessmen." (Mistry 2002b, 800; Sorensen 133, original italics)

In this passage, the term "failure" refers to Maneck's missed opportunity for timely action or participation in the figurative political-symbolic game of chess. The word "undoing" is synonymous with "failure" and relates to the novel's plot. Further into the discussion, Sorensen points out that "Chapter XV ('Family Planning') tells the undoing of Om[prakash] and Ishvar, Chapter XVI ('The Circle is Completed') tells the undoing of Dina" (136). He implies that Maneck's desperate ending is proleptically anticipated in the narrative's structural symmetry, by virtue of pattern: that all the other protagonists also meet their "undoing." However, Dina, Ishvar and Omprakash make decisions and take timely and important steps in their narratives. They actively participate in their everyday life challenges, if not in the political game of the State of Emergency.

As Sorensen has endeavoured to suggest in his discussion, the chess game serves as an appropriate analogy to address the absence of these steps in Maneck's city experience. Here my argument differs from Sorensen's: the chess analogy does not function through action and confrontation but through isolation. As suggested earlier, Maneck's parents' deciding to send him off to the city to earn a diploma could be analogically considered as a move to leave the checkmate state, when their family business in town is going downhill under the perceived

threat of a remote, urban rival. However, for Maneck, this move is regrettable: "Must have made a wrong move somewhere in life, he thought, to walk into this check" (Mistry 2002b, 544). His resentment over this decision emerges at a point of reminiscence, when Maneck "watched the sewer's whirlpool swallow empty cigarette packs and soft drink bottlecaps" (544). Seeing the bottle-caps particularly reminds him of his family business producing its own soft drink, and therefore, leads to the bitter remark that "Kohlah's Cola would not be among them":

> Not while Daddy continued in his stubborn ways. What a success the business could have been. And he [Maneck] would never have had to come to this bloody college. (544)

This moment of reminiscence appears in a short scene when Maneck is in the process of teaching Omprakash chess on a leisurely and rainy afternoon. In turn, mentioning "this bloody college" nostalgically reminds Maneck of an earlier scene at the college hostel, when Maneck first learned chess from Avinash, his first and only friend at college hostel:

> the chess lesson began during dinner, with paper and pencil. Maneck said the diversion made the canteen swill [which he detests] easier to swallow.
> "Now you're *learning*," said Avinash. "That's the secret – to distract your senses. Have I told you my theory about them? I think that our sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing are all calibrated for the enjoyment of a perfect world. But since the world is imperfect, we must put blinders on the senses."
> "The world of the hostel is more than just imperfect. It's a gigantic deformity." (313-4, my italics)

The important word above is the present participle "learning," by which Avinash acknowledges that Maneck is gaining knowledge and skill, not only in terms of chess but also in the way Maneck shows sign of coping with the hostel, the college, and the new environment away from home. Everything that Maneck encounters in the city, indeed, is not only very different from those in his town in the mountains, but also keeps disappointing him on a

tremendous scale. For instance, the canteen food is disgusting by Maneck's standards; yet, he has no better option.

A secret tactic in this dilemma, as Avinash suggests, is to "distract your senses" (313): Maneck just happens to realise how "the diversion" actually works for him. Avinash's elaborates on this tactic and delivers his worldview: our senses are only "calibrated for the enjoyment of a perfect world" (314). Thus, his ironic remark points to the inevitable imperfection in the world of reality. That "we must put blinders on the senses" advises withdrawal from unpleasant reality, and therefore, also recommends drawing sensory boundaries (314).

To relate this to hospitality, Avinash's advice can be elaborated as such: in most cases, one should shun cruel world outside and practise numbness to surroundings, in order to accept or to "swallow" whatever might follow. Maneck's response to Avinash's advice curiously suggests the inadequacy of the word "imperfect" – "The world of the hostel is more than just imperfect" (314) – he uses the comparative "more than" to modify the non-comparable adjective "imperfect." Imperfection is to a certain extent expected in reality. Regardless, describing something as "more than just imperfect" suggests that the disappointment it provokes goes beyond one's mental capacity to tolerate. In short, it is simply unbearable. Hence, Maneck amends the description as a "gigantic deformity" (314). Relating this to the previous discussion of the city's monsters, the "gigantic deformity" of the hostel also symbolises that of the city. It is a symbol of monstrosity like Medusa's head, the sight of whom is more than ill-advised.

Here, Maneck is not deliberately seeking ways to evade the hostel's "deformity." However, in this scene, he realises an unexpected discovery: by focusing on the chess game,

his senses effectively withdraw from the surroundings and retreat to the chessboard's isolation. While Maneck initially calls this condition a "diversion" and Avinash similarly describes it as a distraction ("to distract"); this mental preparation for the chess game indeed significantly involves an important step of "isolation."

In his elaboration on Descartes's reasoning method, Philip Fisher points out that "Descartes wants to make it possible, as in a chess game, to have only a single move to make" (1998, 61). Fisher's example is Descartes's application of the Pythagorean Theorem ($c^2 = a^2 + b^2$) in Regulae to "demonstrate how symbolic notation isolates one and only one step within a process of thought" (62). As Fisher points out, Descartes creates a step-by-step method leading towards the solution. Each step involves a diagram and eliminates any unnecessary elements so that one's mind can focus entirely on a particular problem as a "visual all-at-once visual experience" (26). Fisher suggests that this isolated step, importantly as "one and only one step" in this "learning by wonder" process (67), leads one's mind to "recognize discovery and certainty when we do reach them ourselves" (67) and to taste "a 'wonder-like' experience in the small steps of the proof" (66).

During the chess lesson scene with Maneck and Avinash, Maneck is invited to the realm of wonder on the chessboard, which encourages the player to "create a situation where only one step of the problem stands before the mind" (Fisher 1998, 61). However, Fisher also notes that "we see no representation at all of trial and error" in Descartes's learning method (67). Fisher insists that "Platonic wondering is also a wandering – an erring" (67). In this sense, as Fisher emphasises, the process of making mistakes, of wandering without aim, is also essential to the experience of wonder, as shown in Plato's Meno involving the demonstration of an unexpected geometrical theorem of "doubling the square": to double an area of four

211

square feet, we calculate, by easy arithmetic, the area for a newly proposed eight square feet. However, getting the new sides' length requires intellectual discovery. Plato retells Socrates's dialogues with Meno's slave, a boy untrained in mathematics, from whom Socrates elicits reasoning. To obtain this square's length requires an important step, as Fisher points out in his study of Socrates's scene, a step of making mistake:

> All earlier trials had kept the lines vertical and horizontal. It is important to notice that it was in making the first mistake that the boy gave us this square that was too large, but that mistake led, once we contemplated it a certain way, to the solution to the problem. The mistake had to be made. (Fisher 1998, 72)

After trials of thinking such as extending or shortening original square's existing lines, the boy discovers that the unknown length unexpectedly lies on a diagonal line. Yet, crucially, the scene does not go on to measure the exact size of this length. The purpose of this scene is to prove to Meno that soul is immortal and has existed as the truth in the boy all along.

For Fisher, more often than not, this step of mistaking leads to frustrating dead-ends. Yet, in some cases, it could fruitfully and surprisingly lead to the solution and the delight of discovery – or to put it precisely in Socrates's vocabulary, the delight of rediscovering something one does not know that he knew before. However, Socrates's method has a problem or a blind spot, which Fisher describes as "Socratic silence" (79). In the above-discussed scene from <u>Meno</u>, a specific unresolved problem drops into silence: "how long the side of the new square will be?" (Fisher 1998, 76) Socrates avoids the question because in this case, no rational length is measured – that is, the length is neither an integer nor a fractional number. The problem is no longer unsolvable in modern day mathematics. As we know, the length of the new square can be expressed by an irrational number, as two times the square root of 2. Fisher points out the historical context in ancient mathematical study wherein the very

question measuring the square's diagonal is considered a taboo because of its contradiction with rationality:

> Earlier in Greek geometry it was the very scandal of this irrational number $\sqrt{2}$, which is the outcome of trying to compute the length of the diagonal of a square with a side of length 1 by means of the Pythagorean theorem, that led to the crisis within Pythagorean mathematics, a crisis connected to its mysticism and to its secrecy. According to legend the discoverer of this problem was put to death. He had, at the very heart of the rational, reached the irrational. (77)

Irrationality prevents the Pythagorean mathematicians from going further and investigating the exact length of the diagonal of a square. Fisher proposes that there is "a movable line between what is so well known that it seems commonplace and what is too far out in the sea of truth even to have been sighted except as something unmentionable" (78). This line is the threshold within which wonder becomes possible, but beyond which lies the "far distance of the irrational, the unsolvable and the unthinkable" (78). The length of a square's diagonal, in Socrates's time, falls beyond this line, and thus is considered "a threat to mathematics itself" (78).

This movable line in the experience of wonder relates again to hospitality. Among the several different ways by which Fisher takes to elaborate on wonder as an aesthetic category of rare experiences, he proposes one in terms of hospitality: "Wonder is the hospitality of the mind or soul to newness" (49).[49] Hospitality to the strange, Fisher notes, does not always come about unconditionally but with a particular condition: "only where the security of the self has already been secured so deeply that security, a feeling implying that reality of fear, but its suspension, can itself be forgotten" (49).

I may have stretched too far into Fisher's discussion. Nevertheless, the limited hospitality in this particular elaboration on wonder relates strongly to Maneck, Mistry's

unaccommodated stranger. Here, the implication of a "reality of fear" that is not only suspended (Fisher 1998, 49), but the suspension of which is forgotten, can also apply to the chess lesson scene between Maneck and Avinash.

The chessmen, the rules of chess, and the scenarios on the chessboard all amount to wondrous newness as a first experience to which Maneck turns his attention. However, the material edges of this chessboard also symbolise the convenient lines of mental hospitality for Maneck. Anything beyond the perfect squares of a chessboard – for instance the hostel's deformity – can temporarily be kept at bay. Phenomenologically, it corresponds to Maneck's "diversion" and Avanish's "distraction." This diversion or distraction creates distance between Maneck and his environment. Indeed, in addition to this chessboard, there are a couple of other symbols in the novel that addresses such limited hospitality.[50]

The first one is the refrigerator analogy. As an ironic note on his area of specialisation – that is, refrigeration and air-conditioning – Maneck offers this pessimistic worldview:

> If there were a large enough refrigerator, he would be able to preserve the happy times in this flat, keep them from every spoiling [...]
> But it was an unrefrigerated world. And everything ended badly. (Mistry 2002b, 574)

The refrigerator, here, symbolically overlaps with Dina's flat, which he finally calls home at the end of his one-year stay. It also suggests a radical sense of demarcating the familiar, which has to be preserved and protected, from the strange, which spoils. In other words, this analogy envisions the division between the interior of the refrigerator and the exterior of the unrefrigerated world.

The second is the quilt analogy. Maneck describes an imaginary monster quilt to Dina:

> "I prefer to think that God is a giant quiltmaker. With an infinite variety of designs. And, the quilt is grown so big and confusing, the pattern is impossible to see, the

squares and diamonds and triangles don't fit well together anymore, it's all become meaningless. So He had abandoned it." (444)

This idiosyncratic image of god's quilt echoes "the famous statement of modern mathematics – God made the integers, the rest was made by man," as Fisher notes, that "finds in Socrates' silence a tacit nod of agreement" (1998, 79). Similarly, in Maneck's analogy, the monster quilt ends in Socratic silence, through the inevitable conclusion that God has abandoned the imperfect world that He created, leaving the "gigantic deformity" of this quilt totally out of sight.

Because the last thing Maneck has in mind in his suicidal moment is that "he still had Avinash's chessboard" (Mistry 2002b, 800), it is important to elaborate my reading of the suicide scene through the lines of mental hospitality, the mental state of isolation, and Socratic silence. Indeed, I disagree with Sorensen's interpretation that this particular "last thought that passes his mind" should primarily amount to his regret of non-participation (133), although I concur that suicide is the only independent decision that Maneck makes for himself.

Maneck's suicide could be understood as a defiant step in that it departs from this narrative where everything ends in meaninglessness. This step allows him to radically abandon the comfort of the shelter and leaps toward the irrationality of the gigantically deformed and unrefrigerated world. That the chessboard is still in his hands can be read as the irony that despite this radical departure from the narrative, Maneck is probably incapable of really moving across the limited lines of hospitality. The oncoming train takes his life and thus reminds us of the novel's opening scene: Omprakash's comb had hit Maneck accidentally after the train made an unexpected halt. This moment initiates contact and conversation between Maneck and the tailors, thus marking the beginning of their relationship. We soon

215

realise that the train comes to a halt before reaching the destination because "another body had been found by the tracks" (Mistry 2002b, 6).

This scene is reminiscent of the famous ending of Tolstoy's <u>Anna Karenina</u>, as Morey notes,

> it is only after Maneck's suicide under an oncoming train at the end of the book, that the faint echoes of Tolstoy's <u>Anna Karenina</u>, that other tale of a family torn apart, which also begins and ends with deaths under trains, can be fully appreciated. (2004, 101)

Milan Kundera's elaboration in his novel <u>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</u> on this scene from <u>Anna Karenina</u> may well serve as an indirect justification of Maneck's final act:

> Anna could have chosen another way to take her life. But the motif of death and the railway station, unforgettably bound to the birth of love, enticed her in her hour of despair with its dark beauty [...]
> It is wrong, then, to chide the novel for being fascinated by mysterious coincidences [...], but it is right to chide man for being blind to such coincidences in his daily life. For he thereby deprives his life of a dimension of beauty. (Kundera 2008 [1984], 55)

One may argue that Maneck makes a final attempt to mark beauty in the world of cruelty. His suicide abruptly provides the novel with an artificial ending by turning himself into another body by the railway tracks. Howbeit, in either case, whether that he leaps into the railway track to depart from his life and the narrative or that he intentionally leaves a mark of beauty in the narrative's structure, Maneck becomes an unaccommodated character whose final action remains incomprehensible and unresolved. Therefore, his final step – the leap he makes toward the railway track – is a step of un-accommodation, refusing definition, justification or explanation, a defiant step away from the fictional universe of rational action and representable pattern and into the darkness of Socratic silence where words are "unable to find an exit" (Mistry 2002b, 795).

The Omniscient Narrator in the English Language

In this chapter, I introduced Derrida's idea of absolute or unconditional hospitality as an ideal towards which many of the characters in Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u> strive or dream. Richard Kearney, among several other contemporary philosophers, expresses his reservations. He contends that the idea of absolute hospitality undervalues and downgrades the ethical question of discernment: how do we "distinguish between benign and malign strangers"? (2003, 70)[51]

Kearney relates the problem of this absolute other to Emmanuel Lévinas's idea of the irreducible other – *l'illéité* or illeity: a philosophical term coined by Lévinas. It is the place of God in Lévinas's philosophy – a position beyond subjectivity, to which the pronouns we use in a dialogic interaction simply fail to apply. One cannot retain the subjectivity "I" and refer to illeity as "you" or, to imagine a reversal, whether the stranger is using the subject position "I" and addressing oneself in return as "you" – no, it is an irreducible other that can only be addressed in the obscure sense of the third person "He."

Nonetheless, for Kearney, the idea of the absolute hospitality to which we should open ourselves is problematic since we can never be sure whether this absolute other leads us to encounter "the highest of the high (illeity) or the lowest of the low (*il y a*)" (Kearney 2003, 71). "*Il y a*" is another of Lévinas's ideas – the pole in opposition to illeity. I understand it as the inchoate state before subjectivity, the impersonal noise in the background which we account for in the phrase "there is" ("*il y a*") like post-mortem murmurs around a corpse.[52]

Kearney's summary of Lévinas's conflation between the highest high of *illéité* and the lowest low of *il y a* illuminates my reading of the omniscient narrator's role in Mistry's novel. To anticipate the ideal of absolute hospitality involves a belief – almost equivalent to the

religious sense of faith – in an absolute other who sits in the position of illeity. I argue that this absolute other's subtle presence is sometimes embodied by the omniscient narrator.

Peter Morey makes a stunning point on the presence of an omniscient narrator in almost every story in Mistry's oeuvres. He observes many characters' recurrent endeavours

> to transcend the piecemeal, ground-level view to which they are bound as earthly participants in their quotidian dramas, and to reach for a more holistic, pattern making perspective: the kind of perspective usually vouchsafed only to an omniscient narrator. They seek to discover the "whole picture," a conjunction of beginnings, middles and ends that will give meaning to their lives. (Morey 2004, 168)

In <u>A Fine Balance</u>, many characters share the tendency to anticipate the omniscient perspective from which the meanings of their lives could be elicited. Dina's quilt serves as a convenient analogy for this shared belief or tendency to anticipate. The quilt carries the implication in its patterns' imposition, whereupon the four protagonists once shared their thoughts. As Dina puts it, their bittersweet memories of lives and struggles form "[t]he pattern of each day […] like the pattern of a well-cut dress, the four of them fitting together without having to tug or pull to make the edges meet. The seams were straight and neat" (Mistry 2002b, 507).

> At that moment, her quilt is left with an uncompleted corner:
>
> "We're stuck in this gap," said Om. "End of the road."
> "You'll have to wait," said Dina. "It depends on what material we get with the next order."
> "Hahnji, mister, you must be patient. Before you can name that corner, our future must become past." (640)

The last lines above are said by Ishvar, who is unaware of the ominous and tragic implications behind this unfinished corner. As I suggest above, Omprakash's determination to go back to the city after the horror during their homecoming trip in their village is triggered by his

yearning for a perfect closure to their narratives. The quilt's missing corner proleptically allegorises the non-arrival of any anticipated end.

In the novel, Ishvar and Omprakash, and possibly Dina, represent those who subject themselves to the omniscient narrator's holistic perspective in a position equivalent to Lévinas's *illéité*. Although they could find no shelter or accommodation in the city or in any other corner of the world, their view of this God-like perspective allows them to feel accommodated in the narrative, on a scale larger than their lives, where they nonetheless play the roles as protagonists, and where they may eventually find their lives and tragic suffering meaningful.

However, I find myself unable to set aside all reservations and celebrate them as survivors. It would be inexcusable cruelty on my part to condemn them as pathetic and naively self-deceptive. However, it is difficult to refrain from describing them in such terms, especially when taking into consideration their bad faith in, or their passive submission to, a god-like perspective where their narratives' perfect symmetry could be taken for granted. Indeed, one of the novel's important achievements is the invention of Maneck as a protagonist who shares his perspective with many English language readers. We partake in the similarly problematic comfort position suggested by Balzac's narrator's words, cited in the epigraph of A Fine Balance. I take this position further to describe Maneck's position as a passive passenger's on a train. Regardless, there is something remarkable in Maneck that I could not simply reduce to a sentence-long accusation about his absurd suicide.

Indeed, if Ishvar and Omprakash's stories, as those about the untouchable community, could be contained in the English-language omniscient narrative voice, then they project a hospitable and all-inclusive image of the English language, that of a medium in which a total

stranger and his stories could be described and narrated. In other words, believing in the God-like narrator promotes the perception of the English language in novel-writing as universal and hospitable to any culture. However, it is through Maneck's suicide that this promise of hospitality and structural symmetry in the English language is broken and put between parentheses, if not called into question.

In short, Maneck's suicide introduces us to the other extreme of Lévinas's philosophy of the absolute other: the horror of *il y a* – or in Maneck's figurative language, the unrefrigerated world where things naturally deteriorate. If such an omniscient narrator is in control of what is about to happen in the narrative, Maneck opines that this narrator, the "giant quiltmaker," has long abandoned this story: "the quilt is grown so big and confusing, the pattern is impossible to see, the squares and diamonds and triangles don't fit well together anymore, it's all become meaningless. So He [the God] had abandoned it" (Mistry 2002b, 444).

As such, Maneck is in contradiction with the other three protagonists. Indeed, he largely remains sheltered, whether it is in his hometown, in the mountains, in the City by the Sea, or in Dubai, but his too-easily secured shelter in a world of cruelty makes him paradoxically unaccommodated in the rhetoric of the narrative. Unlike the other characters, he could not narrate his own story. His final steps in the city are violently defiant and bold. They make a statement and reject any possible narrative frame. This final scene warns the reader not to be fooled by the illusory symmetry of the narrative structure and implies that there may be no meaning to life, no matter how hard one tries to make sense of it. There are scenes and stories, things and people, beyond those lines of limited hospitality, beyond those imposed beginnings and ends. They exist in the darkness (or in Socratic silence), in the background of

the Levinasian *il y a*, where one should anticipate to be absolutely unaccommodated. Thus, Maneck's suicide raises questions about the English language's inadequacies: to what extent are those scenes and dialogues adapted to favour the English-language reader's taste? What are the things, the stories and the scenes that remain untranslatable in the context of India or Bombay in the English language medium?

There is perhaps no other way for Maneck to make this impression on the metafictional level of the novel apart from killing himself, thus violently removing himself from the narrative. Like a passenger in a moving vehicle, the only way to get onto his own feet is to disembark from this vehicle. However, the "moving vehicle" which has taken Maneck further and further away from home is not going to stop or to let him disembark. All he can do is remain in his passive and comfortable seat or get up and jump out of the vehicle.

Indeed, the novel is bookended by scenes of passengers waiting in a train or on a platform, both important constituents of everyday life in many contemporary cities. The diversification of means and systems of public transportation and the popularity of their usage make a huge difference to urban life between the nineteenth and the twentieth century. Complex transportation systems generally dominate the postcolonial city. For instance, Bombay has got one of the earliest and most sophisticated subway systems in the world. Most of the urban characters in Mistry's novel rely on public transportation to go to work, to run errands, and to get around. Particularly, the train prevails as an important part of urban life. A Fine Balance also features the train as a metaphor for progress in the capitalised society, where everyone, like Maneck, becomes a passive passenger led forward. In this position, one is stripped of any meaningful experience as time translates itself into meaningless mechanical clock hours.

For Maneck, the choice is between remaining seated and standing up and actively looking for an exit. Getting caught between two unfavourable options, he finds himself unaccommodated, uprooted or severely displaced in this vehicle which is distancing him from home. Maneck's suicide warns that it is important to alight from this figurative *vehicle* of progress. However, instead of making a transgressive step of hospitality as the other protagonists do, this step should be described more fruitfully as a step of concession. I shall elaborate this with reference to my model in the next chapter: the hopscotch player in the Hong Kong-based novelist XiXi's body of work.

Chapter Three   The Hopscotch Player

"Modernity is one of Kleist's marionettes" – Stathis Gourgouris begins with this enigmatic statement in the Preface to his book, <u>Does Literature Think?</u> (2003, ix). Thus he invites us to reflect upon the experience of modernity, using the peculiar image of the marionette. Via his reading of Heinrich von Kleist's famous parable "On the Theater of Marionettes" (2010 [1810]),[1] Gourgouris proposes that the experience of modernity could be interpreted figuratively. He frames this in terms of the two antagonistic desires which a theoretical marionette experiences: "the defiance of earth's gravity and the submission to the whims of the puppeteer" (2003, ix). These two desires allegorise the contested projects at the heart of modernity, namely, "the project of autonomy" and "the project of mastery" (xi). "Though essentially contrary," he describes, "these two elements emerge together and oftentimes work in tandem" (xi).

According to Gourgouris, in our experience of modernity we often find ourselves caught in suspension between "the defiance of gravity" and "an unwillingness for self-mastery" (x). Despite its elegance and effortless movement, an unnerving sense of insecurity emerges behind this figure of aesthetic suspension. Let us imagine the marionette on stage: one could not help but wonder, yet dare not to fully anticipate, what would happen if it were rid of its manipulator's strings? Would it be able to stand on its own (let alone to lay its own steps)? Or, would it crumble and collapse instantly on the ground?

To ask these questions, then, is to *concede* that one could never totally evade gravity – not even in a metaphorical sense. I italicise the verb "to concede" in the above sentence. This verb carries implications such as the initial unwillingness to admit as true, or the unwillingness to agree to a point after a disagreement.[2] Its adjective "concessive," as we understand it in

"concessive clauses," paradoxically involves the willingness to admit a point that goes against a sentence's main argument.[3] In short, concession (as in the verb "to concede" and in the adjective "concessive") entails a shift from unwillingness to willingness. Figuratively, I propose that this change of attitude requires an active step, by which one can leap *from* the reluctance to admit insufficiency in this posture of weightlessness *to* the playful anticipation of alternative possibilities.

My understanding of concession has always come with a similar figurative step, which can be heard in the equivalent of "concession" in the Chinese language: *rangbu* [讓步].[4] It comprises two characters. The first character *rang* [讓] connotes the verb 'to give way to,' and suggests the sense of mutual humility, as in the terms *lirang* [禮讓] (comity) and *qianrang* [謙讓] (humility); while the second one *bu* [步] connotes the noun "step" and the idea of progress, as in *jinbu* [進步] (progress) and *buzhou* [步驟] (procedure). Within the term *rangbu*, an (almost untranslatable) internal twist of this "step" can subtly be heard: the diction of "step" in the figurative sense of concession withstands the very progress for which it stands. In short, *rangbu* has a double meaning: as a verb, it connotes "to give way to the step of someone"; as a noun, it refers to "the step by which to give way to someone." The idea of *rangbu* in this chapter alludes to the ordinary others' choral and humble steps. These steps are often written off as mundane and unprofitable from different agendas of progress.

We could superimpose the marionette figure with the implied "someone" behind the implications of *rangbu*, who withdraws his own steps from a grand narrative or is deprived of the opportunity of participation therein. Then, *rangbu* can be understood as the crucial step by which he is granted the opportunity to stand and walk on his own in resistance or in response

to this grand narrative of omission or exclusion. Such a step has long been overdue in Hong Kong's imaginative interpretation or critical understanding: the city that has been imagined and allegorised in the 1980s and 1990s in tropes that are very similar to Kleist's marionettes in cinema, in literature, and in critical discourse in the wake of the pre-1997 Sino-British Negotiations on what was then thought of as Hong Kong's future: to name a few best-known examples, the image of the floating city as in XiXi's short story "Marvels of a Floating City" (1997a [1986]), the myth of the "footless bird" in Wong Kar-wai's 1990 film <u>Days of Being Wild</u>,[5] and the critical model of hyphenation and disappearance in Ackbar Abbas's criticism (1997), among many others.

In this chapter, I attempt to locate the steps of *rangbu* in Hong Kong literature, which would allow for the re-imagination of the aforementioned tropes of suspension: for instance, to retrieve the forgotten feet of the footless bird, to actively forge the link between the ground and the floating identity, or to reverse the preferred sequence in our understanding of hyphenation. Instead of highlighting that what connects also separates, as Abbas advocates, we could understand hyphenation as the force that brings any two isolated parts together.

XiXi [西西],[6] a Hong Kong based Chinese writer, actively and enthusiastically performs such steps of concession, or *rangbu* [讓步], in her fictional writings. As an appetizer, we can look at the playful image embedded graphically in her penname, which features a provisional alternative to the marionette. The name "XiXi" consists of two identical Chinese characters: 西西. The primary connotation of this character is "west." However, XiXi does not invite us to skip to the meaning, but to look at the graphic elements of these two characters as

pictographs with a jack-in-the-box riddle. In the Preface to a short story collection, she offers a way of reading this riddle:

> When I was young I used to love playing a game similar to hopscotch [...] First you draw a series of squares on a ground. Then you tie a string of paper clips into a knot and toss it into one of the squares and start hopping from one square to the next until you reach the square with the knot in it. Then you pick it up and hop your way back to where you started [...] The Chinese character 西 "*xi*" looks like a girl in a skirt, her two feet planted in a square. Put two of them side by side, and they are like two frames of a film, a girl in a skirt playing hopscotch in two squares. (XiXi [1984] translated in Soong 1996 [1985], 128-9)[7]

This image, a girl in skirt playing hopscotch on her own, prompts us to re-imagine the elegant posture of the marionette in suspension. Kleist's marionette does not only show defiance of gravity, but also resistance to the ground: through the strings that link to the fingers of a manipulator, it submits and withdraws its initial defiance. Its elegant, suspended position is not the result of its *willingness* to resist and defy gravity but the *unwillingness* to make a decision and take responsibility of its own action.

XiXi's hopscotch player explores the possibility of making her concessive steps with self-adjustment from unwillingness to willingness: that is, from the reluctance to admit imperfection and her indulgence in passive anticipation of progress in the grand narrative. Instead, she becomes ready to anticipate mistakes, inadequacies, limitations, and disappointments. She draws the lines of restrictions on the ground as patterns of hopscotch, and imposes obstruction upon herself in order to inspire creativity and alternative ways of storytelling. Similar to the marionette, XiXi's hopscotch player also aspires toward an effortless state of lightness. Yet, instead of abandoning the ground where she stands, this player resists and anticipates gravity as part of the rules of her own game.

This girl's staccato hopping steps playfully and reassuringly demonstrate that the ground is not as unfavourable as implied in Gourgouris's interpretation of Kleist's marionette. Instead, the ground is an inevitable surface with which one must interact. Each of XiXi's literary projects can be considered a hopscotch game: "Putting the words on squared paper," XiXi persuasively imagines, "is also a kind of hopscotch game" (XiXi 2007 [1984], 1 in Soong 129). It is a common practice for a Chinese writer to use pieces of square paper, on which characters are scribed one by one starting from the top-right corner, going downward square by square, then leftward column by column. This slow scribing process is vividly described in a common Chinese expression, translated here: "crawling from square to square." Physically, this writing process can be a "painful [and lonesome] exercise" (XiXi 2007 [1984], 1 in Soong 129). However, with the spirit of a hopscotch player, XiXi also enjoys playfulness and freedom by laying steps of concession in her unique game of writing and storytelling.

The focus of this chapter rests upon XiXi's stories of Feituzhen [肥土鎮] (translated into English as "Fertillia" or "Fertile Town"), which include particularly in the discussion below "The Story of Fertile Town" (trans. Eva Hung 1997a, 29-64, original title: "Feituzhen de Gushi" [肥土鎮的故事] 1992 [1982], 68-91), "Marvels of a Floating City" (trans. Eva Hung 1997a, 1-27, original title: "Fucheng Zhiyi" [浮城誌異] 1992 [1986], 131-43), and a novel, Flying Carpet (trans. Diana Yue 2000, original title: Feizhan [飛氈] 2000 [1996b]).[8] The fictional city Feituzhen, like Majzels's "City of Forgetting" and Mistry's "City by the Sea," is an allegory. More appropriately, it should be read as a mythical re-imagination of Hong Kong. In Flying Carpet, XiXi's narrator does not follow the steps of protagonists, heroes, or bigger-than-life characters. Instead she performs what I describe as the narrative

rangbu and retrieve the choral steps of the ordinary numerous and their hard-to-locate everyday life stories.

Before I discuss on this novel, in the sections that immediately follow, I shall offer my critical reading of two short stories about Feituzhen. Quite differently, in these stories, XiXi shows how the steps of the ordinary numerous are withdrawn from participating in their narrative. In short, each story stages a particular moment of disappointment relevant to Hong Kong.

XiXi's Floating City and Kleist's Marionette

Relevant to the aesthetics of suspension in Kleist's marionette or that in Gourgouris's discussion of modernity is the "floating city" trope for Hong Kong. XiXi was among the first who developed this mythical trope from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, a period in Hong Kong that is usually considered transitional as the Sino-British Negotiations generated political uncertainty and anxiety. The most notable example in XiXi's oeuvres is her novella "Marvels of a Floating City" (1997a [1986]). It consists of thirteen numbered vignettes, each of which is introduced by an image of Belgian surrealist artist René Magritte's painting.[9] As Michael Ingham notes, the image of the floating city responds to, and is "inspired by, Magritte's Castle in the Pyrennes,"[10] while several other works of the same painter's "such as Time Transfixed and The Mind's Gaze are juxtaposed with short but surprisingly apposite meditations on Hong Kong's past, present and future" (2007, 21). To borrow Ingham's words, XiXi's novella can be read as a "literary creation myth" that "encompasses also the uncertainty and ambivalent feelings during the Sino-British joint negotiations [sic] in the mid-1980s" (21).

In his influential study on Hong Kong, Ackbar Abbas (1997) observes that the "floating identity […] has served Hong Kong so well in the past" (4).[11] According to Abbas, the ambivalence in the "floating identity" trope prompted the people of Hong Kong "to establish something more definite in response to [the] political exigencies" (4). Such was the case during the two decades prior to 1997: the city was anticipating the date when the United Kingdom would hand sovereignty over to the People's Republic of China. In his book's opening pages, Abbas aims at offering an utterly different way by which to reimagine Hong Kong. He begins with the contention that Hong Kong should be considered "not so much a place as a space of transit" (1997, 4):

> It has always been, and will perhaps always be, a port in the most literal sense – a doorway, a point in between – even though the nature of the port has changed. A port city that used to be located at the intersections of different spaces. Hong Kong will increasingly be at the intersections of different times or speeds. (4)

Abbas suggests that the "port mentality," for which "everything is provisional, ad hoc; everything floats," "was only viable before anxieties over 1997, and before events at Tiananmen 1989" (4). In other words, in anticipation of 1997 handover aftermath, he endeavours to suggest a different model through which to reinterpret Hong Kong in new critical terms. However, the model that he reaches in his conclusion is yet another floating state of suspension – one that he theorises as hyphenation:

> Hyphenation has very different implications. It points precisely to the city's attempts to go beyond such historical determinations by developing a tendency toward timelessness (achronicity) and placelessness (the inter-national, the para-sitic), a tendency to live its own version of the "floating world." (143)

This "floating world" that appears near the end of his book portrays the city in a state beyond determinist constraints (143), whereas the "floating identity" in what is noted at the beginning of the book corresponds to political uncertainty (4). In its two separate occurrences, the

meanings of "floating" are subtly different. But, they both imply an ambivalent attitude towards the future. Instead of acquiring freedom, as Abbas would anticipate in the floating world's proposed position, his hyphenation model ironically leaves Hong Kong entrapped within imaginative suspended space. This space is almost the same as the passively maintained floating identity, from which Abbas intends to depart. The floating identity is self-entrapped because the approaching future seems to crush the city's perceived stability. However, the hyphenated state which Abbas proposes is also symptomatic of self-entrapment due to its laissez-faire attitude towards any perceived and unresolved uncertainty. In this state of hyphenation, the city would never really determine its own future, but at best could submit to a particular *tendency*, another key word onto which the imagination of this floating world has to cling in order to maintain its position.

XiXi's "Marvels of a Floating City" presents the floating city neither as a utopian model of "timelessness" and "placelessness" which Abbas advocates, nor as a detachment from history for passive identification or escapism. Instead, the novella stages the floating city as a myth. According to Gourgouris, myth should be considered a catalyst or a "self-altering agent," for reimagining and rethinking assumed authorial relations, historical patterns and hierarchy of powers in a given society. Instead of bringing closures and stabilising categories such as uniformity of belief, shared values and national identity, our understanding of myth should take into consideration its performativity. This corresponds to "the tireless capacity of humankind to create fables, legends, and stories in order to dramatize the otherwise incommensurable puzzle of human existence" (2003, 31). To quote Gourgouris's words, "the performativity of myth undoes [the myth's] originary or archetypal authority by staging its interrogation, pluralization, and in effect, historization" (31). In this "performative terrain" of

a myth, a society "stages other images of itself, other self-representations that may, under certain historical conditions, lead to self-interrogation and indeed self-alteration" (42).[12] I endeavour to address this performativity in my reading of XiXi's myth of the floating city.

In the Preface to his 1986 edited anthology of Chinese sci-fi stories, which includes XiXi's "Marvels of a Floating City," Chang Shi-Kuo [張系國] refuses to read the Floating City as Hong Kong exclusively; for him, "it can be any modern city in the world" (1987, 2, my translation).[13] While I agree that this allegorical floating city speaks to experiences of ambivalence and levitation desires in other urban contexts, this myth stages a "floating city" trope and other imagery that are specific to Hong Kong's social-historical conditions. Myth and literature can be said to be co-incidental to each other. "Co-incidence" is a theoretical concept of time and space that Gourgouris modifies from Cornelius Castoriadis. Gourgouris elaborates it as such: "two elements of different but not ordered temporalities, occupying a mutual 'space' in what may be called [...] a 'magma of time'" (xvii). Gourgouris also considers myth to be "always co-incident with history [and] always contemporary" (43). As such, the imagination of a "floating city" occupies the mutual space of ambivalence with Hong Kong's political status during the Sino-British Negotiations of the 1980s and 1990s.

XiXi's novella and most of her other stories in the Feituzhen series were written during a very particular period from 1980 to 1996. It was the time when Hong Kong was made to anticipate its designated endpoint as the outcome of the negotiations between the United Kingdom and the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong citizens were not represented during the negotiations.[14] In this novella, the floating city mythicises the uncertainty and ambivalent conditions that are specific to Hong Kong. The trope functions as an intentionally inadequate mirror: one that does not shows the frontal appearance of reality, but is like the

looking glass in Magritte's painting <u>Not to be Reproduced</u>, only reflects "the rear sides of thing" (XiXi 1997a, 19). Through this mirror, one "cannot find the answer or predict the future" by taking the floating city as a reflective representation of Hong Kong (19). However, the narrator is also optimistic, "to be able to see the past [that is, in the sense of the rear side of things] is by no means a bad thing"; she continues, "History is a mirror, and that is one positive aspect of the mirrors in the floating city" (19). The myth shows the city not as a mimetic reflection, but as the inadequacy of its inhabitants' critical reflection upon their city with respect to its history. Instead of facing it, the inhabitants prefer to evade or ignore the past, but at the same time, they also hope to secure a vision of the future, alas to no avail.

The "floating city" image in XiXi's literary re-imagination of Hong Kong is comparable to Kleist's marionette, in that they both defy gravity and remain suspended above ground. Indeed, XiXi's narrator already brings them together in her contemplative questions concerning the floating city's mechanism. The narrator asks,

> What is it that enables this floating city to stay so steadily in the air? Could it be the gravitational pull between ocean and sky? Or could it be a marionette performance staged by the god of destiny holding numerous invisible strings in his hands? (11)

Above, the narrator questions whether the city's floating condition is desirable by relating this condition's prerequisite to the marionette's submissiveness at the hands of an unknown and supernatural puppeteer. While the puppeteer is metonymically associated with "the god of destiny," the marionette is portrayed in a problematic posture of passivity in which it is not given the chance to make its decision or to exercise its free will. Stability is withheld if one does not choose to surrender self-autonomy. The perceived powerlessness of this posture generates an anxiety for the inhabitants. The floating condition is not as desirable as it is sometimes imagined:

the majority of the citizens wish they had wings. When all is said and done, these people feel that to live in a city that is floating in the air is a scary thing. Those most worried brood over it day and night, and finally decide to pack up and leave, like migratory birds. (21)

Hence, stability is conditional that it can be attained only if one totally submits to self-deceptive faith in destiny. Those who passively and uncritically receive what they are given show signs of submission to a hidden manipulator's mastery. "The god of destiny" carries potential religious or metaphysical implications. However, it can also metonymically refer to "superstructures" or "greater System of Order" figure to which are partially entrusted beliefs and ways of life. For instance, the government can be taken as this manipulator's possible metonym. Its invisible strings are its bureaucracies, policies, welfare services, and facilities, on which the public rely for livelihood, shelter, security and prosperity. XiXi's narrator notes these aspects of the floating city: "Nine years' compulsory education; social security; allowances for the disabled; pension schemes – all these have come into being" (5). These aspects are again explicitly modelled on the infrastructures and policies in Hong Kong in 1980s. This conditional guarantee of prosperity and stability is taken as the city's essence, equivalent to its analogical position in the "marionette theatre." Floating is made possible only through the submission to the manipulator's pull of strings. But for foreigners or visitors, the perception of such possibilities of floating is incredible: "People find it is almost unbelievable that buildings in the floating city can float in the air" (5), observes XiXi's narrator.

According to Gourgouris, defiance and submission are two antagonistic modes relating to the marionette. Again, they can be seen as social forces operating in a "co-incidental" tension. An obvious example that Gourgouris offers is democracy and capitalism. To extend this analogy of the suspension aesthetics to Hong Kong's floating status, we find this

paradoxical and "co-incidental" pair in the political milieu: on the one hand, there is a movement that yearns for the true democracy in the form of universal suffrage in all elections, and on the other, capitalism is identified as the status quo or the defining "system" of the city's "ways of living" in the Hong Kong Basic Law.[15] However, perhaps the equally antagonistic pair of the laissez-faire attitude in the economy and the (over-)confidence in the assumed infrastructures and professionalism measures is more relevant to collective mentality, or to the Hong Kong psyche. As we have seen, all these can be read in the symbolic references on many levels in XiXi's novella.

Putting Gourgouris's theory side by side with XiXi's novella, I have linked analogically XiXi's floating city and Kleist's marionette. Via Gourgouris's argument, I have also articulated how XiXi's novella should be read as a myth in which the city is reimagined as a trope not for self-reflection, but for self-alteration. It is curious then, to note that the elegant marionette figure never comes back in Gourgouris's book after it briefly appears in the short Preface. Oddly and subject to further investigation, the marionette maintains its posture in suspension at this instance of critical thinking. In his book, Gourgouris does not manipulate this imagery further. Said book bears a difficult phrase in its subheading: "Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era" (2003).[16] The era of modernity, that is, the post-Enlightenment period, is described as "antimythical." Then, in what ways can the marionette relate to the "antimythical era," if it comes to *mythicise* modernity in Gourgouris's rhetoric?

Gourgouris reminds us that literature's mythical potential in the post-Enlightenment world is both denied and repressed by the "anti-mythical" forces. These forces can be summarised into two: first, the denial tendencies in religious and theological practices, which "privileges the abstract and otherworldly over the concrete cultural ritual" (xviii); and second,

the repressive drives that submit myth to any sort of "'rational-secular' instrumentalist abstraction" (xviii). For Gourgouris, they are but the same kind of forces that "cultivate[] the allure of a transcendental signifier": the anti-mythical should be referred to as "whatever element [that] occludes humanity's intransigent desire to seek or create meaning in the finite world" (xviii).

If we take the marionette as the performative figure of myth, then, it maintains its passive position amidst these antimythical forces. Gourgouris sees an active engagement in dialectics, either as the dialectics of enlightenment or the dialectics of autonomy in this elegant posture of suspension. It may be read as a confrontational approach in dealing with the contradictions between these forces. He insists that these antagonistic forces cannot be reduced to one another, nor is it possible "to confound the two into some sort of (even polymorphous) singularity," because to do so "would mean to lose sight of the vital necessity of the forces of interrogation" (xi). He even goes as far as to warn that any attempt at such reduction will become "an act whose perilous dimensions are too terrifying to contemplate" (xi). As such, in his argument, the marionette always tends to defy the pull of gravity by submitting to the mastery of a different and incompatible force in order to avoid alighting on a ground.

In this sense, I argue that the marionette's posture is not an active engagement with the dialectics of autonomy but a passive surrender of one's autonomy and self-responsibility. In order to resist such antimythical forces and to retrieve the potential for mythical performance in literature, one should not be easily contented with the position of suspension but should actively search for an alternative posture. Such a posture would prepare us for any misstep or imbalance when the *perfect* state of suspension is no longer sustainable.

Through the imagined dancer Herr C's voice of in Kleist's parable "On the Theater of Marionettes" (2010 [1810]), we learn that marionettes enjoy "the advantage in that they are gravity-defiant" (269). "They know nothing of the inertia of matter: for the force that lifts them into the air is greater than the force that binds them to the ground" (269). In response to this extraordinary remark, Kleist's narrator tries to refute Herr C's argument at every turn of conversation. For instance, he suggests, "as cleverly as [Herr C] might maneuver [sic] the crux of his paradox, he would never convince me that there was more grace in a jointed mechanical figure than in the structure of the human body" (269). Though Kleist's narrator finally agrees with the dancer, his doubt about the perception that a mechanical marionette's movement could – and should – be more valued and considered to exhibit more natural grace than a human body's remains unresolved. Metaphorically, we should note, the terms "puppet" and "marionette" are sometimes derogative, which Swedish playwright Hjalmar Bergman eloquently elaborates in his explanation of the title words of his Marionette Plays: "In [these plays] I regard my people as marionettes because they are directed by a power behind them about which they themselves are unconscious" (Bergman [1917] translated in Segel 1995, 214).

Bergman's words extend the interpretation of the marionette towards a self-interrogative and performative edge. While Kleist postulates that the marionette is a desirable posture, Carlo Collodi's Pinocchio (1986 [1883]), for instance, shows us its ultimate insufficiency and potential for social incompatibility. Relating mostly to his defiance of authority, the first half of Pinocchio's story alludes to Kleist's marionette. However, in this posture as a defiant puppet, Pinocchio denies and disavows his reciprocal connection with society. Upon his return from death and a moment of an awakening and realisation that he is

236

accountable for his actions, Pinocchio is finally transformed into a human boy. With this sense of responsibility, Pinocchio's myth does not offer a conservative return[17] but a promising performative function: that is, to paraphrase Gourgouris, to stage Pinocchio as an other image of self and an other self-representation, thereby to make room for self-interrogation and self-alteration (Gourgouris 2003, 42). How can we read it as mythical in the performative and provocative sense with reference to XiXi's imagination of a floating city? Is a dream similar to Pinocchio's embedded in this "floating city's" psyche?

Indeed, in "Marvels of a Floating City," XiXi's narrator retells a common dream shared by the city's inhabitants during typhoon season:

> With the arrival of May, people in the floating city start dreaming the same dream. In this dream everyone is floating in mid air; they neither rise up to the heavens, nor do they drop down to earth – everyone is just like a small floating city. The floating humans do not have wings, which means they cannot fly. All they do is stay afloat in the air, silently, and solemnly, with no means of communication between them. The city sky is afloat with people like raindrops in an April shower.
> […] Such dreams do not disappear until September. (1997a, 7)

These people's isolated positions in their dream and their helplessness are reminiscent of the condition of those sleepers in modern Chinese writer Lu Xun's [鲁迅] famous Preface to the First Collection of Short Stories, "Call to Arms" [呐喊自序] (Lu Hsun 2003 [1923], 1-6):

> "Imagine an iron house without windows, absolutely indestructible, with many people fast asleep inside who will soon die of suffocation. But you know since they will die in their sleep, they will not feel the pain of death. Now if you cry aloud to wake a few of the lighter sleepers, making those unfortunate few suffer the agony of irrevocable death, do you think you are doing them a good turn?"
> "But if a few awake, you can't say there is no hope of destroying the iron house." (5)

In his conversation with XiXi, He Furen points out that Lu Xun is more gifted in humour than in seriousness (He 1994, 26).[18] In his reading of Lu Xun's "The True Story of Ah Q" (Lu Hsun 2003 [1921], 65-112), He Furen suggests that the story begins with humour, but its mood gets

heavier as it progresses towards the end. Lu Xun's short stories, particularly those in <u>Call to Arms</u>, endeavour to awaken his readers and bring them to an unbearable awareness of the cruel reality in early twentieth century China, through the heavy image of the "iron house." XiXi does not aim at such tormenting effects of cruelty in her fiction. However, if we, as readers, can be said to potentially identify with those dreamers in the myth of the floating city, XiXi reminds us of this floating position's illusory nature and the helplessness of life therein.

Similar to Lu Xun's image of an "iron-house," the floating city is a cage derivative in the sense that its inhabitants are deprived of freedom: "Though the people of the floating city long to be winged pigeons, in their hearts they are repressed, caged birds" (XiXi 1997a, 21). Because "they don't have the ability to fly" despite floating in the sky already, "they are still firmly attached to the ground of the floating city" (23). The myth operates in a rhetorical dimension. The floating city's mythical imagination invites the reader to anticipate an after-state or an eventual point of crisis. Analogically, the city, too, would also cease to float one day. XiXi's narrator introduces the inevitable gravity without losing the sense of lightness. I shall elaborate on this sense of lightness in relation to XiXi's fictional narratives in the next section. The sense of lightness is a main source of redemption for the Floating City's inhabitants. It also enables the figurative hopscotch player (in XiXi's penname) to map her idiosyncratic patterns in which to read the city.

Italo Calvino, t zero, Lightness

XiXi's novella "Marvels of a Floating City" begins with a mythical account of the city's original in an image that is perpetually sketched and erased between the collective memory and amnesia:

Many, many years ago, on a fine, clear day, the floating city appeared in the air in full public gaze, hanging like a hydrogen balloon. Above it were the fluctuating layers of clouds, below it the turbulent sea. The floating city hung there, neither sinking nor rising. When a breeze came by, it moved ever so slightly, and then it became absolutely still again.

How did it happen? The only witnesses were the grandparents of our grandparents. It was an incredible and terrifying experience, and they recalled the event with dread: layers of clouds collided overhead, and the sky was filled with lightning and the roar of thunder. On the sea, a myriad pirate ships hoisted their skull and crossbones; the sound of cannon fire went on unremittingly. Suddenly, the floating city dropped down from the clouds above and hung in mid air.

Many, many years passed, and in time our grandparents' grandparents all passed away. Even our own grandparents went to their eternal sleep one after another. The events of the past which they had related became obscure legends.

The descendants of these grandparents gradually settled down in the floating city and gradually adapted themselves to its conditions. The legends of the floating city faded in their memory. Most people believed that the floating city would continue hanging steadily in the air, neither rising nor sinking, for ever. When the wind blew, it would sway only a little, just like the pleasant motion of a swing.

And so many, many more years have passed. (XiXi 1997a, 3)

I quote this beginning passage's English translation at length to capture the deliberately fairy-tale style, the choral storyteller's practical tone, the sentences' tidal rhythm, and the circular structure shown in the way that this passage returns to its starting point in the concluding line. We should note a series of fascinating contrasts in this passage. First, the weight of the sinking implication in the phrase "went to their eternal sleep" (the equivalent term in the original Chinese consists of two characters: *chenshui* [沉睡], *chen* as the verb to sink, and *shui*, to sleep, 1992, 131) contrasts with the lightness of the recurrent word "floating." Second, the downward movement in the verb "settled down" contradicts the upward force in the gerund "hanging." Third, the thickness of details of the event that comes with the word "dread" clashes with the thinness of generational memory as implied in the adjective "obscure": rather than settle down and precipitate, memories of the event are diluted, then float and vanish into thin air. Amidst the narrator's well-chosen dictions, the mythical city is maintained in a perfect

condition of suspension: "hung there, neither sinking nor rising" for many, many years. Yet, would it remain there as it does in the dreams of its inhabitants? While passive submission to trend leads one to look forward to the desired answer "yes," XiXi's narrator optimistically and courageously anticipates new possibilities in alternative directions.

In the last vignette of the novella, titled "Windows" (1997a, 26-7), the narrator introduces the conditional future: "From the solemn looks on the observers' faces one can detect how things are going. If it is a tragedy, their faces will be sorrowful; if it is a comedy, they will of course smile" (27). The "observers' faces" here refer intertextually to the crowd of almost identical faces in Magritte's <u>The Month of the Grape Harvest</u>. In the painting, the crowd is gazing through an open window into the room. The visual moment gives the impression that they are looking at the viewers and the exhibition hall. Rather than comfortably dwell in a passive position as spectators, the narrator, the readers, and the floating city's inhabitants are all recast as actors onstage. Their actions will lead towards the city's future: whether it meets a comic end, a tragic one, or any other end, depends on their actions and decisions.

Time plays an important role in this novella's structure. Within the thirteen vignettes, the story remarkably and ambitiously covers the floating city's entire history from the beginning "many, many years ago" to "now" of the present tense in the final vignette – that is, *cike* [此刻] ("this moment") in the original Chinese (1992, 143; 1997a, 27). The present time action takes place in the City Hall, where Magritte's paintings are exhibited. The moment "now" is rephrased as "the critical moment" and "the absolute moment" in the eighth vignette entitled "Time" (1997a, 17). This vignette is introduced by the image of Magritte's <u>Transfixed Time</u>. In this surreal image, the train is emerging out of a fireplace, above which the clock

reads the time as approaching twelve forty-five. In response, the narrator raises this question: "Zero hour always has people worried. What will the hour one be like?" (17) "Zero hour" and "hour one" relate to the numbers on the clock's face in Magritte's painting (that is, more precisely, between midnight and one o'clock). Such is the wording Eva Hung [孔慧怡] chooses in her English translation. The original terms that XiXi uses, indeed, refer directly and explicitly to Italo Calvino's "t zero" and "t_1."

In "Zenyang Kaishi yige 'Shijian' Wenti: Yu XiXi Duitan" [怎樣開始一個「時間」問題—與西西對談] ("How to Start a Topic of 'Time': He Furen in conversation with XiXi" He 1994, 24-6, my translation), XiXi elaborates her understanding of Calvino's concept of "t zero." She proposes that there are four different dimensions of time in fictional narrative, particularly novels. The first three relate to the different narrative report modes as narration, dialogue, and description respectively: "The time in dialogue flows almost at the same pace with time in reality; the time in narration goes fast; the time in description tends to drag slowly" (26).[19] She highlights the fourth dimension of time as "the time in discussion, that which functions like a timeout requested by the coach in a basketball match" (26).[20]

Calvino's concept of "t zero," XiXi suggests, is a derivative of this fourth dimension of time. In Calvino's short story "t zero" (also known as "Time and the Hunter" 2009 [1967, 1969], 243-57), time does not flow in narration – the past and the future are radically reduced to trivial moments, while the entire narrative focuses only on one particular instant: a lion leaps towards a hunter, meanwhile he aims and shoots an arrow at the lion: both the lion and the arrow are suspended in the air in this particular moment. Calvino's narrator labels this moment as t_0 (t zero). From this subjective perspective, it is hard to say what is going to

happen. Two possible outcomes are deduced. First, the arrow misses the lion. The lion attacks the hunter. The hunter dies. Second, the arrow hits the lion. The lion dies. The hunter then takes his carcass to his community and celebrates. The narrator labels the moments afterwards as t_1, t_2, t_3, etc. However, unlike traditional novels, XiXi points out, the story does not bring us to what is going to happen next. All these moments (t_1, t_2, t_3) remain in the territory of the unknown; moreover, the story does not detail the preceding moments before t zero, which the narrator labels as "t minus one" (t_{-1}), t_{-2}, t_{-3} etc.

For XiXi, "t zero is a carefully selected special scenario" (He 1994, 26, my translation).[21] "By abandoning or reducing other moments," she says, "t zero opens up a new narrative perspective. There is no beginning or end. Because the form is open, a story can begin anywhere and in whatever way" (26).[22] Like the scene in Magritte's <u>Transfixed Time</u>, any of the chosen moments of t zero is a "critical moment" or an "absolute moment" (XiXi 1997a, 17). If there is gravity in the temporal dimension, it is ordinarily perceived in a linear fashion as the forward direction from past to future: that is, we are always driven to flow from t_{-1} (a past moment) to t_1 (a future one) passing through t_0 without giving much thought to this transitional moment. In his lecture "Quickness" Calvino proposes that time in literature

> is a form of wealth to be spent at leisure and with detachment. We do not have to be first past a predetermined finish line. On the contrary, saving time is a good thing because the more we save, the more we can afford to lose. (1988, 46)

He thus elaborates "quickness of style and thought" as "all qualities that go with writing where it is natural to digress, to jump from one subject to another, to lose the thread a hundred times and find it again after a hundred more twists and turns" (46). This digression technique, which he claims eighteen-century novelist Laurence Sterne invented (at least in the art of novel

writing), is "a strategy for putting off the ending, a multiplying of time within the work, a perpetual evasion or flight" (46).

The final phrase here – "a perpetual evasion or flight" – reminds us of the suspension state in the marionette and floating city figures. Immediately following this, Calvino asks on behalf of his audience, but "Flight from what?" In other words, it can be rephrased as such: what can be taken as an analogy for the ground from which the narrative digression allows us to escape? The answer he soon provides is quite straightforward: "From death, of course, says Carlo Levi" (46). We can also add that digression allows fleeing from the inevitable destination in the generally perceived linear progress of time.

The word "flight" implicates swift movement and lightness. Paul Valéry says, "One should be light like a bird, but not a feather."[23] Calvino quotes it from its French original in his lecture "Lightness" to clarify that lightness "goes with precision and determination, not with vagueness and the haphazard" (1988, 16). The main difference between a bird and a feather is that the former is animate and its actions are self-determined, whereas the latter is inanimate and its movements depend upon environmental forces. Both figures are capable of evading gravity, but only the bird amounts to what Calvino values as the virtue of lightness. Comparatively, the marionette is similar to a feather, since it surrenders its self-mastery and passively responds to the forces acting upon it and driving it in perpetual motion. XiXi's figure of the hopscotch player, on the contrary, lays her steps of *rangbu* in search of stories in the city. These steps are possible only with the concession that this hopscotch player should not abandon the ground completely but sooner or later alight on it like a bird.

Pondering over the consequences of decision-making and self-determination for his protagonist Tomas, Milan Kundera complicates the sense of lightness in his novel The

Unbearable Lightness of Being (2008 [1984]). In the beginning, his narrator asks, "What then shall we choose? Weight or lightness?" It is an interrogative follow-up of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical speculation on the mysterious idea of eternal return as "the heaviest of burdens" (Kundera 2008, 5).[24] While "weight" can potentially befit "an image of life's most intense fulfillment" (5), and carry ideas such as responsibility and commitment, it is tautologically perceived as burden. On the other hand, "lightness" is derived from "weight" as "the absolute absence of a burden" (5). It implicitly and splendidly connotes freedom beyond any attempt or tendency to escape, depart, or withdraw from constraints and limits. However, as Calvino remarks, Kundera's novel, despite bearing the key word "lightness" in the title, "is in reality a bitter confirmation of the Ineluctable Weight of Living" (Calvino 1988, 7). In Calvino's reading, the novel "shows us how everything we choose and value in life for its lightness soon reveals its true, unbearable weight" (7). From this, he offers a witty remark that allows us to freshly feel the lightness in Kundera's novel, if at all possible:

> Perhaps only the liveliness and mobility of the intelligence escape this sentence – the very qualities with which this novel is written, and which belong to a world quite different from the one we live in. (7)

The verb phrase at the end of the previous sentence is curious: "belong to a world quite different from the one we live in." It implies a ruptured sense of belonging.

Ulf Hedetoft and Mette Hjort formulate a similar version of this in the Introduction to their co-edited volume The Postnational Self (2002, vii-xxxii). They playfully reflect on the morphemes within the word "belonging" which "separates into its two constituent parts: 'being' in one place, and 'longing' for another" (vii). Such longing for an alternative world is observed by XiXi's narrator in "Marvels of a Floating City." The narrator recalls such a scene from an imagined novel:[25]

Someone went to an embassy to apply for migration, and the official in charge asked where he wanted to go. Doesn't matter, he replied. The official handed him a globe and told him to take his pick. The man looked at the globe, turned it around slowly, and then asked: Do you have another one? (XiXi 1997a, 21)

The tone, here, can be read as pessimistic, since no place on the globe is perfect and worth all the troubles and sacrifices of migration. In Hong Kong's relevant context, we find that feeling that one belongs somewhere (the "cultural" home of shared memories and customs of everyday life) does not match the "objective ascriptions of membership" (the "political" or "civic" home for the unsolicited national identity that the model of "One Country Two Systems" would impose on Hong Kong). While the floating city can be taken as an alternative city to the one we live in, the narrator does not suggest that readers escape from the reality and take the fictional city as one in "another globe" to which we could, albeit imaginatively, migrate. Instead, what I find to be the true message behind XiXi's stories, including "Marvels of a Floating City" and this very short one within the novella, is that the readers should let their "liveliness and mobility of the intelligence" (Calvino 1988, 7) – the very qualities which Calvino finds in the rhetoric of Kundera's novel – guide them in their playful re-imagination of the city. The playful sense of lightness that comes with such re-imagination liberates the readers from the burden of any model of national belonging, which in the floating city's case, is doomed to fail.

However, if time is perceived as a linear progression towards a destined centre of gravity, this sense of lightness evades us. Calvino's "t zero" concept opens up a temporal dimension for narrative digression with a similar touch of lightness – one that allows us to imagine living in a different world. In turn, imagining this enables us to anticipate different possibilities for the future. One would forever be tempted to "inhabit forever this second t_0"

and the luxury thereof to have "ample leisure to look around and to contemplate [only this] second to its full extent" (Calvino 2009, 254). However, one does not, and indeed could never, really and simply inhabit this second and isolate others. In "t zero," Calvino's narrator sums up this paradox from his first person perspective:

> to stay in t_0 I must establish an objective configuration of t_0; to establish an objective configuration of t_0 I must move to t_1; to move into t_1 I must adopt some kind of subjective viewpoint so I might as well keep my own. (256)

Rather than be dragged or pulled through the manipulator's strings into the next series of moments (t_1, t_2, t_3, etc.), the narrator *chooses* to take a step and willingly moves into t_1, t_2, t_3, and etc. The narrator does this, he explains,

> in wanting to discover if I would really be making a good bargain trading my stable and secure citizenship of t_0 for that modicum of novelty that t_1 could offer me, I might take a step into t_2, just to have a more objective notion of t_1; and that step into t_2 might, in turn… (256-7)

Here, germane to XiXi's "floating city" is the phrase "stable and secure citizenship," which does not refer to a nation-state or a city-state, but to a moment: t_0. The "floating city" is not imagined as a city-state but a city-moment, in which "citizenship" oddly consists of forgetting the past and deferring the future. However, the stable and secure feeling of this citizenship is only illusory. In XiXi's novella, "t zero" refers to the moment when one looks at the painting in the exhibition hall and gets caught in the particular moment staged in the image. As Chan Kit-yee [陳潔儀] notes in her study of this novella (1998), "t zero" is not the temporal dimension on which the novella is narrated, but a metaphor for the city's ambivalent and allegorical "floating" condition. It reveals the critical moment which the inhabitants of the floating city have to face and cannot sidestep (Chan 123-4).[26]

246

In XiXi's novella, the eighth vignette "Time" is suffused with imagery relevant to the local inhabitants' indecisive attitude and their reluctance to anticipate the floating state's termination. It begins with a description of the elements of Magritte's painting <u>Time Transfixed</u>:

> this is the absolute moment – a train engine arrives. Before this moment, the engine has not yet entered the fireplace; after this moment, the engine will have departed. It is only at this particular moment that the engine steams into the fireplace in this room; it is only at this absolute moment that the smoke from the engine can rise up the chimney: and they chimney is of course the only proper outlet for smoke. (1997a, 17)

From this, the narrator associates the fireplace with "Christmas festivities" and shows how the painting is constructed by a collage of absences. All the elements suggest festival time but fail to meet their expected implications: "no gift stockings hanging from the mantelpiece, no pine tree in the room, no shimmering lights, no angels, no silver bells, and no candles in the candlesticks" (17). In other words, all these absences can be read as visual signs of disappointment. XiXi offers an obvious example of this condition via the voice of a minor character Irwin Chan in <u>Flying Carpet</u>: "Take the line 'Government's warning to citizens' for example, he says. First of all, Fertillia is not a country, nor is it a province or a municipality, so where are its citizens?" (2000, 411) In other words, a candlestick without a candle can be read as an analogy for citizenship without a state, or for a city without citizens.

After these absence signs, the narrator moves to describe the marble clock on the mantelpiece in the painting, which "has its hour hand approaching one and its minute hand approaching nine" (1997a, 17) – a moment caught not at t_0 but between t_0 and t_1. Here the narrator remarkably brings up the images related to Cinderella: "Had there been a carriage, it would have turned back into a pumpkin" (17); and so would steeds, mice, the beautiful ball gown, rags. These images eventually lead to an analogical question:

But as the story goes, Cinderella meets her Prince Charming before midnight. Is the floating city's Prince Charming waiting somewhere around the stroke of midnight [i.e. around "t zero"]? (17)

In the language of the narrative voice, the floating city is compared to Cinderella who, according to the folklore collected by the Grimm Brothers, expects meeting with the Prince in the ball. In Magritte's Time Transfixed, the train is an image similar to the carriage taking Cinderella to the ball. What I want to emphasise is the shared quality among these figures – the train, the carriage, and the floating city: though each is different, they are all maintained in constant momentum. Modern physics and our everyday experience tell us that constant momentum keeps an object, whether motionless or in unidirectional motion, in a state of passive inertia.[27] Evading inertia, as suggested, requires an active sense of lightness.

In this vignette of the novella, XiXi's narrator draws our attention to one sign of absence after another in Magritte's Time Transfixed. All these signs point to the crucial absence of the expected slippers in this intertextual reference to Cinderella's scenario. These slippers constitute a vital symbol in the Grimm Brothers' tale.[28] They symbolise Cinderella's first steps away from an unfavourable condition of waiting and non-participation and toward self-determination and emancipation. Their absence in XiXi's novella subtly calls attention to the deprivation of such steps for the Floating City's habitants. But, this deprivation is a result of their submissiveness: they surrender the opportunity to take their first *steps* of self-determination in exchange for the temporary comforts they perceive in sticking with slow and steady progress. In short, they are reluctant or unprepared to take any step that would potentially mark the beginning of their own narratives.

That is, the train passengers and the Floating City's inhabitants would rather remain in inertia and be transported away than get off the train and take their own path towards self-

fulfilment or felicity.[29] Cinderella's slippers being significantly absent, implies that such a step is either forbidden or withhold. How can one alight from this floating position and lay his first step – or a step of *rangbu* – from the suspended city-moment of "t zero"?[30] I am going to account for this question in the next section, with reference to XiXi's multiple attempts at narrating the same city that she imagined under the name of Feituzhen.

Levitation, Hopscotching, Flânerie

Calvino defines the function of literature in existential terms: "the search for lightness as a reaction to the weight of living" (1988, 26). In what he describes as "a steady feature in anthropology" he observes that the desire for levitation always emerges in response to the suffering of privation (27).[31] From the flying island of Laputa in Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels (1996 [1726]), to the imagined giant Micromégas in Voltaire's eponymous short story ([1752]), to the images of "flying carpets, winged horses, and genies emerging from lamps" in Antoine Galland's French translation of One Thousand and one Nights (Les mille et une nuits, contes arabes traduits en français [1704-17]), Calvino mentions a few remarkable examples to illustrate that in Europe the "eighteenth-century imagination is full of figures suspended in air" (1988, 23). He emphasises that these literary instances are contemporary of Isaac Newton. Rather than the implication in Newton's theories, what strikes his contemporaries' literary imagination the most, according to Calvino, is the sparkle of wonder in the implication that "the balance of forces enables heavenly bodies to float in space," and not the inevitable weight of everything and of everyone (23).

XiXi's "Floating City" is one of the latest adaptations of literary levitation. It is mythically "co-incidental" to Hong Kong at the turn of the twentieth century. However, this mythical trope does not reflect reality or a utopian vision, but stages a moment of perceived

ambivalence in any modern city for critical reflection, particularly the political situation of Hong Kong in the 1980s. While the inhabitants of the Floating City are portrayed as caged birds, their state of levitation can in no way be taken as a magical solution to perceived privation. Instead, in XiXi's myth, the common desire for levitation is put in question. In "Marvels of a Floating City," we find many signs of absence that eventually lead to the bankruptcy of anticipation. The story constantly stages collective disappointment in the heart of the city, which its inhabitants are reluctant to admit.

Such disappointment pertains to what Abbas describes as "a consequence of the mistaking of signs" (1997, 51). In XiXi's novella, the Floating City can be read as a mistaken sign of utopia, in the sense that its inhabitants endeavour to sustain floating conditions in every possible way. It is mistaken because rather than freedom and flexibility, the floating city is a place of ambivalence and uncertainty. While the people of this city refuse to acknowledge the disappointment of their unfulfilled dreams of the former, they perceive the impending disappearance of these floating conditions as an unbearable threat. A similar case can be accounted for in Abbas's criticism. While Abbas prominently identifies Hong Kong as a "floating city" in its own right, his understanding of disappointment puts the term under the taxonomy of disappearance, which serves as a defining word in his understanding of Hong Kong and its culture.

In another short story, "The Story of Fertile Town" (1997a [1982]), XiXi produces a different myth of Hong Kong that stages another kind of disappointment. We should understand it via the equivalent term of "disappointment" in Chinese: *shiwang* [失望]. The first character *shi* [失] suggests loss, whereas the second one *wang* [望] means a perspective, a vision, or the act of seeing or viewing. Therefore, the combination of the two characters in this

word conceals a literal connotation beneath the primary meaning of disappointment, which can be read approximately as "a view (vision) that is lost."[32]

Very similar to the first vignette in "Marvels of a Floating City," "The Story of Fertile Town" attempts to mythically account for the city's origin. However, without the singularity and consistency that we find in the myth of the floating city, "The Story" begins with two rivalling versions: "In the beginning Fertile Town was not called by this name. Some say it was called Projectile Town, others say, no, no, it was Volatile Town" (XiXi 1997a, 31). The narrator suggests that the myth, just like the Floating City, is orally inherited across generations: "The people who know about these names are all very, very old. What's more, they have learned about the origin of the town's name from their grandfathers, or their great-grandfathers" (31). Each version similarly traces Fertile Town back to the day of its beginning. The narrator retells these myths via two scenes of cross-generational storytelling involving two sisters, Beauty Bloom and Everlasting Bloom, and their grandparents.

In either case, whether its name used to be "Projectile Town" or "Volatile Town," the story of Fertile Town begins with the place's initial and unexpected detachment from its unreachable origin (from the sky or the sea). As the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, or the cession of Hong Kong Island from China in 1842, the city splits off as a blank page to be filled with new stories and a different history. Both versions sound almost identical in every aspect. The similar tones that they share would possibly bring them in unison as one and the same story. However, they also rival in originality and accuracy. The mutual exclusiveness of each myth, as a result, leaves the city little room to accommodating ordinary lives. It is through the narrator's attempt at retelling these versions that their incompatibility can finally and promisingly be extended onto the quotidian dimension. In the rhetoric of the narrator's

language, for instance, the different myths relate not to the unreachable past of the city, but to the intentionally contradictory opinions, which the grandparents produce to set up their unique voices in the family:

> Whatever they were talking about, grandfather and grandmother always gave entirely different versions of events […] Take a pear for example, if grandfather said it was nice and sweet, grandmother would say it was sour; or take a pot of rice, if grandmother said it was undercooked, grandfather would say it was overdone. (XiXi 1997a, 32)

Not relying on either version of the myth as an authentic source, the narrator casually points out, "Whatever the true story, the town was finally given the name Fertile Town" (32). Therefore, the narrator does not attempt to resolve the contradiction between these overwhelming perspectives. She also does not choose between floating and flying (as implied in the original wording for the names "Projectile Town" and "Volatile Town"). Instead, she tries to account for the idea of "fertility" in the current name of the town and redirects the focus onto the land of the town itself.

The narrator's playful tone holds the readers in good faith regarding their expectations. That is to say, as the word "fertile" or "fertile soil" (*feitu* [肥土]) figuratively infers, the rise of Fertile Town. Nevertheless, "The Story" evolves as a shaggy-dog story, which as a genre of story in oral tradition, according to Roger L. Welsch, can be understood as "a parody of a joke" (20; Richards 2009, 84). Page Richards, in turn, elaborates the idea of a shaggy-dog story: "to draw it out as long as one can, adding as many irrelevant details as possible before coming to the punch line that fizzles" (2009, 84). She further points out: "Its story is often barely a story at all and – like its core 'meaning' – proves difficult to corner" (84). XiXi's "The Story" performs a parody, not of a joke, but in storytelling. The narrative is built in response to the reader's expectations of a punch line which ultimately fizzles – the amusement

of how the city becomes fertile and its inhabitants then live happily hereafter. "The Story" is not a story of the city but a story about the imagination of a city. It explores the questions: how far could we let our imagination go? Can a city grow and expand limitlessly as one may wish?

In this version, the town's origin does not go back across several generations, but begins abruptly during the two sisters' childhood. The narrator takes several backward steps in "The Story." First, the narrative moves from "now," when the two sisters are very old, back to their childhood days, when they are nicknamed "big Bloom girl" and "little Bloom girl." "The Story" also takes a step back in an unexpected direction. The sisters live with their parents and grandparents in a building the ground floor of which is the Easy Bloom Shop, the place where the Fa family runs the business of making and selling soft drinks. Yet, the story takes place elsewhere. The narrator follows the young sister's steps as she frequents the big old house of her twin uncles "in the suburbs quite far away from Easy Bloom's" (XiXi 1997a, 35).

Then, the myth emerges not out of the blue, but out of "an expanse of bare earth" (35), which is located just in front of the big old house. Originally, it is wasteland where people dump their large pieces of broken furniture and household items. It serves as "a very large dumping ground, like a reservoir for refuse" (37). The narrator describes how the dump grows in size and in variety; and how the disintegration of the rubbish is "so speedy" (38). As a result, many people consider the wasteland "the ideal dumping ground" (38). Instead, the protagonist little Everlasting Bloom takes this place not as a wasteland but as her own private playground: "It was really a fantastic world of its own. She loved to come and see what had been newly deposited here […] Any rubbish was good enough to occupy her for a long while" (38). Everlasting Bloom demonstrates a playful perspective from which she invents stories for ordinary and worthless objects. With her imagination, what most people consider rubbish or

useless could be transformed into unique toys in her eyes.

What follows in "The Story" is the narrator's deliberate attempt to speculate *what if* the soil of this wasteland – the "mud-plat"[33] – were not worthless but of a market value. The narrator then imagines what would happen if the "mud-plat" suddenly became fertile soil. In her imagination, Everlasting Bloom becomes the first who notices such a change:

> Didn't Everlasting Bloom see a bit of green here and there? She rubbed her eyes, for this was completely unexpected. In the mud-plat right in front of her she saw countless young shoots, tiny leaves growing from the pores of the mud. This barren, pitch-black mud-plat had turned into an embroidered carpet of green. (44)

While Everlasting intends to share her discovery with her uncles, "[t]he news soon spread all over the small town" (47). The narrator accounts for this unusual phenomenon: the "mud-plat" gains popularity in a very short period of time, because "not just that fruit and flowers had grown on this wasteland, but […] here the plants grew far bigger and better than anywhere else" (47). The soil and the story continue to grow and reach their climax: the wasteland is transformed from a deserted "mud-plat" into a sightseeing spot known to the public as "Bloom's Garden," where the soil becomes extraordinarily fertile. The narrator remarks that the day the "mud-plat" turned into a gated garden "was also the day when this town of ours was named Fertile Town" (48). It marks an intended contradiction, for the Story begins with the idea that the name of Fertile Town was adopted at least several generations earlier.

Remarkably, at this point, the narrator suddenly switches to the first person and claims that she is actually Everlasting Bloom:[34]

> Oh I was so happy, for I was the little girl. My name is Everlasting Bloom. I was the first to see green leaves growing in the mud-plat. (47)

With this change in tone, the narrator interrupts the narrative with a concessive step. She steps into the story that she created and comments on the city's expansion from a little child's

254

innocent point of view, as she cares more about her neighbourhood's surroundings than the city's prosperity. This step makes negotiating between the mythical and the quotidian possible. It is a negotiation between the expansion of the city and the life of ordinary people. In a moment of rhetorical shift, it also turns the story away from narrative to the performance of storytelling.

The ideas of "bloom" and "fertility" in XiXi's story allude to Hong Kong's economic boom from the 1960s to 1980s, as well as to the perceived crisis of the modern city in general, which, as Letizia Modena puts it, "was deemed incapable of meeting the demands of a society in rapid expansion" (2011, 58). The narrator's interruption allows us to question the discrepancy between the city's prosperity and everyday life's felicity. Would the local inhabitants really feel happy, as the narrator claims she is, if the city prospers? If this is the question which the narrator anticipates, her answer is at first a quick and welcoming yes, and it is soon followed by a note conceding her personal disappointment: "I didn't realize that after the mud-plat had turned into a sight-seeing spot I would lose my playground" (XiXi 1997a, 48).

Sightseeing annihilates the unique perspective of seeing, which Everlasting Bloom develops and maintains, both as the protagonist and the narrator. She does so as she explores the place that she takes as her playground freely. Sightseers or tourists, on the contrary, suffer from what Abbas identifies as a symptom of "reversal hallucination" which could mean the "refusal to see what is there" or more precisely "not seeing what is there" (1997, 6). In "The Story," the narrator notes for instance, "[p]eople came to the mud-plat to look at the plants, and while they did so, their thoughts turned naturally to the soil that gave rise to such marvellous fruit and flowers" (XiXi 1997a, 48). As a result, no one pays attention to any other

aspects of the place apart from the characteristics for which it is most famously known. Therefore, new titles are conveniently and arbitrarily adopted for the initially nameless places. More often than not, these titles misrecognise places as touristic destinations, rather than the home of its local inhabitants, which entail the displacement of home. For instance, "The big house where First Bloom and Second Bloom [the twin uncles] lived became known to the sightseers as the Bloom Villa" (49).

Although the narrator never explicitly pronounces the term "disappointment," the reluctance to admit the bitter fact that she has lost the playground where she is "the first to *see* green leaves growing" implies "a lost view (vision)" in the figures of the Chinese term *shiwang*. This disappointment reminds us of the fact that the city, like Everlasting's playground, is above all home to many people, no matter how versatile and prosperous it has become. Indeed, the more it booms and gets transformed, the less likely it is that it could still serve as a home for locals. If Everlasting Bloom, or the narrator, represents the voice of innocence in Fertile Town, she is also one of the very few who choose not to partake in this blooming business of fertile soil. In other words, she chooses not to get on the vehicle which leads to theoretical privilege gain or benefits from economic success.

After her uncles' house and her "playground" are fenced in as a safeguarded tourist attraction, Everlasting Bloom chooses instead the Easy Bloom Shop's rooftop as her new haunt. At this turning moment of the story, Everlasting embodies the hopscotch player figured in XiXi's penname: retreating to the rooftop, she "drew little squares on the floor, played building house," that is, *zao fangzi* [造房子], the game of hopscotch known in the Chinese language (1997a, 55). As I mentioned in this chapter's introduction, the figure of a hopscotching girl exhibits the spirit of playfulness and self-adjustment in XiXi's career as a

novelist. The figure also embodies XiXi's commitment to constantly innovate new ways of storytelling in her writing practice. She once claims that "writing fiction, I hope to provide the readers one thing: either new contents or a new technique" (1992 [1982], 342, my translation)[35] – a statement, which some critics take as a manifesto from the writer.

Not only does Everlasting Bloom play her game of hopscotch as the narrator portrays, she also performs hopscotching tactic in her narration. Indeed, she is a flâneuse who reads her hometown Feituzhen as she wanders around and away from her home. Hopscotching is relevant to flânerie as a practice of reading the city in one's own pace and pattern. Everlasting Bloom moves back and forth between past and present, between the third-person and first-person perspective, between her family lodging and her uncles' house, from one corner to another, in active search of new stories or new discoveries.

XiXi expresses the importance of this attitude in an essay titled "Shops" (1992 [1975], 265-7, my translation), in which she strolls in Sheung Wan district of Hong Kong as a feuilletoniste-flâneuse and produces a journal based on her very careful observation of different shops along her way. By the end of that essay, she suggests that

> Each of these small shops – the herbal tea shop, the grocery shop, the hair salon, the restaurant, the old bookstall, the coffin shop, the embroidery shop, the small tuck-shop selling cut noodles, and the soymilk shop – has its own story. One can spend many happy afternoons, just to study these shops. If I have time, I would love to stroll into every alley and see every shop along my way. I would study the shop, its every corner, the bowls at the corner, and even the tiny dust on a bowl. Dust also deserves our attention, just as a Latin American writer [Gabriel García Márquez] once says, "Things have a life of their own, it's simply a matter of waking up their souls." (267)[36]

To wake up the souls of trivial things and to *stroll* into the each shop's unique story, one can perform this from the playful attitude of active and creative reading, in the posture of a hopscotch player as XiXi performs and encourages.

In another short story "Yongbu Zhongzhi de Dagushi" [永不終止的大故事] ("Never-ending Story" 1986 [1985], 239-274, my translation),[37] XiXi introduces a peculiar way of hopscotching as a reading practice through her reader-narrator's voice:

> I do not just get one but two novels, which I open and read together […] I can switch back and forth between these two books at any time I like. I can read page thirty-six of this book at this moment, then move to read page sixty-three of the other book at the next moment. In such practice of reading, wouldn't I get confused easily? Wouldn't both stories be mixed together at some point? In fact, it is a favourable condition. The two books originally only tell two separate stories. But, now, when I put them together, a third story would probably emerge as a response. (241)[38]

In her experience of reading, not only does this reader-narrator hop from one passage to another in a highly idiosyncratic and nonlinear fashion, she also jumps from one text to another and traverses the gaps between them by generating a new story between the characters, the scenes, and the narrative perspectives that she encounters.[39]

In hopscotch, the players produce an idiosyncratic and seemingly haphazard pattern. It is reminiscent of the narrative structure found in Julio Cortázar's novel Hopscotch ([Rayeula] (1966 [1963]). To start, the title conjures the same analogy of hopscotching: Cortázar's book invites the reader to participate in a game of hopscotch in its narrative structure. It opens with a "table of instructions" in which the writer claims, "In its own way, this book consist of many books, but two above all" (5). The book contains one hundred fifty-five short chapters, but two main paths of reading are introduced. In the first, the reader simply reads the first half of the text, "in a normal fashion," from chapter 1 to chapter 56, and then ignores the rest "with a clear conscience" (5). In the second, the reader is invited to read in a figurative hopscotching fashion. Following a suggested pattern offered by the writer, the reader jumps from one chapter to another. The reader is most encouraged to develop a unique pattern of her own. The

narrative, then, in other words, anticipates the reader's active engagement and reaction in a cycle of call and response.

In XiXi's "Never-ending Story," the perspective of a reader-narrator offers us a hint in reading "The Story of Fertile Town."[40] As the narrator and the writer respectively, Everlasting Bloom and XiXi develop "The Story" out of different sources in a way similar to the reader-narrator's in "Never-ending Story": in a storytelling game, they put different sources beside each other and actively forge a new story. The narrator creates the myth of Fertile Town out of the contrary versions told by her grandparents. Similarly, as concerns the house where she lives and her uncles', if each house carries a story of its own, then, the narrator endeavours to makes a new story up as a winding path that connects them both. "The Story" is also an attempt at articulating the contradictions and incompatibility between the private sphere of felicity and sorrow and the public sphere of prosperity and crisis. The underlying spirit is the belief that everyone should be capable of narrating the city where one lives in one's unique voice and from one's original perspective. Innocent or naïve it may sound, but it is an effective and self-amusing move by which the same city can be narrated in millions of different ways. Similarly, the stories of the ordinary can be narrated in a unique rhythm and become extraordinary.

XiXi, also, creates "The Story" by performing a similar tactic of hopscotching. She explains how the idea of fertile soil first came to her mind:

> There is a unit in the Hong Kong Government the main function of which is to research waste treatment. They scientifically decomposed waste materials. The indecomposable refuse was then thrown onto a rooftop. One day, some birds brought seeds to this wasteland. It then produced fruits, very healthy and bigger-than-usual, like grapes and tomatoes. Because of his work, one of my relatives received a very detailed report about this fertile soil. I got very excited about it after I first heard of this report. This is the origin of Feituzhen. I always wanted to write a series of stories about

this city, which does not necessarily bear the name "Feituzhen." However, this detailed report was lost before I got the chance to read it. Fertile soil, therefore, could only be written about indirectly, via my imagination. (1992 [1985], 362, my translation)[41]

In "The Story" XiXi also borrows tropes and mythical images from Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude (Cien Años de Soledad 1970 [1967]). For instance, the location of Macondo and García Márquez's character Buendia have parallel existences in XiXi's "The Story." The "mud-plat" or Fertile Town matches Macondo, and the uncles First and Second Bloom are reinterpretations of Buendia. The Bloom sisters' childhood is also based on García Márquez's. In her reading notes, XiXi recounts that García Márquez was not brought up by his parents but by his grandparents. When he was small, his grandmother told him the myths and fantasies about the town where they lived, while his grandfather also told him stories of different backgrounds: the Colombian civil war in which he once got involved (XiXi 1986b, 160-1).

XiXi's "The Story" is therefore intentionally intertextual. It is a shaggy-dog story developed out of imagination, in which the narrator follows a self-imposed pattern of hopscotching from one source to another. This tactic performs what Roland Barthes suggests as "some idea […] of a *playing*" in his essay "From Work to Text" (1978, 158). The narrative branches off infinitely, like rhizomes and metonymic links. In this story, however, XiXi suggests a pitfall in Barthes's writerly reading approach, if the text happens to be a city. "The Story of Fertile Town" initially allows without setting limits the growth of Fertile Town and the story's expansion. Nevertheless, after its climax, the second half of "The Story" shows us how the fertile soil's ever-expanding quality turns from profitable to disastrous, and ultimately and inevitably leads towards the crisis of Fertile Town. The plants' growth in this soil and the soil's itself eventually invade most Fertile Town's space. All townspeople now abandon and

dump fertile soil. At this point of ultimate crisis, the narrator once again interrupts the narrative and delivers this line:

> Oh I was so worried, for I was Everlasting Bloom, the only person who went to the mud-plat […] Would the soil granules just keep on growing? And if so, would they finally bury the uncles' house? Oh I was so worried! (XiXi 1997a, 59)

Importantly, the ever-expanding fertile soil signifies the city's unexpected boom, but it also becomes a threat to survival spaces and home establishments.

"The Story" analogises how the wishful self-expansion of a city only leads to its self-destruction, as did Babel's ambitious project. While imagination can be limitless, the city inevitably meets its limitations in space, hospitality, and resources. A Chinese idiom has it that "the water that carries the boat is the same that swallows it up."[42] In this idiom, "The Story" treats fertile soil metonymically like water. Soil, like water, can bring about progress or destruction, while the city, like the boat, has its limitations and constraints.

Just like an absurd shaggy-dog story, at the end of "The Story," everything comes back to normal as if nothing narrated had ever happened: Fertile Town returns to its initial status before fertile soil was discovered. No one seems to remember that the problematic fertile soil ever exists and all its consequent crests and troughs. "The Story" concludes with a proverb via the mumbling grandmother: "A town will not remain forever prosperous or forever poor. It's just the same as human beings; there's no everlasting happiness, and no endless sorrow either" (64).

So far, I have discussed "Marvels of a Floating City" and "The Story of Fertile Town." Both are tales of disappointment. They are modest in scale. In this chapter's remaining sections, I move on to study the only novel in the Feituzhen series – Flying Carpet (2000 [1996b]). Remarkably different from the two short tales discussed above, Flying Carpet is

woven by different narrative threats dealing with the lives of the ordinary numerous. The book reconstructs the layers of anticipation that form the city of Feituzhen's foundation.

Flying Carpet: Scrolls of a Landscape Painting in Cubist Style

Sponsored by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, XiXi wrote <u>Feizhan</u> [飛氈] in 1994 and 1995, which was initially serialised in Hong Kong's Chinese newspaper <u>Sing Tao Daily</u> [星島日報]. Subsequently in 1996 Su Yeh Publications [素葉出版社] and Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店] co-published it as a book in Hong Kong and Taiwan respectively. Lau Ming-Pui [劉明佩] translated four passages from the novel into English under the title "<u>Flying Carpet</u>: Excerpts" (XiXi 1997c) in a special issue of <u>Renditions</u> on "Hong Kong literature of the 1990s." In 2000, Diana Yue [余丹] attempted to accomplish a full English translation of the novel under a slightly different title: <u>Flying Carpet: A Tale of Fertillia</u>. The main title remains more or less the same, except that Yue inserts a tagline in her version and changes Feituzhen's name to "Fertillia," while both Eva Hung and Lau Ming-Pui translated it as "Fertile Town." In addition to the common locale where the main narratives take place, the Fa family (that is the Bloom family) from "The Story of Fertile Town" is recast in this novel. Although the novel cannot be considered an extension of "The Story," it is an alternative approach to narrating the city.

Again, the novel is framed into a cross-generational storytelling, between a father and his daughter Aimee Fa (or for a possible alternative, between a grandmother and her granddaughter). However, we are only given a little hint concerning this frame and the relationship between the narrator and the implied reader by the novel's end. The last story sequence is very short, the narrator uses the second person pronoun "you" for the first time

and addresses his audience: "You want me to tell you the story of Fertillia. Well, I think I have told you all of it – all the things I know, and all that you wish to know, my dear Aimee Fa" (428). As Page Richards suggests, "[w]hen unreliability of narration occurs in modern texts, the boundary between audience and speaker, 'you' and 'I,' diminishes in a characteristic of oral humor" (2009, 88). In the case of <u>Flying Carpet</u>, humour emerges at the end, when the reader finally realises that, unaware throughout the reading, she has been taking up the narrator's implied role of Aimee Fa.

The end twist carries two fusing (or confusing) implications for the narrative. The first is that the reader should not take stories of Fertillia seriously and should not read them as anything more than the mere imagination of the narrator. Yet, as "The Story" parodies the limitless imagination, the inadequacy therein introduces the second interpretation: Fertillia no longer exists, the stories of which can only be heard and memorised in folk tales and oral history. "The retelling of the story," as Natalia Sui-hung Chan [洛楓] suggests, "is a way of commemorating the golden past and lost memory of a city that no longer exists in reality" (2001, 157). This interpretation is tempting and ironically favourable to those whose pessimism prevented them from anticipating any future conditions for Hong Kong after 1997. In the position of the listener Aimee Fa, the reader is invited – or dared – to pick the less disappointing of the two implications.[43] What keeps Fertillia exclusively in the realm of imagination is the same force that keeps the "floating city" in its position of suspension: the illusory field – or gravitational pull – of progress. To choose between an utterly imaginative Fertillia and a post-catastrophe Fertillia, one may as well embrace the disappointments that the narrative frame anticipates.

As I have shown, progress is questioned by both short stories discussed above, "Marvels of a Floating City" and "The Story of Fertile Town." From its unique point of view, each presents an instance of disappointment that is relevant to the conditions of Hong Kong. "Marvels" stages the floating city as a mistaken utopia, an allegorical city-moment of ambivalence and indecision, whereas "The Story" lets our anticipation meet the moment of disappointment when imagining a city's unlimited expansion brings forth its rapid destruction. Their rhetorical effects are optimal in the scale of short story. As a novel, Flying Carpet is different in its narrative development. It anticipates progress and disappointment that it inevitably brings forth.

Structurally, the novel comprises three sections, which Diana Yue simply translates as "parts." But, in the original, XiXi uses a term that better illustrates the novel's division – "*juan*" [卷], which could be translated as "volume," "book," or literally as "scroll." In other words, the novel can be read as a horizontal triptych comprising three long "scrolls" of painting, the contents of which are the lives of the ordinary people and the urban landscape of Feituzhen. Rather than stage disappointment in a single act, the novel introduces different narrative threads that lead both the narrative and the reader's hermeneutic anticipation to feel progress with respect to the city's historical development across a spectrum of approximately a century and a half. Each book then extends not from one page to another, but laterally in the space of imagination, like a long landscape painting, while the reader unhurriedly follows and actively searches for different scenes and stories of everyday life. Reading this novel, as Chan Kit-yee has noted (145-6),[44] is like the experience of viewing Zhang Zeduan's [張擇端][45] landscape painting, Along the River During Qingming Festival [清明上河圖].

In his essay "Wocheng de yizhong Dufa" [我城的一種讀法] ("A reading of My City" 1999 [1988], 237-59, my translation), He Furen [何福仁] offers a playful reading of XiXi's novel Wocheng [1979, 1989, 1996, 1999] (My City, trans. Eva Hung, 1993). He associates this novel's shifting narrative perspective with the experience of viewing Zhang's Along the River During Qingming Festival. He points out that the viewer, rather than maintain a panoramic view of the long painting panel, "shifts the focal point of observation from one tiny figure depicted on one spot to another. Time flows in space while the space keeps changing as we move across the scroll of painting" (1999, 241).[46]

Similarly, reading Flying Carpet also reminds us of Zhang's painting: the structural scroll invites the reader to stroll along the same street at a slow pace, while the city simultaneously fast-forwards across several decades of development through each panel. This novel, therefore, creates a subtle impression of progress, which flows like the river in Zhang's painting: it is both stationary and moving forward.

With its triptych structure, the novel can be experienced like three long scrolls of Chinese landscape painting. However, if any analogical reference could be made, the narrative technique resembles more the Cubist style in Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque's paintings. It does not attempt to offer a panoramic view of the city. Instead, the city is dissected into small facets and viewed from different perspectives. All these facets are then reassembled as a mosaic of narratives.

XiXi once refers to the style of Cubism in illustrating how the narrative structure works in the first chapter of Mario Vargas Llosa's novel Captain Pantoja and the Special Service [Pantaleón y las visitadoras] (1978 [1973]). She makes a quick summary of the Cubist

characteristics, and then relates this to her close reading of the first chapter of Vargas Llosa's

novel (1995 [1985], 177-201, my translation):

> In the painting, the front of a face overlaps with its lateral side on a surface. It allows us to see simultaneously different facets of the same face: a person can have three eyes, three ears, and a nose that is both frontal and lateral. Using the new structural technique, the novelist aligns many scenes, parallel to each other as a collective whole. As such, he does not have to narrate the story scene by scene; he can easily capture the most delicate details in each scene and lets the characters speak in the first person if necessary. The result is a united space of structural realism. (188)[47]

In an earlier reading note "Zhongguo Taohe" [中國套盒] ("Chinese Box," Aguo [阿果] 1984,

34, my translation), XiXi[48] notes that Vargas Llosa's structural realism is commonly

analogised with Chinese box model ("*Caja china*" in Vargas Llosa's term) – that is the mise-

en-abyme structure of a-story-within-a-story-within-a-story ad infinitum in One Thousand and

One Nights. However, she proposes that the metaphor of a Chinese medicine cabinet would be

more appropriate:

> It is a big cabinet with a lot of little drawers. This drawer is suddenly open; then the other one joins in. Sometimes, it is the one on the top row; sometimes, it is at the bottom. These open drawers can be far apart. Different portions of the contents from these drawers could be mixed into a particular formula of medicine – effective medicine despite bitter in taste. (1984, 34)[49]

XiXi's Flying Carpet exhibits the structural features of a Cubist painting's composition and a

Chinese medicine cabinet, the construction of which XiXi identifies in Vargas Llosa's novels.

The patchwork sequences can be seen as squares drawn on the ground for the narrator to tell a

story, just as hopscotch player produces a self-designed pattern for her game, or as a Chinese

medicine practitioner opens his cabinet's drawers to prepare a specific formula.[50]

The novel, as I have said, ambitiously offers a narrative of Fertillia in a span of

approximately one hundred and fifty years, from the early days of its establishment through its

period of industrialisation into a modern metropolis. Some critics in the Chinese language,

notably Huang Ziping [黃子平], have noted that although Fertillia is modelled on Hong Kong's development during the colonial period (1842-1997), XiXi omits important historical events such as the Opium War, the causes and consequences of the Nanjing Treaty, the Japanese occupation during the Second World War, the Sino-British Negotiations and the Joint Declaration that threw Hong Kong in a state of uncertainty in anticipation of the year 1997. Huang, therefore, criticises that XiXi's deliberate omission of these historical burdens drives the novel away from the important question of the city's fate in the period of uncertainty (1996 quoted in Chan Kit-yee 139).[51] In other words, critics such as Huang are preoccupied with the question that has already been set in "Marvels of a Floating City": would the city "sink" and disappear in history, or would it remain afloat?

He Furen offers a convincing justification of XiXi's treatment of politics and history in this novel. He reminds us that Flying Carpet is a fictional narrative about ordinary lives of a particular city in a particular time.[52] In this case, then, he asks "is it essential to locate one or two historical axes as the main narrative threads?" (1996, 31, my translation)[53] He further points out that in XiXi's earlier short stories, particularly "The Fertile Town Chalk Circle," "Town Curse" [鎮咒], and "Marvels of a Floating City" in the Feituzhen series, XiXi has already dealt with the Sino-British Negotiations and the Joint Declaration in very explicit ways. Above all, Flying Carpet manages to "let those historically silent people speak" (He 1996, 31).[54] His argument supports my idea of concession by which the novel bypasses the grand narrative and yields to the voices and stories of the ordinary.

In the Preface, XiXi suggests how Fertillia could only be located in relation to its neighbour, the big nation Dragonland (which allegorises China):

> If you open a map of the world and look for Fertillia, you will have great difficulty finding it. I suggest you look for Dragonland first. This is the big country that is shaped like a begonia leaf. Look at the southern part of Dragonland, and on the very edge of it you will see a tiny dot, hardly visible, smaller than a sesame seed – and there's your Fertillia. (2000, xvii)

The implication is that any initial attempt to approach the city is more easily and conveniently taken from an outside perspective, because the major reason for Fertillia's existence is its connection with Dragonland: it is considered the gateway to Dragonland for traders and travellers. The narrator of the novel, however, does not dwell upon this perspective. Following local inhabitants' footprints, he gets inside the city and tells their stories from their inside perspectives.

For instance, in a narrative sequence titled "Street Map" (XiXi 2000, 100-3), the narrator takes the readers on a guided tour and demonstrates where the local inhabitants' footprints can be traced in Fertillia. He retells the old saying that "[r]oads are made by people walking" (100), and specifies it in the next sentence: "in Fertile Water District the earliest roads were made by merchants walking" (100-1). These main roads, as Fertillia evolves from a small town to a metropolis, are soon dominated by big cars and different vehicles. They accommodate well the grand narratives of progress in the city; but the narrator implies that the lives of its inhabitants reside elsewhere.

To find them, we have to leave behind the main roads, change our orientation, make a detour to hidden alleys, and be prepared to yield to the unexpected stories. These alleys, as the narrator tells us, are usually nameless, "like the short breaks which people here manage to squeeze out of their tight agendas, thus unmarked on their timetable" (102). However, he emphasises how the spirit of Fertillia thrives in those alleys, which are easily omitted when one goes down the main horizontal streets along the east-and-west axis of the city: "The

stories begin here and wend their way through the narrow crooked alleys, and as they reach the big streets they become whirlpools big and small" (103).[55]

In addition to Vargas Llosa's structural realism, in <u>Flying Carpet</u> XiXi also modifies narrative techniques from Gracía Márquez's <u>One Hundred Years of Solitude</u>, as she did in "The Story," and frames the narratives into a family chronicle. However, as Chan Kit-yee again points out, the novel still differs from a chronicle in that it does not highlight dramatic events but narrates mundane everyday lives, nor does it depict characters with rich personalities but as plain, ordinary people.[56]

Throughout the novel, we mostly follow the footprints of the members of the Fa family and their neighbours, in-laws, relatives, friends, customers and visitors to their shop. When these ordinary characters' survival means could smoothly help them benefit from technological advancements and urban development, they do not entirely give up on participating in this grand narrative of progress. Instead, the narrator shows us how progress could not be taken for granted, and that at times it could be intimidating and frustrating in the everyday dimension. He therefore follows his ordinary characters, puts himself in their shoes, and accounts for their current and future struggles.

Similar to what we noted in "The Story of Fertile Town," the narrator in <u>Flying Carpet</u> also addresses the city's economic boom and the rapid development: "[A]s the town grows and the population rapidly expands the economy has also undergone a transformation" (2000, 177). This sentence is perhaps one of the most convenient and straightforward ways to summarise the exponential process of urbanisation or the evolution of any city from small town to metropolis. While in "The Story" the imaginative expansion of the city is put into question, in <u>Flying Carpet</u>, the narrator endeavours to address the not-so-smooth changes and

struggles which his characters undergo when faced with Fertillia's unexpected growth and development.

For instance, both the Fa and Ip families initially own and manage businesses that are later eliminated from the city: the Fa's own a shop that produces, packages, distributes, and retails a now extinct type of soda water which is known in colloquial Cantonese (or the fictional language "Fertillian" in the novel) as "*Ho Lan Shui*" [荷蘭水], that is, informally and locally known as "holland-water" in English;[57] and the Ips own a shop that sells hand-made wooden furniture of traditional Chinese style. Both cannot survive in the city's later modernised period, if they continue to operate their businesses according to the same old ways.

In the early days, the holland-water shop, Fa & Sons, runs smoothly and generates enough profits to maintain the Fa's livelihood and business. But, at one point, its continuation is severely threatened by the arrival of a new kind of aerated drinks in Fertillia.[58] While the new products are better received by locals, they become real rivals to Fa & Sons' holland-water. As the new aerated drinks gain popularity, Fa & Sons lose their customers and are forced to adapt their merchandise to the new market. Such is one of the few episodes of inevitable changes in the city that usually happen unnoticed. Indeed, the narrator voices out the owner Rainson Fa's unheard worries, his silent sighs at those insomniac nights: he "cannot understand why this aerated water, a new product, can be sold at a cheaper price than Fa & Sons' holland-water. It is ruining his sleep every night" (160). Finally, Fa & Sons burns down accidentally, which the narrator analogises to the condition in which an item can be useful in one context and destructive in another, just like the "fertile soil" in "The Story": "Electric lamps are indisputably the most welcomed modern invention, but the electric wires that are

dragged around inside people's houses may flare up anytime, and when they burn they burn faster than fireworks" (171).

Similarly, in the sequence "Double-Deck Beds" (185-7), the narrator shows a view on Fertillia's change through perspective of Mr. Ip, the owner of Fairwood Furniture Shop:

> As Mr. Ip sees it, his business has dropped not because he is selling poor-quality products, but because Fertile Water District itself is constantly undergoing changes, and these changes have put his business into difficulty. (186)

One major change that he notices is the rapid population growth and the reduction of average flat sizes. A partitioned flat's small rooms could not accommodate the big pieces of furniture which his shop used to produce. Indeed, as the narrator remarks elsewhere, "Fertillia has a very little land but a large population. Even the living are having difficulty finding accommodation, not to mention the dead" (272). Unlike the furniture shop, ironically, "[t]he crematorium business has grown very big" (272).

Villains and heroes can hardly be found in this novel. Lines of conflicts and disagreements are subtly drawn between those who hope to facilitate the city's transformation and those who are resistant to change. In another instance, we find an insurance agent, described as "a man with a briefcase under his arm" suddenly showing up at Fa & Sons and asking for the proprietor (178). However, shortly after he introduces himself and purposefully presents his different insurance policy products to the family, he is violently expelled from the shop. The repeated lines "touch wood, touch wood" of Mrs. Fa in response to the inference of death justifying behind a life insurance plan, reminds us that a new concept is not always welcomed in a city such as Fertillia (178-9).

Progress, Flight, and Disappearance

Throughout the novel, we find different approaches in acknowledging, summarising,

or analogising the development of Fertillia in different progress terms: for instances, in "Big-Eyed Cock" (144-5) the narrator follows the sister and brother Claire and Ned Wu and recounts Fertillia's history and geography from their perspectives: "Fertillia, originally a fishing port, is gradually attaining the status of an entrepôt port" and "Fertillia's harbour is both wide and deep, and that is a great advantage" (145). These are reminiscent of the standard textbook description of Hong Kong in the primary school curriculum.

Albeit from very different perspectives, all these sequences collectively offer a progressive impression that the city is developing: a progress, otherwise known as "urbanisation" or "modernisation." While progress is inevitable, a city could not remain in the wishful condition of "t zero" as XiXi analogises in "Marvels of a Floating City." In Flying Carpet, a vision of anticipation is provided, referring to the Calvino-esque trope of "t zero." The narrator, again, provides an account of Fertillia's origin in this novel:

> In the early days the island of Fertillia was a desolate place, but it was also rich in vegetation […]
> Lying close to Fertillia are numerous big and small islands and also a vast mainland. When some spots in those areas are hit by floods, droughts and plagues, the victims have to flee. Then there are those running away from crimes they have committed. All these people are forced to abandon their homes and re-establish themselves in Fertillia. Here they start from zero time and zero place [sic], doing farming or fishing. There are perhaps only a few dozen inhabitants to begin with. Later, as more people become farmers, a small village has sprung up, with maybe a few hundred villagers. (2000, 160-1)

In this passage's English version, like Eva Hung, Diana Yue mistranslates "t zero" as "zero time." The phrase "Zero time and zero place" in the above excerpt should more appropriately be read as "time zero and space zero." Although "t zero" can lead to different possibilities of t_1, as previously illustrated, it can also become a tempting position of self-entrapment. The same applies to "space zero." If the floating condition were indulged and stepping forward

were avoided, then nothing would ever come into existence, city included.

"Time zero and space zero" can also be taken as the primary struggle that Fertillians initially and constantly face – that their next steps' direction is easily obscured by uncertainty. Such a condition is noted for immigrants, who also come "hacking out a living" in Fertillia (210), starting from a different point of "time zero and space zero." They are refugees from the nearby mainland, Dragonland i.e. China. They do not intend to settle there permanently but "must find new footholds" because their entire families are "torn up from their roots, flocking to Fertillia in total retreat" (202). They form an unprecedented source of manpower as an "army of workers" (201): "it is owing to their unbreakable spirit that Fertillia's way to prosperity is paved" (211). They also contribute to the diversity and heterogeneity in the population: "These people all speak different dialects, but they will come out with their brand of oddly accented Fertillian [Fertillian, again, allegorises Hong Kong Cantonese] when they are plying their trade among the locals" (228-9). However, the narrator also notes the troubling and alarming phenomenon which they bring with them into Fertillia: "With large numbers of immigrants pouring into Fertillia, the population has gone up fast, but dwellings are small and confined. Sometimes a family of seven or eight has to sleep in one bed" (239).

Introducing the life of immigrant Diamond Wong, the narrator offers a brief history of architectural development in Fertile Water District, as impacted by the integration of new immigrants. While there are new "multi-storey high rises," what is more remarkable is the emergence of slums in the form of some "countless little huts spreading like mushrooms on the hill-slopes and the lower down areas" (229).[59] This brief history of housing unexpectedly and prematurely introduces us to the crisis of Fertillia and of immigrants: their poverty-stricken conditions force these newcomers to set up shelter and to step in the moment of t_1 in

any possible way, even against laws and landowners' rights, "before they can think of anything else" (229). The narrator points out, this sudden population expansion "is a headache for the government" (229). Policy makers, immigrants, local inhabitants, and landowners are all fighting for the potential "space one" (or "s_1") where they can lay their narrative step, whether it is survival, integration, improvement, expansion, evolvement, development, or urban planning. Ultimately, the land of Fertillia is limited.

"Progress" is a term we tend to collocate with modernity. Referring to the analogy of Kleist's marionette again, all progressive, emancipatory movements in the modern world share the goal of defying gravity. That is, they share a forward motion in civilisation's evolution. But, by the same token of progress, like the marionette's submission to her puppeteer, we also tend to entrust ourselves in the world's instrumentalisation wherein we can enjoy the comfort of weightlessness. We can develop this weight further: the marionette escapes from the burden of having to make decisions, or the burden of mastering one's own narrative as a protagonist. In this sense, we are tempted to remain in the comfort zone where we feel weightless and are transported away by any vehicle of progress, wherein any friction is reduced or even erased along its smooth journey.

XiXi's narrator manipulates the vehicle metaphor, the railway train, in his description of the thriving economy of Heart Town, the neighbour city of Fertillia:[60]

> The log bridge is gone, of course, and in its place is a bridge constructed in steel and concrete. Pedestrians use it and trains use it, whistling back and forth every day. Ah, I should have said the trains go "t-rum, t-rum" quite quietly every day, because we are already in the age of electric trains. Commercial activities between Dragonland and Fertillia keep growing. There is a busy flow of people doing business. The world is spinning as the economy is booming. (381)

In this passage, the forward movement of the train corresponds to the progress of urbanisation

driven by a booming economy. The evolution of railway technology further evokes the impression of difficulty since anyone takes pains to remain valuable or to keep pace with the city's rapid development.

At the beginning of Flying Carpet, the narrator provides a new reading of Zhuang-zi's [莊子] famous fable: "Zhuang-zi dreamt that he was a butterfly" [周莊夢蝶]. The narrator mentions this story as he recounts the relation between sleep and flight. He proposes, "Sleep weakens the sleeper. By keeping up some 'motion' in sleep, man is actually revealing his unwillingness to fall sleep" (4). The free-floating state is an aspect shared between sleep and flight. This new interpretation of the old fable invites us to rethink modernity in reference to figure similar to Kleist's marionette. XiXi's narrator emphasises that what prompts us to dream (sometimes to dream of flight) is not the defiance of gravity as the marionette exhibits, but our proximity to the earth. Dreaming is not a demonstration of our resistance to the ground, but our resistance to the need to sleep, or our resistance to the need for a state in which we would inevitably surrender our consciousness and our self-control.

Here, XiXi relates the common fantasy of levitation to our down-to-earth reality. The desire to fly does not necessarily imply resistance to the ground. Indeed, the title phrase "Flying Carpet" of the novel stages this dilemma into a mythical figure. But, as He Furen points out in his conversation with XiXi on flying, "Yu XiXi Tan Feixing" [與西西談飛行] ("A Conversation with XiXi on Flying" 1993, my translation), "Zhaung-zi might not realise that the perspectives are very different between that of a man on the ground and that of a bird in the sky" (17).[61] In response, XiXi suggests that after technology made flying possible, we also developed different understandings and perceptions of time and space. She proposes that the Cubist painters were first to consider these new experiences and new perspectives in their

works even when flying was not a common practice (17). As Gertrude Stein writes on her first time experience of travelling on an aeroplane:

> when I looked at the earth I saw all the lines of cubism made at the time when not any painter had ever gone up in an airplane. I saw there on the earth the mingling lines of Picasso, coming and going, developing and destroying themselves, I saw the simple solutions of Braque, I saw the wandering lines of Masson. (Stein 1984, 50)

XiXi notes that literary imaginations of flight in fantasy writing such as the flying carpet in One Thousand and One Nights differs from those in modern literature, mainly because writers of twentieth-century modernity such as Antoine de Saint-Exupéry can root their imagination in actual flying experience. Although we have already acquired flying capacity, the collective longing for levitation will not disappear, because, XiXi suggests, "flying allows us to achieve a sense of freedom" (18).[62] One of the best-known Tang shi (poems from the Tang Dynasty) written by Li Shangyin [李商隱] includes this couplet about the Chinese mythological Moon Goddess Chang'e [嫦娥]:

> Chang'e must regret having stolen the elixir of immortality;
> green sea, blue sky, night after night after night.[63]

This couplet depicts a scene of Chang'e flying in the sky: these views of sky and sea are exceptional but unbearably lonely. XiXi acknowledges its poetic beauty, but she also notes cause and consequence are reversed in this sequence. For XiXi, it should be the longing to float in the blue sky that tempts Chang'e to steal the elixir (He 1993, 18).[64] Her regret should be understood as the consequence of her actions and implies that we should learn from this myth. Just as de Saint-Exupéry asserts that "flying is not the point," and that "the aeroplane is a means, not an end" (2000, 97),[65] XiXi emphasises that "even for a bird, it spends more time on the tree or on the ground than in the sky" (He 1993, 19).

With the prominent "flying carpet" in the title and as a recurring figure, XiXi's novel does not attempt to lift the readers from the pain of privation, as Calvino notes on many folklores of levitation. This is because there is hardly any suffering of this kind in a modern city such as Fertillia. Instead, the flying carpet figure attempts to liberate the ordinary numerous (readers included) from their tendency to get their voices assimilated and harmonised into neatly-drawn boxes on a timetable, arrayed cells on a balance sheet, or identical cubicles in an office space. This rests on an assumption that they may endure their own triviality in their assigned seats humbly and patiently, not to mention the usually pitifully small and suffocating legroom one is granted for the ride on the vehicle of progress. They are not absent, but usually and collectively addressed as an anonymous "they," or reductively implied in a flat dimension as a unanimous and unified chorus. The replication of these living patterns annihilates differences and significances and smooths out accents and cavities. On such an assigned seat, what one perceives in the city is not much more than shared attitude of indifference and tamed anticipation of insignificance. Indeed, the stranger met on the street does not seem to lead a story that different from anyone else's. To say it bluntly, there may be no more stories to tell or anticipate if we remain in parallel motion and in synchronised pace with such vectors of progress.

With a deliberate step of concession, the narrator yields to the footprints of these ordinary numerous, though their voices and living steps are often written off as irrelevant and unprofitable. By setting this chorus in motion, and dispersing their steps through the different corners and streets of Fertillia, XiXi's narrator retrieves their dissonant voices from a cacophony of differences, usually misheard as a harmony of noises.

While the everyday lives of the ordinary numerous constitute the main subject of the

novel, the imagery of the flying carpet is more than a metaphor but appears prominently as a real object in the fictional universe. Through it, the tale exceeds its ordinariness. Early in the novel, the term "flying carpet" is first mentioned, and is classified as the "fifth principle of flight," by a scientific-writer character who is working on "a paper on the phenomenon of 'flight'" (XiXi 2000, 8). At one point, he writes, "if there is no wind, why is the carpet able to fly? Here we come to the fifth principle of flight: the magic of myth" (10). "The magic of myth" alludes implicitly to the power of storytelling and magic realism in twentieth century Latin American literature. Coincidentally, after the scientific-writer concedes that a flying carpet could exist, albeit only by the magic of myth, he sees one in the sky.

The knowledge of flying carpet's existence and of the mechanism behind its flight remains largely in the realms of the magical and the fantastic. The novel distinguishes a few people who at least see a flying carpet once or those who inherit its story from ancestors, and a large group of people who refuse to believe or acknowledge the possibility of its existence. Those who see the flying carpet inevitably encounter the difficulty in convincing others of this incredible vision. This moment of the inexpressible is relevant to the story of Fertillia, which the narrator finds difficult to tell an audience. In this, he is like most Fertillians who are not willing to read it, because they would not have time, would not be interested or prepared to read it as a myth, because they lack the imagination necessary to mentally accommodate it. Then, some simply prefer factual accounts.

Claire, for instance, not only witnesses the carpet flying in the sky, but actually flies on it near the end of the novel. Although she acknowledges that "invisibility does not mean non-existence" (XiXi 2000, 423), she still chooses to convince herself that "[t]his can only be a dream" (424). Her contemplation on Fertillia as she floats with the carpet in the air compels a

switch in perspective from that of roaming on the ground to that of flying in the sky:

> There are many stars glittering down there too, and the galaxy down there looks almost like a Milky Way. With its shining lights, Fertillia is a small universe unto itself. […] The blue sea, the green hills, the grey houses, the brown earth. Over there on the peak of a hill sits a big statue of the Buddha. A little further on, on a big mud-brown strip of land, a new airport is being built. Fertillia is a not a big stretch of land, and the sea is all around it. Sitting on the flying carpet, Claire has the feeling that what is slowly flying is not the carpet, but the town of Fertillia that she is watching from above. The town is floating and moving on the sea in slow motion even as she watches, and all is quiet and peaceful as dawn breaks on the little island, this island that according to legend is a piece of land that has flown all the way here from some place else, a land that has risen out of the waters, a land carried on the back of a tortoise. In future, will Fertillia re-enter the water and be drowned? Or will it continue to drift and float, in silence, serene and unique, stable and prosperous? (424)

Familiar mythical accounts of the city, heard from the grandparents in "The Story," recur. In Claire's contemplation on the flying carpet, she experiences the optic illusion that the city is also floating. Then, which is deceptive the flying carpet or the floating city? Her flying journey ends with her question about the future of Fertillia. It implies her desire to remain afloat in the sky with the city and to sustain an ambivalent status, which is not only illusory but also self-deceptive.

But, in the following scene, when Claire's ride on the flying carpet ends, it now carries Falibaba and Flora Fa as the carpet's next passengers. Flora Fa, in her sleepwalking mode, constantly picks some magic sprigs which bear the power of invisibility. The sprigs are used to cover the carpet and hide its stunning appearance. In the same manner that one blows off dandelion pollen, Flora blows those sprigs off her hands and lets their pollen spread down into the city. Rather than fly away, or sink into the sea as the myths have it, Fertillia receives this tiny pollen and liberates itself from its ambivalent and illusory floating position. It introduces the unexpected scene in the final sequences of this tale.

The owners of this flying carpet are Faliyeh and Falibaba, a father and son who come

from a Turkic country and settle in Fertillia. They decide to fly it, like a dog-owner frequently walks his pet. In order to shield the carpet from being noticed by gawkers, they string up its four corners with kite-strings, tie it to a reel, to give it the appearance of a huge kite. These strings are only decorative, since the carpet is actually flying on its own magical power.

The scene of flying the carpet in XiXi's novel subtly reminds us of the marionette discussed earlier in this chapter. Faliyeh and Falibaba fly the carpet in the guise of a huge kite. A kite is an object very similar to a marionette in that they are both attached by strings to the hands of a master or a manipulator. However, there is an essential difference between the two: in the marionette's mechanics, strings join the marionette and the puppeteer together in an interdependent relationship or what Gourgouris calls "a curiously idolatrous exchange":

> this operation implies at once both the confirmation and the abdication of mastery. Though, quite visibly, the master-fingers manipulate the strings of an inanimate form, an idol, they are invisibly entranced by a movement that flows back from the idol's tenuous joints – a soul that animates the image of dance; an image of dance that animates the dance experience. (2003, ix)

In other words, the marionette remains passively suspended and is incapable of eluding the manipulation of master-fingers. A kite is also attached to strings. However, these strings function differently from those attached to a marionette. They maintain the kite's balance and keep it afloat. With the bridle of strings at his disposal, the kite flyer does not manipulate or control the kite's movement but aids its flight. With reference to the difference between a feather and a bird discussed above, if a marionette can be compared to a feather, then a kite defies gravity as a bird does, that is, not through submission to a puppeteer but through its ability to fly. However, unlike a bird, a kite is inanimate and cannot maintain its balance on its own. As for the flying carpet in XiXi's novel, it possesses autonomy and magical power. While the carpet indeed flies like a bird, it appears as a kite in disguise.

Moreover, the imagery of flying a kite appears in a meta-narratological moment near the end of the novel and is featured in a simile: "Like kites with their strings cut off, they are flying away, receding and eventually they vanish, and are free" (XiXi 2000, 427). The pronoun "they" here refers to the characters who disappear one by one under the effect of an "elixir candy" made from the magical sprigs that Flora uses to hide the carpet when she is flying on it.

Beginning with Flora, who "has become invisible and inaudible," this phenomenon gradually affects to all other characters and then spreads contagiously to animals and objects in Fertillia, "[n]ot only men, but bees also, and dappled cats, and pigeons, and shops, and streets, and fox fairies, and the deities, are all affected" (427-8). The narrator reassures the reader that their "invisibility is only to the writer of this story," "only to this story-writer," "[i]n front of her parents, her brother and other people, she should still be the same Flora, still alive and well, still a person with a soul, a person of flesh and blood" (427). In other words, they disappear from the writer's authorial perspective but remain alive and visible in the reader's imagination.

The prospect of his characters' disappearance does not make the narrator anxious about losing them. Instead, he is optimistic that when they vanish, like "kites with their strings cut off," they are also flying to "be free" (427). XiXi's narrator refuses to let his characters or the imagined city remain in the subordinate posture of a marionette. He allows them to fly like birds and exercise their free will in every action and future step. He also hands over the storytelling agency to the reader, who is invited and encouraged to continue the story of Fertillia, to follow the characters' footprints, and to peregrinate in the streets and hidden alleys of the city, at her own pace, like kites flying freely among the clouds in the sky.

This carpet-flying scene can be fruitfully read as an analogy to the writerly and anti-authoritative approach to reading the novel.[66] Gourgouris associates literature reader with the poetics of suspension of Kleist's marionette. He suggests,

> As readers, we stand before literature in the light of Kleist's marionette logic. We submit to an idiomatic order, as the marionette submits to whatever power produces its weightlessness. At the same time, released from the compulsion to translate, as the puppet master must release himself from mastery and transpose himself to the puppet's center of gravity. (2003, xxi)

Here, readers (or the first person "we") are compared to the marionette in one sentence, and simultaneously to the puppet master in the next. For Gourgouris, reading literature involves a perpetual interplay between the reader's "submission to literature's idiom" (like a marionette) and their "readiness to take command of the alertness to history that this idiom imposes upon [them]" (like a puppet master) (xxi). What connect the two are the strings that join the marionette's limbs to the fingers of the puppeteer. In XiXi's novel, however, the relationship between the reader and literature is not so much the complicated interplay and inevitable interdependence between the marionette and the puppeteer, as the whimsical game, like hopscotch or kite-flying, through which the reader produces their own idiosyncratic journey into the text.

This scene of disappearance is utterly different from what Abbas notes as "the culture of disappearance" in Hong Kong in the years between the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 and the "anticipated end" of the city in 1997 (1997, 7). For, Abbas "disappearance […] is more a question of misrecognition, of recognizing a thing as something else" (7). In the particular instance of Hong Kong during the transitional period, he argues,

> it was the beginning of a profound concern with [Hong Kong's] historical and cultural specificity. But then the cause of this interest in Hong Kong culture – 1997 – may also cause its demise. The change in status of culture in Hong Kong can be described as

282

follows: from reverse hallucination, which sees only desert, to a culture of disappearance, whose appearance is posited on the imminence of its disappearance. (7)

The disappearance which happens at the end of XiXi's novel should not be read as an instance of the "culture of disappearance" in Abbas's terms. Regardless, the publication of the series of Feituzhen (this novel included) can be considered XiXi's literary response to the political uncertainty of Hong Kong following the Sino-British Joint Declaration. In this novel, disappearance suggests a deliberate unseeing: Chan Yin-ha [陳燕遐] goes as far as to describe it as "self-castration" [自我去勢] in her reading (134). The narrator lets go of his manipulative anticipation towards his narrative's development and refrains from framing her characters' and his city's future through any biased or subjective perspective.

Localism and Translation

In the Introduction to his influential book on Hong Kong (1997), Abbas outlines his doubts on the three commonly adopted critical models by which to understand Hong Kong, namely "the local, the marginal, the cosmopolitan" or what he then figuratively and respectively renames, "the fallacies of three worldism, two worldism, and one worldism" (11). In his elaboration on the last two critical terms, the cosmopolitan is a model for addressing "the hope of breaking away from local ghettos and entering the world in full cultural equality" (13). Then, "the lure of the marginal" can be considered a by-product of postcolonialism, in that "little narratives, local knowledge, and paralogies" are taken as "strategies for resisting the master discourses, scientific and legitimated, of the center" (12). While the adjective "local" subtly appears in the above elaborations on both the cosmopolitan and the marginal, Abbas delivers a narrow understanding of the local: "Devalued, ignored or subordinated under the hegemonic regimes, the local is now reasserted as a mark of independence" (11). Nevertheless,

he points out a couple of significant points concerning the ways in which we should carefully and critically approach the idea of the local, especially with respect to Hong Kong. First, "The local is not so easily localized; it is not so much what language we use, as what we use language for"; second, "the local is *already a translation* […], so that the question of the local cannot be separated from the question of cultural translation itself" (12, original italics).

Abbas's rejection of the local or localism is mainly due to an unresolvable methodological problem that deals with the difficulty in locating it: "this is particularly tricky in a place like Hong Kong with its significant proportion of refugees, migrants, and transients, all of whom could claim local status" (12). This problem is illustrated by the perplexity one may probably experience while attempting to identify local architecture in Hong Kong. He offers three architectural examples, each of which shows interesting features. However, according to Abbas, none of these could adequately be considered to be local: first, "the Chinese nineteenth-century-style domestic buildings," second, "the colonial-style monuments like the old Supreme Court building in the Central District," and last, "the ubiquitous slab-like buildings that represent a local interpretation of the modernist idea of 'form follows function' to mean putting up the cheapest, most cost-effective buildings, the minimalism of modernism translated as the maximum in profit margins" (12).

Interestingly, these examples are all very distinctive and relevant to Hong Kong, but do not quite belong to, or fit in, the local culture. In his third, Abbas particularly uses the past participle "translated" to highlight the fact that "the local is already a translation" (12). That is, in other words, most local aspects in the city are not originally developed or naturally assimilated, but imported or borrowed from a different culture. However, is it true that there is no *local* architecture in this city? In XiXi's Flying Carpet, we find several moments in which

the narrator describes the local architecture in Fertillia. One particular example is given in Book Three (or Scroll Three) in the sequence entitled "Baroque With a Difference" (2000, 313-6). It involves an instance of translation which differs from what is anticipated in the light of Abbas's last example.

In this scene in <u>Flying Carpet</u>, Constance Fa,[67] who studies architecture at the University, is asked to take Prince Haliput of Petroleum Kingdom on a tour of Fertillia. "When it comes to architecture," the narrator tells us, "the two have a lot to talk about" (314). Although they do not speak each other's native language, they manage to communicate without problem "in the Anglo language" (314). In other words, Constance Fa, as a local Fertillian, is explaining the architecture of his city via translation. He explains the special features of Fertillian lodgings: they are usually unsupported by classical columns and undisciplined in wall reliefs; hastily constructed on narrow sites; simple and crude in their shapes and interiors; "[o]rdinary but rich in human touches"; "sloppy, nosy, untidy and unruly" (315). There is no word in the anglo language or the lingua frança, which Constance Fa and the Prince speak, that can describe this style. Nevertheless, Constance Fa chooses to associate it with "baroque" – a term that connotes a style originally rooted in a culture foreign to Fertillia, but curiously useful when explaining the unique characteristics of local Fertillian architecture:

> Sixteenth century Europe saw the rise of Baroque architecture. The Renaissance had stirred up a rebellion against the stern classical rules, and the builders and architects were giving up sedateness for liveliness, forfeiting uniformity for irregularity, and abandoning serenity for drama. In the new architecture of those days the external walls took on wavy surfaces, the outlines of the pediments and the ceilings were de-regularized, the linings at the foot of the walls became emphatically heavy, the main columns were coiled into rope shape, and the empty spaces were made to stagger and intertwine, everything combining to create freshness and vibrancy and a new expression of strength and life.

   "I think I can see what you mean," the Prince says, looking at the houses standing on Fertile Water Street.
"The baroque architecture of Fertile Water Street is right before you, sir."
"Not designed by any architect in particular."
"But a real creation by our people all the same." (315)

While Abbas is reluctant to acknowledge any local architecture in Hong Kong; XiXi, via Constance Fa's vision in the imaginative Fertillia, recognises the unique style of "baroque with a difference" in Hong Kong architecture. It is taken as a result of local efforts to establish homes in an urban habitat of narrow and densely populated space.

     Abbas's contention that "the local is already translation" (1997, 12) serves to say differently that Hong Kong is a transit space (4) or "a city of transient" (116). In a chapter on "Writing Hong Kong" (111-40), he later suggests that such a cultural space where "staying for six weeks or sixty years makes little difference[,] one's audience is always made up of strangers" (116). Translation functions as a means of communication among strangers: whether it be from English to Chinese, or from Cantonese to English, the direction should make no much difference. If writing can be considered "an attempt to define a sense of possible community," then, following Abbas's argument, the community that Hong Kong writers endeavour to define would be "a community of strangers" (116). Indeed, for Abbas, Hong Kong writers definitely share the sentiment that Gertrude Stein expressed in her famous statement: "I write for myself and for strangers" (Abbas 1997, 116). Although Abbas's arguments are fascinating and punctually offered a profound and original criticism on Hong Kong culture at the time the appointed date of Handover in 1997 was approaching, there is a blind spot in his theory and hypothesis.

     Under the aegis of Abba's critical models such as "culture of disappearance," "hyphenation," or "a community of strangers," rather than dwellers who find home and shelter

in the city, Hongkongers could only become nomads. Abbas elaborates this via a quotation

from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: as the "one who does not depart, does not want to

depart, who clings to the smooth space left by the receding forest [...] and who invents

nomadism as a response to this challenge" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986b, 51 quoted in Abbas

1997, 10). This nomad figure is temptingly identifiable but problematic. Not only does the

nomad refuse to leave, but he has no home to which to return. Per Deleuze and Guattari, he

can at best "cling[] to the smooth space" (51). As its adjective "smooth" ("*lisse*" in the original

French) suggests, "smooth space" (as opposed to, but not necessarily separated from, "striated

space") is curiously frictionless. It is a space where vehicles face little or no resistance – in

short, more or less a space for fast-moving transportation like a highway.

But, I am reminded of what Dung Kai-chung [董啟章] writes in the Preface to his

novel Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City (2012):[68]

> Hong Kong is often called a borrowed place in a borrowed time. It's a colonial and
> therefore biased view but it's not because of any doctrine of national sovereignty that I
> reject it. […] My rejection is instead from the perspective of a person who grew up in
> Hong Kong in its last colonial phase and continues to live here in the post-1997 era. I
> and many others like me simply don't accept this description of the place where we
> live. Why? It's because we belong to the space-time that is ours. No body lends it to us
> and we don't borrow it from anybody. (xiii)

In short, Dung highlights the fact that the city is the home to local habitants, as a response to

the clichéd perception that the city is "a borrowed place in a borrowed time." I share Dung's

sentimental rejection of the word "borrowed" in addressing Hong Kong. Indeed, I would

extend this rejection or reservation to theoretical terms such as transit space, smooth space,

third space, heterotopia, or the space of disappearance, all of which severely diminish, if not

entirely annihilate, any feeling that one is at home in Hong Kong. I insist that as a city, Hong

Kong's cultural space is not that "smooth" after all and should be read primarily as the home of its local inhabitants.

The moment of translation in the scene from XiXi's novel illustrated above points to the humble feeling of home which can be sometimes easily brushed aside or overlooked. Translation, therefore, takes place at home between the host and the guest. Constance Fa takes the position as the host and endeavours to explain what he perceives as local aspects of his home to a foreigner. He invites his guest to follow his steps in reading local aspects of Fertillia as a unique journey of flânerie – one that, with its playfulness and self-imposed pattern, is kindred to the "hopscotching" that figures in XiXi's penname.

The difference in attitude between Abbas's and XiXi's take on translation can be understood analogically as the subtle difference between a blanket and a carpet. XiXi patiently makes this point in the novel's Preface and explains the title's word choice:

> My book is called Flying Carpet. The meaning should be quite clear, but I would like to say a bit more on it because in my language there are actually two characters, pronounced respectively as "*zhan*" and "*tan*," and they stand for different ideas of "carpet." Strictly speaking, the title of the book should be "*fei tan*," though it is now written as "*fei zhan*." (2000, xiii)

But, what is the difference between "*zhan*" and "*tan*"? XiXi provides the clues: "The character pronounced as '*zhan*' is a very old one. It refers to fabrics that have no warp and weft threads," while "[t]he other character, pronounced as '*tan*,' refers to fabrics woven with warp and weft threads and using wool or other kinds of animal hair" (xiii). The thick notion of "carpet" should refer not simply to any big piece of fabrics, but specially to those with warp and weft threads, and thus can be considered an equivalent of "*tan*" [毯] in Chinese, whereas the closest equivalent in English of "*zhan*" [氈] should be "blanket." Therefore, a logical question emerges and its justification is pending:

The title of this book refers to a carpet. Considering the finer distinctions mentioned above, why have I used the character pronounced as "*zhan*" and not the other character pronounced as "*tan*," though the latter should be more correct? (xvii)

Here, XiXi draws our attention to the exchange of languages in any culture, or the incorporation of colloquial words in regional dialects in the Chinese language:

The old dictionaries have already made it clear that *qu-yu*, *ta-deng* etc. are terms absorbed into our language from other regional dialects. The people of Fertillia, we must remember, use a dialect of their own. In the Fertillian dialect, any kind of woven fabric that can form a matting, be it made of wool or cotton or felt or silk, be it knotted or unknotted, be it used for covering the body, for decoration, for wrapping things, for serving as under-padding for a calligraphy artist's writing paper, or just for cleaning your feet on, is called *zhan*. (xvii)

She further and explicitly relates this to the colloquial language of Hong Kong: "I am not making this up," she says, "Here where I live, no distinction is made between *zhan* and *tan*, and the local pronunciation for both is '*jin*' [in Cantonese]. Going by this local rule, I have written the title of my book as '*fei-zhan*'" (xvii).

By naming her book "*Fei-zhan*" rather than "*fei-tan*," XiXi calls attention to Fertillians' misgivings: they see their city through the eyes of others as a frictionless Deleuzian smooth space. However, XiXi also concedes to the customs in the Fertillian vernacular and emphasises that the meaning of "carpet" can also be covered under the term *zhan*. Choosing the word *zhan* over *tan* also turns the final title into a potential pun on Feituzhen in the Chinese languages, and alludes to the deliberate mispronunciation and self-deceptive misrecognition of Feituzhen [肥土鎮] not so much "Fertillia" or "Fertile Town" as "Feizhen" [飛鎮], that is, "Flightillia," "Flying Town," or "Projectile Town."

The Preface gives the reader an idea of how the vernacular (that is, Hong Kong Cantonese or "Fertillian" in the novel) is difficult to capture in literature, as is the case by extension the indigenous culture of the city. As Stephen C. Soong [宋淇] notes in an article on

XiXi's novel – "Building a House: Introducing XiXi" (1986, 1996):[69] "In Hong Kong the greatest single difficulty a writer has to confront is dialect: Cantonese is used in schools, at home, and in society, but the written literary language is based on Mandarin" (Soong 1996, 127).[70] Here, the "single difficulty" refers to Cantonese dominance as the complicated language context with which Chinese writers confront in Hong Kong's literary publication domain. However, in such an environment, Soong fails to notice this difficulty's other aspect which is at least equally severe in Chinese literary production: the fact that using Cantonese expressions or dictions in Chinese letters or Chinese literature is usually considered non-standard at best, or vulgar and rude at worst, and is therefore discouraged. Indeed, standard and institutionalised Chinese appears more as what Turkish poet Mehmet Yasin calls the "step-mothertongue" of Hongkongers (2000, 1-21). It maintains a complex relationship, and rivals their real mother tongue, Cantonese, for literary significance.

In XiXi's literary writings, she consistently translates local cultures and knowledge, from the vernacular to this step-mothertongue, that is, standard Chinese. But, she is not satisfied with this obligatory path of translation in her writing, where her characters' ordinary voices are concerned. Therefore, translation inevitably entails disappointments and gives rise to instances of what I call "back-translation." By back-translation, I mean the reflective and writerly response to any unsolvable paradox which emerges between the translated text and its "original." Taking Hong Kong on the side of the "original," I ask: how could we account for the case in which the city attempts to back-translate itself from the master language into its original people's colloquial tongue?

In Flying Carpet, XiXi acknowledges the rich and complex linguistic environment in Fertillia, where the vernacular known as Fertillian (Cantonese's stand-in) is widely used as a

spoken language despite its conventional omission in standard writing:

> When Fertillian people speak they use the local Fertillian language, which is a regional dialect used mainly for oral communication but not for writing. For writing things down, they have to use Dragonese [that is Chinese], the language of Dragonland [or China], which everyone knows. (XiXi 2000, 108)

One mundane example is the word "ice," which is *bing* [冰] in Chinese. The narrator

tells us that

> the place that sells ice is called "Quick Profit Snow Factory" [Feili Xuechang 飛利雪廠]. Fertillians uniformly say "snow" when they mean ice. In their language, an ice lollipop [冰棒] is a "snow stick" [雪條], and an ice-box [冰箱] is a "snow closet" [雪櫃]. But why is that so? An old saying happens to have it: "There's no point explaining ice to a summer insect." Fertillia never gets snow, not on any day of the year, not once in a hundred years. It's like that country called Egypt – a lot of people there have never seen rain or heard of something called an umbrella. (105)

He goes on to employ this colloquial diction while narrating a scene in which the character

Shrimpy goes down to Flying Soil Boulevard to purchase a piece of ice in a "snow factory."

Here, the way in which the narrator relates the Fertillian language to the subtropical climate of

Fertillia is remarkable. The narrator quotes the old saying from Zhuang-Zi's "Autumn

Floods."[71] The expression carries the analogical implication that our knowledge is always

limited by the context in which we acquire it.

The epistemological dimension offered by this standard language limits the context in

which the city's narratives can be set. As a result, certain scenes have to be left out or

awkwardly misrepresented in the standardised Chinese language. Here, XiXi's narrator

playfully and innovatively twists meaning. He implicitly points out that institutionally

maintained "standard" Dragonese (Chinese) could not serve as a language medium through

which local Fertillian aspects can be captured, mainly because this standard written language

is also limited by its own context and answers to arbitrarily maintained customs and rules.

Therefore, the narrator proposes through hyperbolic humour that "if you go around asking for ice shops, ice retailers or ice factories on Flying Earth Boulevard it won't get you anywhere" (105). Running this errand as a shop assistant, a local Fertillian like Shrimper would know that ice could only be obtained in a "snow factory." This constitutes the local wisdom of survival. Though a marginal character, Shrimper recurs several times at the crossroads of different languages, back and forth, as a figure of translation and back-translation in the novel.

Coda: Stepping into Feituzhen, Fertile Town, and Fertillia

In "Kan Hua (Daixu)" [看畫(代序)] ("Viewing Paintings: In Lieu of a Preface"), or the Preface to Huzi You Lian [鬍子有臉] (Beard with a Face 1992 [1986], 325-8, my translation), XiXi recalls Greek philosopher Heraclitus's renowned idea: "We cannot step into the same river twice" (325). She pushes further and asks, "What about a river fixed in a painting?" (325) In response, XiXi refers to Calvino once more and paraphrases his suggestion: "Entering an art gallery, from one painting to another, any viewer can create his own story based on his imagination" (325).[72] She reaffirms Heraclitus's observation with a slight modification: the same painting does not always summon the same interpretation. Later in this Preface, she casually suggests that she would choose Zhang Zeduan's painting Along the River During Qingming Festival, because in this painting, the river flows endlessly, and so does the scenery.[73] One can study it centimetre by centimetre and follow the footprints of each tiny figure. She proposes that each has their own story waiting to be read and unfolded.

This question of stepping into the same river twice is analogical to the experience of reading the Feituzhen series. There are numerous Feituzhen stories in XiXi's oeuvres, but does a reader enter the same Feituzhen every time? The answer is as tricky as XiXi's interpretation of Heraclitus's conceit. It is the same and it is different. It is always, to a certain degree,

Feituzhen as the imagined city based on the culture and languages in Hong Kong. However, the Feituzhen in each story features a unique chronotope of its own. To borrow Gourgouris's terms, they are all "co-incidental" to each other and stage themselves as different takes of the mythical re-imagination of Hong Kong. Yet, Feituzhen's plural existences (as Fertile Town, Fertillia, and Floating City) should not be collapsed singularly as one and the same, because the same city's story can be narrated in an unlimited number of manners.

Many critics on XiXi's works, including those very few who work in the English language, tend to assume that the readers of her stories, especially those in the Feituzhen series, are mainly Hong Kong people and not, as Abbas suggests, "the community of strangers" (1997, 116). In other words, the community of readership that XiXi creates unites those who share the same cultural space, the imagined community of Hong Kong. English translations of XiXi's works are mostly produced in local academic institutions. Therefore, translators such as Eva Hung and Diana Yue perform a role similar to a host's, like Constance Fa, who takes Prince Haliput on a guided tour of his city. Because of this, I believe that XiXi's works anticipate a wider audience, outside Hong Kong. However, in order to fulfil this anticipation, new translations are needed.

As we have seen, translations of the Feituzhen series do not come to a point of consensus. Indeed, to a certain extent, they are incompatible. Eva Hung directed the project which attempted the translation of some of these stories into English.[74] This resulted in a collection of three stories titled Marvels of a Floating City (1997a), which includes the translations of "Fucheng Zhiyi" [浮城誌異] ("Marvels of a Floating City" [1986]), "Feituzhen de Gushi" [肥土鎮的故事] ("The Story of Fertile Town" [1982]) and "Feituzhen Huilanji" [肥土鎮灰闌記] ("The Fertile Town Chalk Circle" [1986]).[75] While Hung translated the first

two stories, the last one was handled by John and Esther Dent-Yong. In the last two stories involving different translators, Feituzhen is consistently renamed as "Fertile Town," which very much reflects XiXi's original idea: the first two characters "feitu" [肥土] connotes "fertile soil," whereas the character "zhen" [鎮] is the term for "town." While XiXi keeps coming back to this imagined polis in different narrative pieces, translations of its names are not consistent. In Diana Yue's translated version of the novel <u>Feizhen</u> [飛氈] (<u>Flying Carpet: A Tale of Fertillia</u> [1996b] 2000), as we have noted above, Feituzhen appears as Fertillia – the suffix "-ia" suggests that the noun is derived from the adjective "fertile" and denotes the name of a country or utopia, which also pays tribute to Calvino's <u>Invisible Cities</u>, wherein almost all cities mentioned end with this suffix (1974).

I once considered this inconsistency to be unfortunate. However, it points to the essential discrepancy between the different versions of Feituzhen in XiXi's literary imagination and the diverse interpretations of the story of Feituzhen by its inhabitants or readers. In these stories, I contend that every Feituzhen townsperson or every Fertillian should have their own version of this city's story. The discrepancy between these two translated names complicates these stories' intended incompatibility, as the narrators and their perspectives are deliberately different. All these different Feituzhen stories and their different translations allow the reader to step into Feituzhen as a hopscotch player and read Feituzhen in one's unique path of flânerie and imagination. In the Preface to the 1999 edition of her novel <u>Wocheng</u> [我城] (1999, i-ii, my translation), XiXi notes that since its publication, the novel has undergone three different editions. Humorously, she proposes, "each edition is a different performance; similarly, in each performance, there should be something different" (1999, i).

She continues, "this current edition published by Hong-fan is the fourth edition. It is a bit richer than the earlier ones and seems to be the most complete" (i).[76] We can add that Eva Hung's 1993 translation of <u>My City</u> can be read as another special performance of the same work. One may as well consider the unnamed city in <u>My City</u> or <u>Wocheng</u> to be another imagination of Feituzhen and, by extension, that of Hong Kong. These fictional narratives are all "co-incidental" to each other. Each edition, translation, or even reading should constitute a new performance. The word "performance" should be understood in terms of what Gourgouris considers "the performativity of myth": that is, each version or each instance of storytelling stages Hong Kong as a fictional city and invites the reader to wander in their textual space and leave on a journey of self-interrogation.

This self-interrogation can be best elaborated as the question "what am I to do?" – that is, what Gourgouris calls "the question of praxis […] posed by modernity's conditions of suspension" (2003, xiii). The conditions of suspension in Gourgouris's argument refer to those of modernity that we all share in a figurative posture of Kleist's marionette. Gourgouris empahsises that these conditions of suspension can hardly be alleviated, "even for those who may claim mastery over the art of decision," while "the question 'What am I to do?' remains a quandary all around" (xiii). This is a very profound observation: Gourgouris insists that "the question itself" should be far "more important than its possible resolution" (xiii).

In this chapter, I have developed my thesis partially in response to Gourgouris's idea of myth's performativity and his mythical interpretation of modernity in terms of Kleist's marionette. Specifically, I find his argument on the poetics of suspension very relevant to the uncertainty which Hong Kong citizens experienced during the transitional period between the early 1980s Sino-British Negotiations and the 1997 Handover of sovereignty. However, I find

inadequate, perilous even, to embrace the marionette's elegant posture, or the poetics of suspension. Yet, as said in the Introduction, the image's beauty makes the argument irresistible.

I perceive the marionette's suspension as a posture of *perfect* equilibrium that could also be described in Gourgouris's terms as "an order of gravity that knows no ground" (x). Rather than remaining out of reach or unattainable, it is impossible or unthinkable to depart or to free oneself from this posture of perfect equilibrium. To account for this impossibility, consider the inertia and comfort which make the subject reluctant to leave conditions of suspension. Moreover, this subject may have proleptically imagined the next steps in moments of t_1, t_2, t_3 etc. with the fear and anxiety that they could hardly return to this equilibrium if they were to take courageous first steps and deviate from this position. At worst, a single step of initiation might bring forth a disaster too terrifying to risk. However, I believe that when one asks questions such as "what am I to do," one has already taken a first step of interrogation, a step by which one concedes that remaining in a suspended position of perfect equilibrium is indeed less favourable than wandering at one's own pace and assuming an imperfect posture on the ground. In this chapter, the hopscotch player model demonstrates such steps of self-interrogation through a game that encourages the reader to get off the vehicle of progress, to develop a unique pattern of flânerie, and to journey into the textual city where mundane aspects of the ordinary numerous thrive abundantly with life's imperfections, like kites flying in the sky.

Chapter Four   The Double's Double

In an interview with Orhan Pamuk for the January 2008 issue of <u>PMLA</u>, Z. Esra Mirze

asks a general question, "How important is the idea of home to you?" (179) In response,

Pamuk first offers an obvious answer:

> It is very important. Why? Because I have been living in the same city [Istanbul], the
> same neighbourhood [Nişantaşı], even in the same house [Pamuk Apartments], for all
> of my life. Now, as I explain in the beginning of <u>Istanbul</u> [his memoir, originally
> published in Turkish in 2003], there is extra attention paid to immigration, cultural
> change, hybridity, the creativity of immigrants who invent the new culture, the new
> identity. These are things that I cherish and I admire, and I thik that the vitality of new
> cultures, their attraction, is created by immigrants because they bring new points of
> view. A culture that is tolerant of its immigrants, its newcomers, its others, most
> probably will be a glorious culture in the future, as it was in the past. (179)

Then, he points how his relation to home is at odds with those of immigrants and newcomers:

> But, on the other hand, contrary to what I believe in, I have been living in the same
> neighbourhood, the same street, the same house for fifty years. Home, of course, is
> important to an immigrant, perhaps more important because that is what he left behind.
> But home is also important for the guy who is at home all the time. And I am
> geographically, physically at home. (179)

Here he references Theodor Adorno's irony of home, that "it is part of morality not to be at

home in one's home" (Adorno 1978, 39). However, Pamuk does not repeat the original

German or the often-quoted Jephcott translation in English. Instead, he rearranges Adorno's

words as such: "Adorno says that morality begins when you do not feel at home" (Mirze

179).[1] This irony puts into question Pamuk's self-aware position of being at home. It

nonetheless allows Pamuk to formulate a profound and unique understanding of home, and to

justify his position as a wrtier who, instead of living in exile, remains strongly attached to his

hometown, Istanbul.

In the wake of the Holocaust, Adorno annihilates any possibility of home and

pessimistically contends that "[d]welling, in the proper sense, is now impossible" (1979, 38).

Without arguing against Adorno, Pamuk defends the importance of home, to those in exile and to those who always stay at home. As a nod to Adorno, he coordinates further explanations and his rewording of Adorno's sentence with the conjunction "so":

> *So* I was never "at home" at home, but physically I am at this home, and that, and the definition of my home, is different. I am not in geographical or physical exile. I still continue to live and I hope to live to the end on the same street, in the same house. But obviously I have been in trouble ideologically, politically, and felt not "at home" at home as Adorno suggested. (179)

Here, the significance of being "at home" is doubled in a syntactical paradox: a literal and physical meaning of *home* and a figurative and conceptual meaning of "at-homeness." For Pamuk, this double meaning of home is self-imposed and deliberately irresolvable. Moreover, it would be promising to understand it in relation to problematic self-identification with the city. This is indeed never settled for the insider (who is physically at home) or the outsider (who is mentally not at home).

Shortly following this elaboration on home, and in response to Mirze's questions about his memoir Istanbul, Pamuk makes this confession:

> Actually, my intention was to write a book on Istanbul, not on myself. But then I realized as I wrote the book this fact, which Walter Benjamin pointed out years ago when he was writing about the German writer Hessel's Berlin book: that there are two kinds of city books, those written by outsiders, which Benjamin pointed out tend to be exotic, and those written by insiders who live in the city, and that kind of city book tends to be autobiographical. That was the heart of the matter. And Benjamin had already recognized problems of the book I was going to write, so I followed the logical conclusion and made my city book also an autobiography. So my intent was not initially to write an autobiography, but, to be honest, my city book was going to be autobiographical anyway. (180)

Here, he refers to Benjamin's "The Return of the Flâneur" (1999b [1929]), in which the author neatly distinguishes city books between two categories. Based on their writers' chosen

perspectives, a city book can be an outsider's exotic and other-oriented travelogue or an insider's nostalgic and self-preoccupied autobiography:

> The superficial pretext – the exotic and the picturesque – appeals only to the outsider. To depict a city as a native would calls for other, deeper motives – the motives of the person who journeys into the past, rather than to foreign parts. (Benjamin 1999b, 262)

Benjamin further suggests that the outsider's and the insider's city experiences are *a whole world* apart. Of course, this separation is not a physical one. Importantly, it points to the irreducible distance between the two incompatible "homes," as elaborated in Adorno's irony "to be not at home in one's home."

By this token, it may seem justified to suggest that Pamuk readily assumes his insider position in reading his city. This is only half of the story and true only if the book in question – Istanbul: Memories and the City – is unquestionably read as an autobiography. Ángel Gurría-Quintana conducted an earlier interview for The Paris Review (Pamuk 2008 [2005], 355-78),[2] in which Pamuk offered a more complex conceit on the literary form of the book:

> I recently published a book called Istanbul. Half of it is my autobiography […] and the other half is an essay about Istanbul, or more precisely, a child's vision of Istanbul. It's a combination of thinking about images and landscapes and the chemistry of a city, and a child's perception of that city, and that child's autobiography. (361)

Pamuk takes pride in this innovative crossover between an autobiography and an essay about the city.

There is always privilege in reading the city from an insider perspective which cannot be enjoyed otherwise. Many critics are skeptical of the insider's potentially self-indulgent position. For instance, in his "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said spells out the curse of always being an insider, as one of those who "are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home" (2000 [1984], 186). For Said, exiles perceive the idea of home as plural.

Importantly, Pamuk does not indulge in an exclusively insider perspective: he also embraces the outside.[3] In Istanbul, Pamuk anticipates the outiders' gaze as their perspectives of reading the city would infallibly contest and mediate with the insiders'.

In Pamuk's self-justification of "being not 'at home' at home," the non-physical conceptual meaning of "home" is always inaccessible. The speculation of this unattainable home is figured in the explicit imagination of a double, which is central to Pamuk's body of work. The double can be considered the athor's, the narrator's, or the protagonist's Doppelgänger, as he who feels effortlessly at ease in his city and attains a feeling of at-homeness. Such a feeling is otherwise out of reach or brutally alienated.

Hence, duality emerges through two "homes": a physical home wherein one takes root and always finds shelter, and an imaginative "perfect" home where the ideal Doppelgänger resides. In this chapter, the constant meditation between these two homes illuminates my reading of Pamuk's fourth novel The Black Book (trans. Güneli Gün 1994; trans. Maureen Freely 2006) [Kara Kitap (1990)] and his memoir Istanbul: Memories and the City (trans. Maureen Freely (2005) [İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir (2003)]. These two works belong to different literary forms. The novel is fiction, a work of the imagination, whereas the memoir is a factual account of Istanbul told through personal memories. However, they share one common feature: the invention of an idealised Doppelgänger who inhabits an unattainable home or an alternative Istanbul which the implied or explicit author of the narrative endeavours, but eventually fails, to reach.

These two "homes" share the bitter and difficult fact that they are unattainable. It is equally hard to admit that one can never go back exactly to the city of their birth, just as one would never be able to reach a "perfect" home. To Pamuk, the distance between these two

homes forces one to leave their comfortable home for a meditative journey, and to stroll in the textual city of Istanbul as a flâneur in search of unreachable home. This forced departure may affect anyone, that is, either Pamuk the writer, his protagonist, the translator, the implied author, the implied reader, the local reader in Turkish, the international reader, or the critic.

If we recognise the ideal figure as the flâneur's double, said flâneur can be described as the double of his perceived double, who wanders in the city in pursuit of his imagined Doppelgänger. It is through this search that one can concede the inevitable imperfection in one's life or world. As a result, we can optimistically say that one's second or new life *begins* or *begins again*. In Pamuk's textual reconstruction of Istanbul from his memories, the flâneur in all his incarnations, cumulates insider and outsider statuses in the city, in the paradoxical position of being not "at home" at home. In this position, morality is said to begin. However, the implications behind the idea that "morality begins" are far more complex than the syntactical structure in which it is delivered.

I have already emphasised the verb "to begin." Indeed, my premise is that all Pamuk's novels should primarily be addressed with this critical enquiry in mind: how and when does the novel *begin*? This question complicates our conception of home and translates the irreducible distance between the "comfortable home" and the "unreachable home." However, first we must take a detour to Pamuk's memoir Istanbul: Memories and the City before we head to fictional Istanbul in The Black Book.

Chronologically, in their original Turkish pulibications, The Black Book ([1990]) was published before the memoir ([2003]). Curiously, though, shortly after Pamuk's 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature, a new English version of The Black Book emerged, conducted by his memoir's translator, Maureen Freely. The reason why this novel was translated twice remains

unexplained. Sevinç Türkkan makes a case study on what she calls the "double life" of this novel in English in her essay "Orhan Pamuk's <u>Kara Kitap</u> [<u>The Black Book</u>]: A Double Life in English" (2012). Notably, Gün did not only translate <u>The Black Book</u> but also Pamuk's subsequent novel <u>The New Life</u> (1994 [1998]). Observing that "both <u>The Black Book</u> and <u>The New Life</u> in Gün's translation were harshly criticised," Türkkan raises these questions:

> why is it that only <u>The Black Book</u> appears in a new translation? Why is it that Pamuks's first two novels <u>Cevdet Bey ve Oğullari</u> [<u>Cevdet Bey and Sons</u>] and <u>Sessiz Ev</u> [<u>Silent House</u>][4] haven't been translated into English yet? How has Pamuk's image as an international writer evolved and is supported by the translations since the Nobel Prize? How can we account for the differences between Gün and Freely's translations when both versions tell the same story but stylistically in two entirely different ways? (162)

All these questions are interesting but may not generate definite answers. And, specifically, I will come back to Türkkan's notion of "double life" in the final section of this chapter. Here, I would like to point out that Maureen Freely translated the following works of Pamuk's chronologically in their English publications: they are <u>Istanbul</u> (2005), <u>The Black Book</u> (2006), the essay collection <u>Other Colors</u> [<u>Öteki Renkler</u>] (2008 [2007]) and <u>The Museum of Innocence</u> [<u>Masumiyet Müzesi</u>] (2009 [2008]).[5] One particular element that all these works share is Pamuk's contemporary Istanbul. To have all these works translated by the same person means that textual Istanbul is consistent to the English reader.[6] For this reason, I usually quote from Freely's version.[7] Thus, <u>Istanbul</u> can be taken as a guidebook for English reader into Pamuk's fictional Istanbul, as it is the first one, of Freely translations to English.

Being Not-At-Home At Home: Istanbul and the *Hüzün*

In his essay "Extraterritorial" (1976 [1969]), George Steiner describes "a writer linguistically 'unhoused'" or "not thoroughly at home in the language of his production but displaced or hesitant at the frontier" (4). He briefly introduces Oscar Wilde, Samuel Beckett,

and notably Vladimir Nabokov as three examples of the 'unhoused' "wanderer across languages" (11). Each of them is never "truly at home inside a language," but, because of and despite that, masters the art of "us[ing the language] as an instrument" (Steiner 5). For Steiner, such displacement could be understood in Adorno's term as "the very opposite of native 'at-homeness' (*Geborgenheit*)" (Adorno in Steiner 5) – which relates to Adorno's irony of "being not at home at home" as set forth earlier.

In her Introduction to the section "Cluster on Turkey" in the January 2008 issue of PMLA, Hülya Adak evokes "Exiles At Home," and summarises the direction she proposes for understanding Turkish literature in relation to global literary studies. She also elaborates on her chosen title "Exiles At Home" in reference to Adorno's irony of home that Pamuk raises in the interview discussed above: "The articles in this cluster all discuss authors who, in Orhan Pamuk's term, do not feel 'at home' at home" (Adak 20). However, does Pamuk really mean "exile" when he paraphrases Adorno? We should be careful not to easily assume that the opposite of "at-homeness," or the equivalent of feeling not at home, refers only to exile.

At the beginning of his memoir Istanbul: Memories and the City (2005), Pamuk considers himself different from V. S. Naipaul, Joseph Conrad, and Vladimir Nabokov. He asserts that their imaginations "were fed by exile, a nourishment drawn not through roots but through rootlessness" (6). Pamuk finds such "roots" important as a source of inspiration for his imagination, but they are disavowed by those writers and absent in their works. While exiles like Adorno or Naipaul inevitably experience a strong meaning of "ruin and dereliction, of out-of-placeness" upon arriving in a foreign country (Naipaul 1987, 19),[8] Pamuk endeavours to explore this "out-of-placeness" at home, by actively locating the vestiges left by various departures. He performs this not through artificial estrangement or self-imposed

defamiliarisation, but through a game of inventing a different persona. Not only does he invent an implied author for many of his novels, but he also imagines his own double. At the heart of Pamuk's Istanbul dwells the writer's imagined Doppelgänger: "Another Orhan."[9] According to the writer, he "must have emerged from a web of rumors, misunderstandings, illusions, and fears" (2005, 3).

Pamuk remembers when he first encountered his double at the age of five, he was sent to stay with his aunt in the Cihangir district in Istanbul while his parents were in Paris. In this new house, he was a "sweet doe-eyed boy inside the small white frame" of a picture hanging on a wall (4). Pamuk recounts how he kept asking himself whether this boy was "the Orhan who lives in that other house," but as he emphasises, he knew at that time that he "was not the boy in the picture" (4). Immediately before the sentence ends, he adds an aside to set distance from this boy by labelling the picture as "a kitsch representation of a 'cute child' that someone had brought back from Europe" (4).

This painted boy serves compellingly as the protagonist of an imagined alternative life. This narrative relies upon the special past tense in Turkish – known as the "narrative past" or "indefinite past." This verb tense "allows [the speaker] to distinguish hearsay from what [he has] seen with [his] own eyes" (8). Pamuk explains that it is the tense one uses to relate dreams, fairy tales, or past events that could not have been witnessed, "just as we learn about our lives from others, so too do we let others shape our understanding of the city in which we live" (8).[10] Right before this explanatory note, Pamuk recounts the scene following his birth.[11] At the end of that scene, he describes how his mother "first set eyes on [him]" and "found [him] thinner and more fragile than [his] brother had been" (7). In the original Turkish text, the equivalent of the main verb "found" is "düşündü" (Pamuk 2003, 16) – this third person

singular definite past connotes the conceit that "she thought." In the next paragraph, he then adds: "Aslında 'düşünmüs' demeliydim" (16),[12] which means "in fact, I should have said "'*düşünmüs*' [instead of '*düşündü*']." The morpheme "-müs" in the verb "*düşünmüs*" is a derivative of the suffix "-*mis*" in the indefinite past tense's formation. To modify "*düşündü*" as "*düşünmüs*" adds an underlying frame of "as I was told" and reduces the scene to a second-hand story. Importantly, the image of the boy, perfect in the eyes of others was imported from Europe. It births the "other Orhan" who gradually and ineluctably grows into a character in an alternative narrative. In turn, this alternative narrative is framed by implied indefiniteness through the hidden phrase "as I was told" or "as if": "as if my life were something that happened to someone else, as if it were a dream in which I felt my voice fading and my will succumbing to enchantment" (2005, 8).

The temptation to live up to this ideal image's expected life and to write about his life within frame of anticipation in the indefinite past tense is enormous:

> Once upon a time I used to paint, I hear I was born in Istanbul, and I understand that I was a somewhat curious child. Then, when I was twenty-two, I seem to have begun writing novels without knowing why. (8)

Nevertheless, Pamuk resists and chooses not to develop these sentences into a full narrative. He comments that in Turkish these different past tenses constitute "a useful distinction to make as we 'remember' our earliest life experiences, our cradles, our baby carriages, our first steps, all as reported by our parents, stories to which we listen with the same rapt attention we might pay some brilliant tale of some other person" (8). Despite this alternative narrative's convenience and rhetorical beauty, he condemns it as inauthentic and unconvincing. Reviving his first-person reflective voice, he protests: "for I cannot accept that the myths we tell about our first lives prepare us for the brighter, more authentic second lives that are meant to begin

when we awake" (8). The "authentic second lives" do not refer solely to people's. Istanbul is also haunted by the different myths of its "first" life in the eyes of the other, be it a cliché, an outsider's exotic city, or a false ideal. Its authentic side could only be explored from the imperfect flâneur's perspective: he who simultaneously embraces insider and outsider points of view.

In "The Divided Self of the Eastern Quest" (1979) Jale Parla provocatively observes that "the tale of an identity and power quest of a hero who encountered his double in the colonized East" (Parla 1979, 201 quoted in Almond 2007, 121) summarises the nineteenth-century Oriental tale, such as William Beckford's History of the Caliph Vathek, Byron's Turkish tales and Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, and Gérard de Nerval's Voyage en Orient. Basing himself on Parla's argument, Ian Almond further suggests that, for nineteenth-century European writers, the East was "a source not of knowledge but self-knowledge" as "a means by which s/he […] could construct a 'true' identity for himself through an immersion in the exotic" (121).

In his reading of Pamuk's The Black Book, Almond points out how the novel "performs an interesting parody of this function" and subverts "the traditional use of the Orient" (121-2). He writes, "The secular Western hero of the text, a comfortably middle-class Istanbul lawyer [Galip], moves deeper and deeper into the book's Orient and its various hurufisms and messianisms, not to find his identity but ultimately to lose it" (122). Almond means that Galip intends to find his identity, but is instead led astray. Galip's quest of the self will be further discussed during my close reading of The Black Book. Delving into the Orientalist image and the outsiders' impression of Istanbul, then engaging the city from an

insider's perspective, deepens the subversion of this "Eastern quest" in relation to Pamuk's memoir.

"Another Orhan" shares with Baudelaire's dandy flâneur his aura of perfection and becomes a rival protagonist:

> Whenever I was unhappy, I imagined going to the other house, the other life, the place where the other Orhan lived, and in spite of everything I'd half convince myself that I was he and took pleasure in imagining how happy he was, such pleasure that, for a time, I felt no need to go to seek out the other house in that other imagined part of the city. (Pamuk 2005, 5)

This scenario introduces "the heart of the matter": that he has "never left Istanbul, never left the houses, streets, and neighborhoods of [his] childhood" (5). This echoes another "heart of the matter" in his interview with Mirze about the autobiographical nature of Istanbul: he admits that his initial "intention was to write a book on Istanbul, not on [him]self" (Mizre 180). How the book became autobiographical deals with Benjamin's review of Hessel, discussed earlier. Although this was not initially his intention, Pamuk's "city book was going to be autobiographical anyway" (Mizre 180), and indeed fated to be so. It was fated, because it was the only way that Pamuk could write about Istanbul from an authentic perspective without slipping into a collection of diverse hearsay accounts: hence, the relevance of retrieving this first-person flâneur's authentic voice. It is in fact by confronting this "other Orhan" that the writer is able to write about Istanbul in the city's vernacular, and to foreground the witness's narrative by using the definite past.

Pamuk may have gone too far in suggesting that fate bound him to using his hometown as his working subject: "Istanbul's fate is my fate. I am attached to this city because it has made me who I am" (2005, 6). Pamuk does not grant himself the existential freedom to choose: he submits to the idea of fate that requires him to "stay in the same city, on the same

307

street, in the same house, gazing at the same view" (6). However, he also acknowledges that "no one can really say what counts as 'going too far,'" not in reference to his own remark on fate, but to some western writers' accounts of Istanbul (235). He offers this example: "when western travelers see cemeteries as part of the city's everyday life, they are going too far" (235).[13] Nevertheless, Pamuk proposes that a city "owes its very character to the ways in which it 'goes too far,' and while an outside observer can take things out of proportion by paying excessive attention to certain details, these are often the same details that come to define that city's nature" (235). Arguably, the same applies to the way he, as an insider, perceives how his memoir "is concerned with fate" (7), inasmuch as it attempts to delve into the city's eternal melancholy. For both outside observers and inside Istanbulites (*Istanbullus*), this "melancholy" defines the city's nature. However, Pamuk notes a subtle discrepancy in its implications between outside and inside perspectives. At the beginning of his memoir, he sums up what the city meant to him: Istanbul "has always been a city of ruins and of end-of-empire melancholy. I've spent my life either battling with this melancholy or (like all *İstanbullus*) making it my own" (6).

The word "melancholy" has its etymological roots in ancient Greek from the term "*melaina kole*," which literally means black bile. It appears as "*melankoli*" in Turkish as a modern French loanword.[14] Thus, Théophile Gautier defined the beauty of the city in his travel journals of his trip to Istanbul in 1852, then Constantinople under the Ottoman rule.[15] Gautier's travelogue first appeared as regular entries in <u>La Presse</u> for over a year. In 1854, it was compiled and published as a single volume under the title "Constantinople."[16] In Gautier's account of Istanbul, melancholy is the essence of the city's incomprehensible and impenetrable beauty. At some point during this trip, Gautier hired a horse and rode through

what he called "those remote districts of Constantinople which [were] but rarely visited by travellers" (214). On this, he reflects, "I do not suppose that there is in the world a ride more austerely melancholy than upon this road, which extends for nearly a league, between a cemetery and a mass of ruins" (220). Pamuk quotes the same passage to express the thrill derived from confirming that the roots of Istanbul's austere melancholy are indeed European. He asserts that "the concept was first explored, expressed, and poeticized in French" (2005, 233). Pamuk also notes that Gautier's writings strongly influenced other Turkish writers in their search for "an image of melancholic 'Ottoman-Turkish' Istanbul" (114), particularly the novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar and the poet Yahya Kemal. In other words, as Pamuk comments in a separate passage, Tanpınar and Kemal were influenced in their commitment to "a political agenda": "They were picking their way through the ruins," following Gautier and Nerval's footsteps, "looking for signs of a new Turkish state, a new Turkish nationalism" (249).

When Nerval and Gautier paid their respective visits to Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire was gradually declining and "had slowly lost its territories in the Balkans and the Middle East, growing smaller and smaller" (245). Although their Istanbul accounts address the city's *tristesse*, they only captured the surface layer of this mood, capturing the writers' individualistic melancholy more than the Istanbulites' sadness. As Pamuk notes, "Gautier allowed this melancholy to seep into his own observations" during his trip to Istanbul (248-9), without knowing that the melancholy that he shared with Nerval carried personal implications for the Parisian poet. Nerval believed that "there is nothing left to live for but 'vulgar distractions' and that he had sought the inane distraction of wandering all over the world gazing at the clothes and strange customs of distant countries" (221). Nerval's need for

distraction and Gautier's indulgence in self-aestheticised sentiment are characteristic of the outsider-traveller. Nerval and Gautier are foreign to Istanbul and represent "Western observers" who, driven by curiosity, "love to identify the things that make Istanbul exotic, nonwestern" (242). In Gautier's experience, there is a dissonance between misrecognising Istanbul exotically nonwestern and melancholy's traditional western roots.

However, Pamuk indicates that even "[i]f western travelers embroider Istanbul with illusions, fantasies about the East, there is no harm done to Istanbul," as the West never colonised Istanbul or Anatonia (242).[17] Instead, for Pamuk, what appears problematic in Gautier's account is that it does not address the following question sufficiently: "why it is that *İstanbullus* have been unable to throw off their *hüzün*" (242). In our contemporary, this question is complicated by the "drive to westernize and the concurrent rise of Turkish nationalism" (235). Istanbulites find themselves torn from within, and develop peculiar "love-hate relationship with the western gaze" (235). Pamuk elaborates on this "brutal symbiosis," and explains how "Western observers love to identify the things that make Istanbul exotic, nonwestern, whereas the westernizers among us [Istanbulites] register all the same things as obstacles to be erased from the face of the city as fast as possible" (242). Istanbulite writers such as Tanpınar and Kemal became obsessed with the melancholic mood inherited from Gautier's travel notes. Indeed, it offers a convenient image of Istanbul, from which local writers could develop their own imaginings of the city as the afterlives of this image. This melancholy is as seductive to them as "another Orhan" for Pamuk, as a ready-to-take image from a European painting, conveniently setting up an imitable model.

For Pamuk, an observant flâneur might appreciate Istanbul's beauty in John Ruskin's "picturesque" terms.[18] Reading Ruskin, Pamuk relates picturesque beauty to an architectural

landscape: this beauty "rises out of details that emerge only after a building has been standing for hundreds of years, from ivy, herbs, and grassy meadows that surround it, from the rocks in the distance, the clouds in the sky, and the choppy sea" (254). Pamuk remarks that those "who take pleasures in the accidental beauty" are "people who come from the outside" (257). Especially in Istanbul, to savour back streets, see beauty in poverty and historical decay, recognise the picturesque in ruins, or in short, to appreciate accidental grace, one "must, first and foremost, be a stranger" to the city (256). Pamuk emphasises that the ruins featured in these picturesque scenes – be it "a crumbling wall, a wooden tekke" etc. – "don't look beautiful to the people who live among them; they speak instead of squalor, helpless hopeless neglect" (256-7). He thereby provisionally locates Tanpınar and Kemal as Istanbul insiders who go outside to look for the city's essence. For Pamuk, they "struggled to do poetic justice to the beauties of such neighborhoods and worried that their 'pure' culture might disappear with Westernization" (257).

In this context, struggling towards poetic justice echoes Adorno's rebuke of home: while the picturesque beauty is an antithesis to home, these Turkish writers are reluctant to recognise it. Pamuk notes how they remained in bad faith: "Yahya Kemal was himself living in Pera," while "Tanpınar was residing in even more comfortable Beyoğlu" – both westernised districts of Istanbul (257) – yet, they "drew upon beautiful, nationalist, melancholy, and picturesque scenes from another part of the city (the poor neighborhoods of the Old City)," which was actually no home to them, "to create an image of Old Istanbul for *İstanbullus* of later generations" (259). For Pamuk, such a nationalist approach merely offers "an innocent view of tradition" (262), with the picturesque, the melancholy of the ruins as a backdrop. Yet the narratives produced from this perspective "were loath to examine the dark evils that might

311

be lurking beneath the surface" (262). These "dark evils" inhabit the realms of our "most primitive hatreds, fears, and anxieties" which Pamuk finds necessary to explore (2008 [2005], 228).

If melancholy is only relevant to Istanbul's surface, Pamuk endeavours to reach the city's depth, and remap Istanbul from an outside to an inside perspective. He performs this by translating Gautier's perception of "melancholy" in the picturesque façade of Istanbul back into the city's vernacular, through the untranslatable idea of *hüzün* in Turkish.[19] Pamuk insists that "[*h*]*üzün* is not a feeling belonging to the outsider observer" (2005, 103). What he has taken pains to describe in his book, he emphasises, is "not the melancholy of Istanbul but the *hüzün* in which we [Istanbulites] see ourselves reflected, the *hüzün* we absorb with pride and share as a community" (94). Although "*hüzün* stems from the same 'black passion' as melancholy," Pamuk tells his reader, there is an "essential difference between the two words" (92). While the melancholy in Gautier's writing is individualistic, *hüzün* is communal: "Now we begin to understand *hüzün* not as the melancholy of a solitary person but the black mood shared by millions of people together" (92). Pamuk relates "*hüzün*" to Islamic history and Arabic roots: "when it appears in the Koran (as *huzn* in two verses and *hazen* in three others) it means much the same thing as the contemporary Turkish word" (90).

Nonetheless, *hüzün*'s connotations are inconsistent because it is based on two distinct philosophical traditions. "According to the first tradition," Pamuk elaborates, "we experience the thing called *hüzün* when we have invested too much in worldly pleasures and material gain" (90). However, for Pamuk, the *hüzün* in Istanbul emerges from a different tradition – Sufi mysticism, which "offers a more positive and compassionate understanding of the word and of the place of loss and grief in life" (90). He explains, "[t]o the Sufis, *hüzün* is the

spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close enough to Allah, because we cannot do enough for Allah in this world" (90). Curiously, the irony is that "it is the absence, not the presence of *hüzün*" that leads to the distress of *hüzün*'s black passion. For a true Sufi follower, "[i]t is the failure to experience *hüzün* that leads him to feel it; he suffers because he has not suffered enough" (91). Pamuk further translates this into the mood shared among contemporary Istanbulites:

> the fastest flight from the *hüzün* of the ruins is to ignore all historical monuments and pay no attention to the names of buildings or their architectural particularities. For many Istanbul residents, poverty and ignorance have served them well to this end. History becomes a word with no meaning; they take stones from the city walls and add them to modern materials to make new buildings, or they go about restoring old buildings with concrete. But it catches up with them: By neglecting the past and severing their connection with it, the *hüzün* they feel in their mean and hollow efforts is all the greater. *Hüzün* rises out of the pain they feel for everything that has been lost, but it is also what compels them to invent new defeats and new ways to express their impoverishment. (103)

Therefore, we elaborate *hüzün* as humbly accepting life's imperfections, conceding contentment with disappointment, and willingly embracing impoverishment. In Islamic culture, *hüzün* is generally held in high esteem, and is not associated with moral decadence as melancholy is in Christian culture.[20]

It is important to note that Pamuk never refers to *hüzün* as "the city's essence." Unlike outside observers, he refuses to essentialise Istanbul by identifying *hüzün* the city's essence. Outsiders endeavour to lift the incomprehensible aura of the city and to "'discover' the city's soul in its ruins" (256). The implication is that seeking this essence and believing in its existence are both in bad faith, since what constitutes the city's essence is in most cases a subjective construct. Therefore, it would be misleading to take *hüzün* for the essence of Istanbul. However, in the English translation, Maureen Freely interprets Pamuk's idea that

Istanbul or "the city itself becomes the very illustration, the very essence, of *hüzün*" (94) through a surprising syntactical reversal in the anticipated phrase – that is, rather than "*hüzün* as the essence of the city," it is the city that becomes "the very essence of *hüzün*" (94). Instead of searching assumed melancholy on a stroll through the city, Pamuk offers that one should look for the city while wander through memories of communal *hüzün*: "To feel this *hüzün* is to see the scenes, evoke the memories" (94). Pamuk contends that Baudelaire's flâneur or the passionate observer and its Western literary rewritings could not grasp the essence of *hüzün* in Istanbul. For instance, Pamuk reads Balzac's Rastignac as "an individual standing against society" with his fury and ambition and therefore an inadequate reader of the city (104). Differently, "*hüzün*" suggests "an erosion of the will to stand against the values and mores of the community and encourages us to be content with little, honoring the virtues of harmony, uniformity, humility" (104). The intensity of *hüzün* is intrinsically woven into "the history of the city following the destruction of the Ottoman Empire – and even more importantly – the way this history is reflected in the city's 'beautiful' landscapes and its people" (91). *Hüzün* does not afford personal ambition and material comfort, but instead "allows the people of Istanbul to think of defeat and poverty not as a historical end point but as an honorable beginning, fixed long before they were born" (104). Pamuk subtly suggests that Istanbul's ruins have been taken as signs of an anticipated end point. From this outside perspective, there is no more beginning and the city's visual experience is sustained as a static landscape painting of picturesque scenery. However, Pamuk's interpretation of the *hüzün* offers an alternate view of the city, for which a fictional narrative has yet to be written.

This idea intimates an implicit paradox. It is suggested that *hüzün* offers a choice to take the Ottoman Empire's fading glory as a beginning or an end; Pamuk declares that

"Istanbul carries its *hüzün* by choice," not as an essence in itself (103). However, contradictory to the implication of this choice, defeat and poverty can also be considered a matter of fate, for they had been "fixed" long before any decision or choice appeared. This paradox should remind us of many other paradoxes pertaining to the problematics of home, or to the threshold between the inside and the outside. To embrace this *hüzün* is to be humbly satisfied with being ordinary: that is, being left outside. In his Nobel Lecture "My Father's Suitcase" (2008 [2006], 405-17), Pamuk calls this the foremost object of "humanity's basic fears":

> the fear of being left outside, and the fear of counting for nothing, and the feelings of worthlessness that come with such fears; the collective humiliations, vulnerabilities, slights, grievances, sensitivities, and imagined insults, and the nationalist boasts and inflations that are their next of kin... (413)[21]

In this Nobel Lecture, Pamuk enriches the understanding of this outside as a world illusorily and ideologically mapped with incompatible centres. He offers this personal account: "As for my place in the world – in life, as in literature, my basic feeling was that I was not in the center" (410).

The Procrastination of Beginnings in <u>The Black Book</u>

The fear of being peripheral to the centre or left outside is a recurring theme in Pamuk's novels. Once more, it relates to Adorno's irony of "being not at home at home." The concept is complicated and elaborated by the arbitrary idea of a perceived "centre," with variants such as "being away from centre at home" or "being away from home in pursuit of the centre."

In Pamuk's 2008 interview with Mirze, he paraphrases: "morality begins when you do not feel at home." Ther verb "begins" is refreshing – Adorno had never had much faith in

anticipating this. By paraphrasing, Pamuk breathes life and optimism into Adorno's ironic interpretation of home. Still, a disagreement emerges between the perception of *beginning* and the idea of *home*. This dissonance in Pamuk's paraphrase also alludes to the writer's difficulty, if he claims to always be at home, to narrate his hometown. In this phrase, the condition that "one doesn't feel at home" should not be taken as prerequisite for morality but for the action, or intention, to begin anew.

The verb "begin" implies restoration, renewal, or redemption that should potentially follow termination, death, and in Adorno's pessimistic worldview, the end of humanity. After the end, as a cliché would have it, a new beginning might come promisingly. However, from the perspective of one who always stays home, a new beginning becomes very difficult to locate unless he surrenders this comfortable sense of home as an insider and experiences the city from the perspective of an outsider. This transition can be noted in all of Pamuk's novels, though slightly modified in each case.

Beginning, according to Edward Said, is always inseparable from intention. In his Beginnings: Intention and Method (1975), Said contends that the novel as a literary form should be understood as "an institutionalization of the intention to begin" (100), thus a rewording of his chapter title "the novel as beginning intention." [22] The word "institutionalization" suggests a tradition or an institutionalised practice of literary production, pertaining to Western canon. According to Said, for every novel, there is a beginning, an intention from which fictional world imagining embarks, as a beginning. In many of Pamuk's novels,[23] there is a common pattern that the beginning usually comes about through the sacrifice of an irreplaceable home.

In what Said offers as a thumbnail definition of "beginning," he suggests, "The beginning is the first step in the intentional production of meaning" (5). For Pamuk, this step may not be assumed as the point of departure in writing a novel.[24] Instead, beginning becomes the troubling condition in which his novels' implied authors[25] inevitably get caught. It usually comes with regret or a bitter moment of epiphany. Many of his novels operate as metanarratives preoccupied by the question of how not to prematurely begin or how to begin at all.

In the openings of Pamuk's novels, or those of the implied fictional narratives therein,[26] we hear the resentment over the end of a hitherto happy life from the first person perspective of a character or from that of the implied author of the narrative in question. For instance, the first voice we encounter in My Name is Red (trans. Erdağ Göknar 2001) belongs to the corpse of a murdered man lying "at the bottom of a well" (3). He confesses ironically that only after he lost his life did he know that "[he]'d been happy" (3). Recounting how he "earned nine hundred silver coins a month," he admits that it "naturally [and] only makes all of this even harder to bear" (3). In fact, the speaking voice can only begin his life narration from the afterlife or from an alienated position, as if it were someone else's story.

In the first chapter of Snow (trans. Maureen Freely 2004), the narrator vaguely addresses his protagonist Kerim Alakusoglu, or Ka,[27] as "our traveler," as Ka departs from his hometown, Istanbul, to the remote Anatonian village of Kars. Acknowledging that "Our traveler had spent his years of happiness and childhood in Istanbul," the narrator justifies the protagonist's optimism during the bus ride to the rural village, yet remarks with the ominous tone of a tragic chorus that he (Ka) "dared to believe himself at home in this world" (2011, 12). The verb phrase "dared to believe" suggests that what awaits the protagonist ahead will

eventually drive him away from this comforting and innocent perception of feeling at home in the world. This narrative is not – or, in fact, cannot be – narrated from the perspective of Ka, because, like the opening speaker in My Name is Red, he does not survive the moment when the beginning conditions become possible. His story can only be told posthumously, and ironically, as his afterlife: it truly begins with the deprivation of feeling at home. In the opening pages of the novel, the narrator revealing himself as a friend of Ka's and implicitly suggests that he can only thread the narrative of his friend's ventures in the village by reading scattered notes in his personal journals. Snow is one of the numerous books in which Pamuk employs the frame of an implied author in pursuit of the protagonist as his perceived double: one assumes the role of an implied author and follows the footprints of a protagonist in the hope of that this will unite life fragments into a coherent narrative.

Snow and My Name is Red both begin with death. However, there are also other instances in Pamuk's novels where a beginning can be achieved without sacrificing any character's life, yet at a very high price. Radically, this should be understood as the epiphany in perceiving the possibility of "a new life." Let us look at the opening sentence of Pamuk's fifth novel The New Life (trans. Güneli Gün 1997). Intentionally incorporating the mystical structure of Sufi storytelling, the book opens straightforwardly: "I read a book one day and my whole life was changed" (3).[28] "The New Life" is also the title of the fictional book which changes its reader's life. As the narrator proclaims: "Nothing besides the book could reveal to me what was my necessary course of action, what it was that I might believe in, or observe, and what path my life was to take in the new country in which I found myself" (4). Within the narrative, the imagined book becomes the surrogate guidebook towards a radical beginning:

318

"Yet I knew the new life was built on words in the guidebook" (4) – a beginning so radical that one's life cannot be perceived as it used to be but as "the new life," with a new beginning.

Pamuk's eighth novel The Museum of Innocence (trans. Maureen Freely 2009) opens into a similar moment of epiphany that promises a beginning, albeit at the price of happiness instead of one's life:

> It was the happiest moment of my life, though I didn't know it. Had I known, had I cherished the gift, would everything have turned out differently? Yes, if I had recognized this instant of perfect happiness, I would have held it fast and never let it slip away. (1)

In this passage, the distance between the past "I didn't know" and the hypothetical "Had I known" is suggestive. Rhetorical beauty lies in the irony that the narrative is possible and that its beginning can happen *only* once ignorance is acknowledged, and once the previously unrecognised perfect happiness is understood to be over. Yet, it is exactly by this condition of ignorance of sustained unawareness that makes the happiest moment "slip away" from the narrator. The ironic inference is that the beginning would not be possible or necessary if the narrator was always able to get a hold of happiness and immerse himself in "the deepest peace" therein (3). The novel's opening scene is reminiscent of Leo Tolstoy's famous first line of Anna Karenina: "All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way" (1998 [1877], 1). Referencing this line as an instance of a beginning condition, Said offers, "[i]n order to be original and recognized as such, a life must be different and novel. And to be different is to sense most of the time that one's life has an uncommon, even unhappy, destiny" (1975, 143).

On several different occasions, Pamuk also references Anna Karenina when he unpacks the novel form.[29] In "In Kars and Frankfurt" (2008 [2005], 226-36),[30] a lecture first

delivered in Frankfurt 2005, he describes <u>Anna Karenina</u> as "a happily married man's attempt to imagine a woman who destroys her unhappy marriage and then herself" (229).[31] What Pamuk points out is that the novel form allows a novelist to imagine an "other" or a "creature" – that is, a Doppengänger – who is dissimilar to us in esssence, but who "addresses our most primitive hatreds, fears, and anxieties" (228). Like Pamuk's examples, Robinson Crusoe's slave in Daniel Defoe's novel or Gustave Flaubert's "discontented Emma Bovary" (229), the beginning condition of a novel is not the imagination of a life so very different from our own (Said's contention that "a life must be different and novel") but the recognition of the repressed other, the dark shadow of a double lying inside us, whom we normally would not usually wish to acknowledge.

  <u>The Black Book</u> is Pamuk's fourth novel,[32] and the first of two novels which feature prominently contemporary Istanbul, the other being <u>The Museum of Innocence</u>.[33] Pamuk imagines an implied author, Galip, an invented writing subject operating as Pamuk's double, but also the third-person protagonist of a narrative which explores "our most primitive hatreds, fears, and anxieties" (2008, 228). This novel is unique in Pamuk's oeuvres because it opens with a scene which rhetorically prevents the narrative from starting. This reluctance to begin mirrors Pamuk's position as an Istanbul insider; it also recalls the deferral of a bitter transition from being at home to not feeling at home in one's home.

  The title word "black" suggests that both the book and the city are impenetrable. Indeed, it is difficult to pinpoint the black or the novel: What is it about? What actually happen(s) in the plot? What does the word "black" connote? Therefore, the book alludes to the imaginative German book in Edgar Allan Poe's parable "The Man of the Crowd," a book that "does not permit itself to be read" (1975 [1840], 475). Indeed, <u>The Black Book</u>'s plot can be

synopsised precisely and simply:[34] the protagonist Galip strolls in the city of Istanbul while looking for his wife Rüya (who is also his cousin, and whose name means "dream" in Turkish).[35] He believes that Rüya is hiding somewhere in the city with her half-brother Celâl Salik, a famous columnist in the local newspaper Milliyet. He also pursues Celâl's footprints in Istanbul and imagines his whereabouts, hoping to finally locate Celâl and Rüya. In the process, Galip finds the opportunity to impersonate Celâl, is seduced by it, and convinces himself of its necessity. Galip winds up producing newspaper articles in Celâl's name while he is missing, and after his death. In other words, Celâl operates as his double, or is the Doppengänger which Galip yearns for, and eerily, almost but not quite, becomes.

The novel also implicitly responds to the idea that "all happy families are alike": by the novel's end, after Rüya and Celâl's mysterious murder, Galip retreats to a room in his family apartment where he locates "living traces of the happy family that was no longer" (Pamuk 2006, 444). And, more explicitly, the narrator suggests, Galip

> was no longer able to dream of a happy ending, as he had done so often during [Rüya's] first marriage, no longer able to assure himself that one day she would appear out of nowhere to resume their life together, like a book abandoned in the middle. That summer the days were hot and never-ending. (449)

In this passage, the narrator analogises the structural parts of a linear narrative that is "abandoned in the middle" and "never-ending." However, what is more important here is the implicit yet obvious inference that a beginning has nonetheless been triggered, resulting in tragic consequences beyond control or repair.

In The Black Book's first chapter we encounter Galip's family and their life: they are ordinarily happy. However, the novel's supposed beginning is suspended in the first chapter. If, as we saw in Snow, being deprived of feeling at home is a prerequisite for the beginning of

a narrative, in the first chapter of The Black Book, we encounter the deferral of this deprivation or the obsessive indulgence of happy memories for an ordinary family before the disaster arrives, that is, Celâl and Rüya's mysterious disappearance. In the first chapter, the narrator appears to embark on a narrative that endeavours to address this mystery in the guise of a detective fiction, but what is offered is not a beginning that prepares the readers for the ensuing narrative, but a recollection of the good old days through Galip's remembering.

The first chapter is titled "The First Time Galip Saw Rüya" (2006, 3). Despite this straightforward wording, the chapter shows the narrator's reluctance to properly locate the narrative's beginning. The narrator attempts to trace the very beginning of Galip and Rüya's relationship instead of beginning at a sharper moment, such as the moment Galip first realises Rüya's sudden disappearance. Therefore, the narrative flashes back through Galip's memories. The first sentence depicts Rüya sleeping in bed as Galip observes her. Then, he imagines himself strolling in her dream and the "garden" of her memory: "He longed to stroll among the willows, acacias, and sun-drenched climbing roses of the walled garden where Rüya had taken refuge, shutting the doors behind her" (3). The tree images that emerge in his imagination – willows and acacias – pull Galip further back towards the notions of origins and family trees. Thus, the door leading to any "beginning," to the breaking off from the past for a new departure, is figuratively "shut behind."

Obsessing with the past, this first encounter justifies Galip's reluctance to leave the "garden of memories" and to keep the narrative from really beginning. We learn that Galip indeed first met Rüya in their childhood, but the memory is traced back to six months afterwards: "Six months after Rüya's family moved to Istanbul, Galip and Rüya had both come down with mumps" (4). While mumps symptoms already fade away with childhood, his

affection for Rüya does not diminish. Instead, it grows stronger. A locally accepted notion connects the Bosphorus to the mumps as "the pure air of the Bosphorus could cure children of the mumps" (4). Thus, this scene imprints the Bosphorus as a personal landmark in Galip's city memory.[36]

The narrator carefully notes that "the first time Galip saw Rüya" takes place "six months before coming down with the mumps" (4). However, the narrator casually moves on to describe scenes in Istanbul's material culture on the date of this first encounter: "a tall barber with a Douglas Fairbanks mustache," "the [increasing] number of '56 Chevrolets in Istanbul," and "the columns that Celâl published every weekday on page two of Milliyet under the name Selim Kaçmaz" (4). Importantly, here we are given an idea how Celâl's newspaper column intervenes into the family's and the city's everyday life. Later, the narrator will also conjure up another first encounter which Galip had in his childhood – the one he had with the Turkish alphabet:

> but it was not when he first learned how to read, because it was Grandmother who'd taught him two years before starting school. They'd sit at the far end of the dining table. After Grandmother had hoarsely divulged the greatest mystery of all – how the letters joined up to make words – she would puff on the Bafra she'd seen no reason to remove from the side of her mouth, and as her grandson's eyes watered from the cigarette smoke, the enormous horse in his alphabet book would turn blue and come into life. A was for *at*, the Turkish word for *horse*; it was larger even than the bony horses that pulled the carts belonging to the lame water seller and the junk dealer they said was a thief. In those days, Galip would long for a magic potion to pour over the picture of this sprightly alphabet horse, to give it the strength to jump off the page; later on, when they held him back in the first year of primary school and he had to learn how to read and write all over again under the supervision of the very same alphabet horse, he would dismiss this wish as nonsense. (4-5)

This scene soon introduces another implication behind the phrase "the first time Galip Saw Rüya": it can also mean the moment "Galip first read Rüya's name." The name, as the narrator recounts, appears on one of the postcards that Uncle Melih sends back home and that

Grandmother subsequently displays "along the edges of the enormous mirror in the buffet where she kept the liqueurs" (11). However, what is so remarkable in the above scene of alphabet learning is the transition from the divulgence of "the greatest mystery" to the disavowal of this mystery through little Galip's eyes. This transition speaks to almost everyone who has ever described such a smooth shift in experience between two neatly distinguished realms, that is, from naïveté to maturity, from childhood to adulthood, or in William Blake's terms, from "innocence" to "experience."

This transition is triggered by the repetition of the first reading lesson. This lesson initially guarantees something new: Galip's first-time encounter with the alphabet. However, it is then repeated "all over again" in formal schooling. The vivid image of the pony horse galloping out of "A" on the page figuratively shows how the little Galip gives free rein to his imagination. Nonetheless, wonder and excitement exuded by this first reading experience becomes mundane and disappointingly tame when the lesson is identically repeated. Galip conveniently dismisses the conditions for his unbound imagination's indulgence in a single swing of thought as "nonsense," silly, and unworthy for further exploration. So, too, are the perceptions of "the greatest mystery" and the longing for "a magic potion" (5). One may easily join little Galip in ironically overlooking the deeper implications behind this transition and considering it natural. Therefore, we could interpret this novel's procrastinated beginning as a wishful suspension of this transition, lest mystery or innocence be lost, or lest Rüya, the aptly-named embodiment of the naïve dream, be disturbed. Indeed, this irreversible transition is anticipated as inevitable and deferred as unwelcome.

Structurally, the novel resists this transition, most notably by depriving the reader and Galip of any linear or progressive sense of the plot as regards Galip's pursuit of Rüya and

Celâl and his correlated quest for self-knowledge. Instead, by following Galip's footprints, the novel traps the readers in a labyrinth of indecision and Istanbul-based enigmas. The main narrative is fragmented into interrupted chapters (odd number chapters in Part I, and even number chapters in Part II). The alternating chapters are the newspaper articles from Celâl's columns, which Galip purposefully but unsystematically encounters. Each stands alone as a parable that offers a unique, allegorical city reading.

To the reader, these articles appear as a digression. To Galip, however, they provide indirect clues, or pretexts, for him to thread together a narrative from found bits and pieces, with the goal of locating Celâl's (and Rüya's) hideout in the city and elucidating their disappearance. As Margaret Atwood notes in her reading of Pamuk's Snow, "we have already been given an envelope inside an envelope inside an envelope" (2011, viii).[37] A similar remark can be made about The Black Book. In this case the Istanbul of Celâl and Rüya's mystery resides inside another Istanbul chronicled by Celâl, which is cast in the Istanbul which Galip perceives in the material world. We can add to this frame, only to make it overwhelmingly more complex, that this envelope is further enveloped inside Pamuk's imagination, inside the translator's transformative reconstruction, and inside the reader's interpretation.

Thus, in the alternative chapters, each of Celâl's articles provides a clue for threading the scattered episodes of Galip's "main" plot of into a coherent narrative, leading the reader, the narrator, and Galip further inside the labyrinth, and closer (albeit only wishfully) towards the heart of the mystery – the location of Celâl and Rüya. In other words, the narrative structure is a modified version of the one in One Thousand and One Nights (or The Arabian Nights): the narrative unfolds itself as *an* Istanbul within an Istanbul within an Istanbul. In the frame story of One Thousand and One Nights, Scheherazade famously employs digression.

Every night she tells to King Shahryar a story in order to sustain his curiosity and thus defer and evade death. It is a strategy, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter and as Calvino suggests, "for putting off the ending, a multiplying of time within the work, a perpetual evasion or flight" (1988, 46). In Pamuk's novel, what we encounter is not the digression of endings but the procrastination of beginnings.[38]

In The Paris Review interview ([2005]), Pamuk responds to a question about his narrative's traditional sources, including One Thousand and One Nights. He suggests that this collection is part of the cultural "roots" to which he decidedly returned during his years he spent in the United States and when he began to write The Black Book in 1985:

> As a Turk coming from the Middle East, trying to establish himself as an author, I felt intimidated. So I regressed, went back to my "roots." I realized that my generation had to invent a modern national literature. (Pamuk 2008, 366)

Indeed, unlike many of Pamuk's other novels, The Black Book was not written in Pamuk's physical home of Istanbul: it was partially written in the United States.[39] The strong impression of not being at home and the intimidation therefrom prompted him to *regress* and turn to old source texts such as One Thousand and One Nights and traditional Islamic literature. He describes how he incorporates those traditional sources' "wealth of games, gimmicks, and parables" in The Black Book by "set[ting] them in contemporary Istanbul":

> It's an experiment – put everything together, like a Dadaist collage; The Black Book has this quality. Sometimes all these sources are fused together and something new emerges. So I set all these rewritten stories in Istanbul, added a detective plot, and out came The Black Book. But at its source was full strength of American culture and my desire to be a serious experimental writer. (367)

Here, we should note items of relevance to the procrastination of beginnings in The Black Book: Dadaist collage suggests a montage of scenes, images and threads that resist a singular beginning. Some of the stories incorporated in the novel are "rewritten" and

deliberately inserted into textual Istanbul. The result could have been that these rewritten stories function as ornaments and decorations, in a way similar to Said's view of Islamic literature in general. Specially, with respect to the collection <u>One Thousand and One Nights</u>, Said argues that the stories therein are

> ornamental, variations on the world, not completions of it; neither are they lessons, structures, extensions, or totalities designed to illustrate either the author's prowess in representation, the education of a character, or ways in which the world can be viewed and changed. (Said 1975, 81)

In <u>The Black Book</u>, these stories are not part of the main narrative. They show up in alternative chapters as Celâl's scattered column-length articles, the writing of which precedes their author's appearance. They provide commentaries and variations on the main narrative and on Istanbul's fictional landscape.

Said suggests that the Koran is always the main narrative, in relation to which all stories in the tradition of Islamic literature are decorative variations: "life is mediated by the Koran, informed by it [… N]o action can depart from the Koran; rather each action confirms the already completed presence of the Koran and, consequently, human existence" (82). Assuming that Celâl's articles function like the parables in Islamic literature in Said's interpretation – as ornaments to the main narrative that are not intended to allow for the imagination of an alternative world, but to provide instead "variations on the world," Pamuk's incorporation of Islamic storytelling traditions highlights the irony of the articles' function. It is then important to note that this "world" should not be understood as the material, but as the fictional Istanbul created in the novel's main narrative. With the detective plot, this main narrative functions as a "surrogate Koran" to which these ornamental stories in the alternative chapters respond. This replacement's implication is that the novel allows for the imagination

of a new world. As Pamuk notes in "The Implied Author" ([2006]), novels "are new worlds into which we move happily through reading or even more fully by writing" (2008, 7). These new worlds are promised by different moments of inspiration or beginnings: as "ideas, passions, furies and desires" (6) and "the real hunger" for a room or a space of solitude, where one can "invent beautiful dreams about those same crowded places – those family gatherings, school reunions, festive dinners, and all the people who attend them" (5).

The Black Book introduces its readers to a "new world" through Galip's double roles as the implied author and the main narrative protagonist. Galip takes great pains to maintain the important distance between his role as the third-person protagonist and his role as the implied author in the first person. They correspond respectively to the two modes of beginnings which Said identifies. He elaborates this in grammatical terms as the transitive and intransitive beginning:

> These two sides of the starting point entail two styles of thought, and of imagination, one projective and descriptive, the other tautological and endlessly self-mimetic. The transitive mode is always hungering, like Lovelace perpetually chasing Clarissa [in Samuel Richardson's 1748 novel Clarissa] for an object it can never fully catch up with in either space or time. The intransitive, like Clarissa herself, can never have enough of itself – in short, expansion and concentration, or words in language, and the Word. (1975, 73)

According to Said, these two modes of beginnings can be considered "two sides of the same coin" (76): the transitive mode is temporal, while the intransitive one is conceptual. Importantly, the transitive beginning anticipates "a continuity that flows from it" (76). Therefore, it corresponds to language as a Lacanian structure of desire, or in Said's words, "a meaningful series of constantly experienced moments" (76). The intransitive beginning, on the other hand, can be understood as the temptation "to push oneself further and further back to what is only a beginning" (76). This backward thrust defers continuity but gets one "caught in

a tautological circuit of beginnings about to begin" (77). Said attributes the intransitive beginning to the realm of the unknown, spatially outside language, and temporally left behind or before the perceived beginning:

> Because it cannot truly be known, because it belongs more to silence than it does to language, because it is what has always been left behind, and because it challenges continuities that go cheerfully forward with their beginnings obediently affixed – it is therefore something of a necessary fiction. (77)

In correlation to Said's distinction between two modes of beginnings, Galip's distinct roles should be broken down. First, Galip-the-protagonist "he" anticipates a transitive beginning that could lead him progressively forward in a narrative where he can take the role, albeit being ironically unprepared for it, as a protagonist or a hero. Second, because he has already experienced what the protagonist "he" is about to go through in the narrative, Galip-the-implied-author "I" endeavours to recapture the happy moment in a self-reflective intransitive beginning, receding from his epiphany and from the moment when he is deprived of home.

As we see, modes of beginning procrastinate in The Black Book. They also correspond to the two types of disappointment that are woven into the narrative's rhetoric. In the next two sections, I shall elaborate upon these two disappointment perspectives with respect to Pamuk's distinction between the naïve and the sentimental novelist (or reader). He references Friedrich Schiller's essay "Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung" (["On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry"] 1795-6), in his Norton Lectures at Harvard University, which are complied in a single volume as The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist (trans. Nazim Dikbaş 2010).[40]

Before I embark upon my discussion of these types of disappointment, I want to go back to Pamuk's paraphrase of Adorno: that "morality begins when you don't feel at home."

Pamuk's reinterpretation of Adorno's irony also alludes to the saying that "morality begins at home." The juxtaposition of "morality," "beginning," and "home" subtly questions the terms themselves. However, it is not the paradox between the two statements that demands resolution. Instead, innocence ceases to be either at the awakening of morality or at the moment of beginning: according to the Genesis creation myth, morality, or to put it simply, the sense of good and evil, begins as innocence ends. However, beginning is an idea which already entails the violation of innocence. As Hannah Arendt notes, "Cain slew Abel, and Romulus slew Remus; violence was the beginning and, by the same token, no beginning could be made without using violence, without violating" (1990 [1963], 20).

Let us read the phrase again more carefully: "morality begins." We should not overlook the verb's grammatical function: "begin," as it appears in this sentence, is intransitive. In his Norton Lectures, Pamuk makes relevant point on moral judgment and morality. He suggests,

> We make moral judgments about both the choices and the behavior of the protagonists; at the same time, we judge the writer for his moral judgments regarding his characters. Moral judgment is an unavoidable quagmire in the novel. Let us always keep in mind that the art of the novel yields its finest results not through judging people but through understanding them, and let us avoid being ruled by the judgmental part of our mind. When we read a novel, morality should be a part of the landscape, not something that emanates from within us and targets the characters. (2010, 22-3)

Moral judgment, he notes, is unavoidable; but, paradoxically, it is considered a predicament in understanding a novel because when taken for granted, the novel is reduced to its plot's threads, causes and consequences. Morality is perceived as "part of the landscape" – that is, the *terroir* of customs and values in the fictional world. Pamuk distinguishes two attitudes in approaching landscapes in a novel, whether one is a novelist or a reader: in Schiller's terms, these are naïveté and sentimentality.

In short, a naïve novelist or a naïve reader indulges in the tempting confusion between fiction and reality, and refuses to see the line between fiction and reality. Returning to the landscape analogy, this naïve novelist or reader easily "believes in the power of the [moral] landscape" and proceeds to judge the characters and their decisions. A sentimental-reflective novelist (or reader), on the other hand, is always aware of limitations of portraying a fictional world. They cannot ignore that "what we see is restricted by the novel's point of view" (19). Therefore, they tend to "withdraw into a Beckettian silence" (19). I posit that Galip-the-protagonist is a naïve reader of his own narrative and that Galip-the-author is a sentimental novelist. The Black Book's main narrative features Galip's transition from naïveté to sentimentality, and from an unprepared protagonist to an unqualified author.

Istanbul and Its Double: The Unsolved and Unsolvable Mystery

The different emphases in Said's and Pamuk's readings of Anna Karenina point to the discrepancies in their understandings of the novel as a literary form. Said notes that a different and unhappy life is a commonplace beginning for a novel and proposes that nineteenth century novels can be aptly summarised as subversions of bourgeois society "for an adulterous purpose: no longer a marriage between intention and time, narrative had become a private arrangement between an original character […] and that character's version of time" (1975, 143). Characters such as Hardy's Jude, Melville's Captain Ahab, Dickens's Pip, and Stendhal's Julien Sorel are "hungry for the distinction of more and more originality" (143). However, all of them end up in inconsolable despair: as Said explicitly puts it, one inevitably fails to "simultaneously pursue the quest that defines his putative originality and participate in the generative processes of life" (144). Remarkably, Said considers that cities ("the Paris of Balzac and Flaubert, Dickens's London, and so forth") are imaginative representations of

331

"forms of sociomaterial resistance faced by the protagonists" in the nineteenth century novel (95),[41] as such are hostile to the emerging sense of originality for which each protagonist strives. To Pamuk, Istanbul is in no way similar to nineteenth-century European cities, as Said inductively reads them. Instead, in Pamuk's novel, Istanbul and its double, the shadow side of its dark evils, expose the protagonist's naïve anticipation and his unpreparedness for his role as the hero of the narrative.

Pamuk suggests that the detective novel responds more unreservedly to the naïve attitude in imagining a fictional narrative. Such is the case of most realist novels of the nineteenth century as well as other genre novels including crime fiction, spy fiction, and romance fiction. They are most capable of creating "a mirror being carried along a road" – or "un miroir qu'on promène le long d'un chemin" as Stendhal puts it (Pamuk 2010, 148).[42] A detective novel reader is prompted to anticipate "what happens next" (20), but Pamuk also notes that there will always be an inevitable and painful "feeling of insufficiency" when the naïve reader is overcome by the gap between reality and his imagination, especially should the novel be too "powerful and persuasive," or too compellingly real (or realist):

> The more the naïve side of our soul has believed in and been enthralled by the novel, the more heartbreaking our disappointment at having to accept the fact that the world it describes is merely imaginary. (124)

According to Pamuk this disappointment's root cause is the readers' self-deceptive attempts to "validate the fictional world with their own senses, even though they know that much of what they are reading has originated in the writer's imagination" (124-5). This relates to the "consequences of that desire" in Said's discussion of beginnings (1975, 82): consequences are anticipated and accepted, albeit self-deceptively and reluctantly, as soon as a beginning has already taken place.[43] However, because this disappointment can be so profound, one lingers

in the gap between fiction and reality, with the self-deception that it is possible to defer the anticipated loss of innocence.

I believe that this describes the disappointment experienced by Galip-the-protagonist in The Black Book: he trains himself to be an apprentice detective and endeavours to prove that his imagination yields the clues that interpret reality. By analogy, he immerses himself in his own narrative, bearing the air of a prophet who can predict the future, or pretending to be a mystic who can extract the secrets from the occult. For instance, on a *dolmuş* ride "along the Dolmabahçe Palace walls," Galip realises how his city had been transformed during his fruitless days in search of his wife: "The city he saw through the taxi windows was not the Istanbul he'd known all his life but another city whose mystery he'd just unlocked and would later put in writing" (2006, 327). However, predictably, reality either differs from what he imagines or simply falls short of his imagination. Thus, in his quest-oriented wandering, he perceives two incompatible versions of the city: on the one hand, a (disappointing) Istanbul which he experiences and strolls through and an (idealised) Istanbul where speculative events take place in his mind. In short, Istanbul and its double form this incompatible pair which alludes to Galip-the-protagonist's profound disappointment with his own story.

The frame story involves the mysterious disappearance of Rüya and Celâl. Following Galip in search of Rüya and Celâl, the reader is also positioned as an "apprentice detective" seeking the solution to a mystery. The mystery, however, remains unexplained and implicitly unsolved throughout the book, leaving room for the reader's (and Galip's) endless speculation. In other words, the perceived mystery tempts Galip-the-protagonist or the reader to imagine and enter a second world in which hypothetical speculation over the reasons and motives

behind a mysterious plot can be abundantly developed and accommodated, to solve the enigma and bring closure to the detective plot.

Since Rüya's disappearance, Galip occasionally indulges in remembering her obsessively to the extent that he sometimes conflates reality and imagination. In the opening chapters, he refuses to suspect anything peculiar in Rüya's disappearance. In short, Galip would rather wait for her return and their reunion than adopt the position of a detective protagonist and overanalyse the intention behind her mysterious disappearance. For instance, during the family dinner at his parents' place, he makes up an excuse for her absence, saying that she has caught the flu and is staying in bed. He entertains himself with the make-believe story that "Rüya must be back asleep by now" (32). When Galip is asked how his wife is doing, the narrator suggests that Galip still manages to make "an effort to draw a line in his mind between his memories of the real Rüya and the Rüya he'd invented" (32). The narrator's explanation follows immediately Galip's efforts to maintain the distinction: "in deference, perhaps, to the fictitious detectives that she [Rüya] loved so much and that he [Galip] would later try to emulate" (32). The implication here is that a detective protagonist or a reader of detective fiction always tends to imagine a second world to accommodate subjunctive or hypothetical events. Importantly, solving the crime does not function to satisfy their curiosity but to provide a key to bringing to a close their fantasy that what has actually happened could flawlessly overlap with their imaginings. Like repeating the boring alphabet lesson on Galip's first school day, a perfect closure ironically allows them to quit their obsessive speculation and come back to the real world.

Here, the reference to Rüya's interest in the detective novel offers a metanarratological comment on the genre. From time to time, Galip alludes to it in his recollections of Rüya.[44] As

we are told, Rüya is always holding a detective novel in her hand, and once considers translating these novels from English into Turkish. In Chapter Five "Perfectly Chidish" (48-58), for instance, Galip reminisces once more:

> Rüya knew Galip couldn't bear her detective novels so she was confident he'd never look through one. He detested this world where the English were parodies of Englishness and no one was fat unless they were colossally so; the murderers were as artificial as their victims, serving only as clues in a puzzle. (I'm just trying to pass the time, OK? Rüya would say […]) (50)[45]

In this scene, Galip mentions his contempt for the detective novel. Given that his role later in the narrative is not so different from "a detective in one of Rüya's novels" or simply "the apprentice detective" in hindsight (56), his hatred of the genre is ironic. His comments on the plot's artificiality and characters in a typical work of detective fiction remind us that The Black Book is not a generic detective fiction but a parody of it, much like Galip's perception that "the English were parodies of Englishness" in the detective story's fictional world (50).

Although Galip loathes the easy and artificial world of detective fiction, he acts like a detective protagonist while seeking closure to his wife's disappearance, as he cannot afford to let the mystery so unsolved:

> After he woke up, Galip sat down at the table and did what he guessed Rüya herself had done nineteen or twenty hours earlier. He looked for a blank piece of paper. When he, like Rüya, was unable to find one, he turned over her farewell letter and made a list of all the people and places that had occurred to him one by one over the course of the night. (56)

In his position as the "apprentice detective," Galip is constantly frustrated by false clues. His speculative narrative depends upon a hypothetical explanation of Rüya's disappearance. However, his hypothesis fails, resulting in disappointment and impatience. For example, Galip once entertains the possibility that "Rüya's gone back to her ex-husband" (57). His belief in this theory is so strong that "it shocked him to think he had failed to notice it until now" (58).

Indeed, as though he were reluctant to prove it, as he strongly doubts his ability "to persuade her to come home with [him]" and wonders "[w]hat should [he] say to get her to come home" (58). To make matters worse, Galip is also less prepared to disprove it, because if he did, Galip would be left with barely any clues to solve Rüya's disappearance, and he would be back to square one.[46] Indeed, after he manages to visit Rüya's ex-husband and realises that his wife is not there, he loses direction and wanders aimlessly in the city. Like "the man of the crowd" in Poe's eponymous parable, he does not know where to go:

> After leaving Rüya's ex-husband's house, Galip made his way back to the main road. He searched in vain for a taxi; neither was he able to board any of the intercity buses that went hurtling past from time to time. He decided to walk over to the Bakırköy train station. As he trudged through the snow, he let his mind wander; over and over, he imagined running into Rüya, returning with her to the life they'd had before, forgetting even why it was that she had left in the first place – except that it was simple and made perfect sense – but whenever he returned to the beginning of the daydream, he could not quite bring himself to tell Rüya that he had gone to see her ex-husband. (140)

On his stroll through the city, Galip displays symptoms of an obsession as can be seen in a detective archetype. He is anxious to catch any clue that could shed light on any puzzles the city harbours, and fears that his endeavour to solve the mystery of his wife's disappearance could wind up in a dead-end. Let us look at Galip's peculiar thoughts during this flânerie:

> As he walked across the bridge [Galata Bridge], gazing idly into the Sunday crowds, he was suddenly certain that he was on the verge of solving a riddle that had been vexing him for years without his even being aware of it. In some deep and dreamlike way he was also aware that this was an illusion, but he was able to hold the contradictory thoughts in his mind with ease. He passed soldiers on leave, men throwing fishing lines into the sea, families rushing for ferries. Though they didn't know it, they all resided inside the mystery he was about to solve. This father he could see in front of him – he was off on a Sunday visit, with the baby in his arms and his older son skipping along next to him in his new gym shoes. This mother he could see on the bus – she was wearing a head scarf, and so was the daughter sitting next to her. The moment Galip solved the mystery, they too would see the thing that had shaped their lives for so very long. (213)

Although Galip acknowledges that both the mystery and its resolution are part of "an illusion," he struggles to maintain his "contradictory thoughts" and sustains his idiosyncratic search for messages hidden behind the looks and gestures of strangers (213). Refusing to admit he cannot reach his wife, or a resolution, or anything at all, Galip surrenders to illusory make-believe wherein he wishfully translates all these city's potential signs into self-serving new meanings.

Galip's endeavour is analogous to the Galata Bridge as he becomes the bridge between an imagined world where "signs in the city" hold hidden meanings and the real city surface where "everything was as ordinary as the pavement beneath their [the passers-by's] feet" (214). In this position, he perceives that anyone is on a similar miserable hunt for closure and "not at home in this world": "They were lost in their thoughts, and yet, if you provoked them just a little, their eyes lit up and their masks fell away and for a moment you could almost see it: the past, the soul, the key" (214). This absent *key* is the one that would send everyone back to their appropriate locations and their original homes, including himself, Rüya, and all these strangers or lost souls. Indeed, his obsessive hunt for this key would later make him believe that "he was a pawn in a game that Celâl (and perhaps Rüya) had devised for him" (265).

In the generic detective novel, the intensity of suspense is built throughout the narrative to prepare the readers (and the detective protagonist) for the resolution of the mystery and the final revelation of the crime's motive. For instance, Galip recalls how Rüya once responded to a detective novel that she had just finished reading: "So it turns out that the murderer was the retired colonel; it seems the victim once insulted him: The motive was revenge!" (217) Such neat closure found through the expected perfect ending of a detective novel is absent in The Black Book.

Near the end, both Celâl and Rüya get shot in the neighbourhood, and Galip is too late to track down their hideout. What ensues then is Galip's tremendous resentment over his incompetence as the protagonist of a detective narrative and his inconsolable thoughts about Rüya. Neither does he find any outlet and instead accumulates into the thick blackness of melancholy that eventually characterises the mood of the novel. As argued earlier, this condition wherein the protagonist or the narrator must sacrifice his physical or mental home is typical in several of Pamuk's novels' openings. As Erdağ Göknar[47] puts it, it makes possible "the birth of the author" (2013, 225). In his reading of this novel, Göknar points out that what matters "in terms of the metaphysical theme" is not so much the "solution of the mystery" as the "discovery of the mystery" (Göknar 2013, 226). Indeed, Ian Almond goes even further to suggest that what we encounter in The Black Book is the disappointment or a brand of sadness caused by "the death of the mystery" (2007, 118).

The detective plot is a pretext for situating this mystery in hermeneutic anticipation for Galip-the-protagonist, the reader, or both. The mystery remains unsolved because unsolvable. However, the novel also parodies the naïve approaches in reading detective fiction, such as that of Rüya who read these novels for consumptive entertainment.

At the end of Part I, the narrator refers again to "Rüya's detective novels" and suggests,

> when the puzzle was solved and the murky second world revealed itself, it would burn bright for a few seconds, only to recede into the shadows of the first world for lack of interest. (217)

This statement explains yet another reason for Galip's reservation about the detective novel, but what matters here is a reader's perception of the double world as part of the experience of reading detective fiction. The narrator describes the universe depicted in the fiction as "the

murky second world" as one degree apart from the reality – "the first world" – where the reader can retreat (217). We can deduce that it is only in the murkiness of the second world, where the mystery can be explicitly imagined. When the puzzle is solved, the mystery is revealed and suddenly evaporates at once; or as the narrator proposes, the puzzle would "recede into the shadows of the first world" (217). "Shadows" here suggest the world's illogical, irrational, mystical or superstitious aspects, which we tend to repress and perceive as shadows. In short, the second world is reflected in the fiction as the first world's shadow.

If we consider imagined Istanbul a fictional narrative, then, a reader can approach it with either of two attitudes: on the one hand, a purpose-driven reader like Galip-the-protagonist may have every good intention to enter it and stroll through its streets to solve a mystery – that is, to locate the secondary meanings beneath signs in the first world – then deliberately, as his final move, to return to the first world.

In his reading of <u>The Black Book</u>, Ian Almond relates this attitude – what Pamuk calls "naïveté" – to a particular kind of "sadness which springs from a need for meaning, for stories and narratives" (2007, 122). Almond elaborates on this "need" through a wide range of possibilities: "a sense of boredom, impotence or unhappiness, a desire for the beyond – a new leader, an new Messiah, a new identity, a new state – springing from a profound dissatisfaction with the immediate" (123). Because the mystery is what unsettles the reader's comfort and removes their feeling of being at home, solving the mystery is key to their safe return home.

However, the narrator offers an alternative reading, in which the reader further explores this fictional second world, only to concede that if a hidden mystery resides there, it will never be easily solved. What matters then is the path of resolution, not resolution itself. In

this case, the city remains murky, while impenetrable blackness is not so much a source of disappointment as anticipated obscurity.

The double world of the detective novel implicitly responds to the epigraph's meaning issued in the form of curious quotations heading <u>The Black Book</u>'s first chapter:

> Never use epigraphs – they kill the mystery in the work!
> -Adli

> If that's how it has to die, go ahead and kill it; then kill the false prophets who sold you on the mystery in the first place!
> -Bahti (2006, 3)

Both sentences mention "the mystery," but only to make it more mysterious: to what exactly does this mystery refer? While Galip-the-protagonist is becoming certain that he will solve the mystery, he becomes perplexed in the face of this question: "All contained the key to the mystery, but what was the mystery?" (214)

Located as epigraphs at the first chapter, the quotations also perform provocative irony. The way they appear in the text contradicts Adli's imperative: "Never use epigraphs!" While each chapter of <u>The Black Book</u> opens with a different epigraph, mostly quotations from Western literary canon, Adli and Bahti's[48] sentences come from a fictional book titled "Gazeteciye Nasihatlar," which roughly translates to "Advice for Young Journalists."[49]

The messages delivered in the epigraph are not a warning to the implied author Galip, but to the readers. They are encouraged to anticipate not the mystery's solution but the disappointment that there is no solution or that there may not be a mystery to begin with. To put it very differently, one must anticipate disappointment in the fact that there is no mystery at all, whereas this fact may be the only existing mystery. Preparing for this disappointment turns the reader into a sentimental-reflective one. Likewise, only upon realising that the

mystery is unsolvable would Galip transit from naïve reader of his self-imposed detective plot to sentimental-reflective narrator of autobiographical remembering.

The two impressions of Istanbul, or the two worlds of the detective novel, are further analogised by adapting an old parable of Islamic literature. As Pamuk discusses in an essay "Şirin's Surprise" (2008 [1992], 283-9), this parable has been told in different versions by Gazzali in Ihya-ul Ulum, Enveri in his verses, Nizami in the Iskendername, Ibni Arbi, and Rumi in Mesnevi (2008, 283), and is retold near the end of The Black Book as one of Celâl's newspaper articles entitled "Mysterious Paintings" (2006, 397-402).

The main substance of this story concerns two paintings, by artists on opposite walls during a competition. In Celâl's (or Pamuk's) adaptation, this competition is set in contemporary Istanbul and is commissioned by a gangster who appoints two artisans to decorate the walls of his "new establishment's spacious lobby" with urban scenes (397). As the column opens, this new establishment is described as "Istanbul's greatest ever den of iniquity" (397).[50]

The parable has it that a curtain separates the two facing walls until the paintings on both sides are finished. This curtain, therefore, symbolises the veil of innocence that blocks off comparisons and reflections. One artisan devotes his great craftsmanship to painting the wall for which he is responsible in colourful, miniature details. In Celâl's version, the wall is finally transformed into "a splendid view of Istanbul" (398). The other artisan turns the wall into a mirror that actually reflects the scene on the first wall after the curtain is removed. In all the versions of this story, including this adaptation in The Black Book, the reflection in the mirror always appears to be curiously "brighter, finer, and more beautiful than the original" (398).

In retelling the story, Celâl's narrator announces the result of the competition, as a matter of fact that "[t]he prize went to the artist who'd installed the mirror, of course" (398). However, he does not offer any ready explanation, nor does he end the story here. He goes on to tell us how the viewers respond to these paintings and in so doing he also gives his readers an idea of how the mirror would excel the painting which it reflects. For example, an elderly customer rushes back and forth between the two walls, "as agitated as an old man who has just remembered he left home without turning off his taps," to check whether the fountain at the centre of a square is really gushing out water in the way he sees it in its reflection, and realises that "the fountain in the picture was still dry" (399). But, when he goes back to the reflection, he sees that "the water was gushing forth more abundantly than before" (399). His amazement derives from the unexpected discrepancy, or the overwhelming asymmetry, between the painting and its reflection in the mirror. As the writing subject of this parable suggests,

> it was the amazing doubleness of the lobby's views that entranced the guests who ended up in this place of sin; after contemplating each wall at length, they would wander back and forth between them for hours as they struggled to give a name to the intense and mysterious pleasure that the twin views afforded them. (398)

Of course, this parable triggers more questions than easy solutions to its mystery that it addresses. In "Şirin's Surprise" (2008 [1992]), Pamuk retells this story and remarks that the two painters attribute to the opposite positions in the East-West dichotomy, and that an Oriental or Eastern painter always turns the wall into a mirror. He particularly notes that all the "Eastern storytellers who take up the story of the artists' competition always offer sweet explanations as to why the Chinese artists win the sultan's prize" (286). However, Pamuk insists that what matters more and what interests him "is not the wisdom these storytellers

offer but something else that reflects the life of the story itself, something that the mirror in the story reveals" (286). He elaborates as follows:

> The mirror that multiplies, the mirror that expands, also makes us feel as if we are somehow lacking, as if we are a bit inauthentic or uninteresting. As if we are not whole. Then, depending on how much courage we have, we […] set out on a journey [….] We each seek the "other" who will complete us. This is a journey that takes us beyond the surface, into the depths, closer to the center. The truth resides far away. Someone somewhere told us so, and now we have embarked on a journey to find it. Literature is the story of this journey. Though I believe in this journey, I do not believe that there is a center waiting to be discovered in a faraway land. (286)

Disavowing the perceived centre as well as noting the mise-en-abyme generated by the multiplying mirrors allows us to predict Galip's disappointment. As the implied author, from a sentimental-reflective perspective, he postures in the city as Said's "wanderer between homes," or a self-admitted "sleepwalker through [the] hidden world [of the black dream]," near the end of The Black Book (2006, 443).

Wanderer Between Homes: The Failure of Arrival

In Beginnings: Intention and Method, Said figuratively describes the posture of a literary critic as "a wanderer, going from place to place for his material, but remaining a man essentially between homes" (1975, 8).[51] For him, the "wanderer's" sense of homelessness and in-betweenness is also relevant to "the working reality of the self-conscious writer," who "can no longer easily accept – for many reasons, spiritual or sociological – a place in a continuity that formerly stretched forward and backward in time" (Said 1975, 9). While wandering between homes, the literary critic or the "self-conscious writer" inevitably distances him- or herself from a tradition, or a habitual "home": "In the process, what is taken from a place ultimately violates its habitual way of being" (8).

This trope of a "wanderer between homes" is applicable to Galip as the implied author of the frame story in Pamuk's The Black Book. By the same token, the "self-conscious writer" corresponds to Pamuk's idea of the sentimental novelist. The latter insistently maintains distance from himself as the third-person protagonist through an alienating and omnipresent narrative perspective.[52] Galip-the-implied-author only occasionally interrupts his narration and speaks in the first person, most notably in the first and the last chapter. As the book ends, for instance, he insists on maintaining distance from Galip-the-protagonist in the third-person "he." Nevertheless, the first person "I" unexpectedly shows up at one point and addresses the reader:

> Reader, dear reader, throughout the writing of this book I have tried – if not always successfully – to keep its narrator separate from its hero, its columns separate from the pages that advance its story, as I am sure you will have noticed; but please allow me to intervene just once before I send these pages off to the typesetter. (2006, 442)

We should not forget that there is always a difference between the narrator and the story's implied author, not to mention between the implied author and Pamuk. Here, the first person "I" is not the narrator but Galip-the-implied-author of the narrative. Shortly afterward, he explains that he intervened in the final pages of a book entitled "Rüya and Galip." In other words, the complex frame of The Black Book is made visible: another book, Rüya and Galip, is being written by the fictional author Galip in Pamuk's novel. Following the passage quoted above, the first person "I" speaks of his role as the writer in a peculiar, conditional sentence:

> So if I were an illustrious author and not the parvenu columnist I really am, I'd simply assume this to be yet another page in my great work, Rüya and Galip; I'd know, too, that its fine words would be delighting my more sensitive and intelligent readers for years to come. (443)

With the subjunctive "were," Galip-the-implied-author imagines himself as "an illustrious author," while the declarative "am" proposes that he actually identifies himself as "the

344

parvenu columnist" (443). We are reminded that shortly after Celâl's death, a few pages before this passage, Galip makes himself the surrogate writer for Celâl's newspaper column and writes articles in the name and style of Celâl. Rightfully, then, he is a columnist. This sentence also produces an ironic mirroring effect between Galip-the-implied-author and Pamuk. Pamuk invents an implied author, that is, a self-demeaning columnist who pens The Black Book's main narrative. He is the exact contrary of an illustrious author pretending to be a parvenu columnist. The derogative word "parvenu" is in sharp contrast to the "author's" "illustrious" qualifier. This contrast implicitly points to the tensions between the problematic literary practice of novel writing and the respected journalistic tradition of Turkish letters.

In "Murders by Unknown Assailants and Detective Novels" (2008 [1997], 292-9) Pamuk discusses the difficulty of maintaining balance between these fictional column articles and The Black Book's main narrative:

> Because I was having such a good time writing in the voice of a columnist, balancing fake erudition with a subtle buffoonery, the columns kept getting longer, dominating the book in a way that destroyed the balance and composition of the whole. (292)

He then provides some background of what it is like to be a columnist in his country:

> In Turkey a real columnist will write four or five times a week. He will take his subjects from every aspect of life, geography, and history. He will deploy every narrative shape and strategy, whether drawing upon the most mundane daily news or philosophy or memoir or sociological observation. (292)

In other words, there has been a long tradition of journalistic writing in Turkey. As Pamuk illustrates, some columnists are very successful, trusted and admired as national stars, "because theypresume to be experts on everything, because they seem to have an answer to any question, because they discuss political enmities about which everyone has an opinion" (293). In short, according to Pamuk, "before television changed the country's newspaper-

reading habits[,] Turkish readers considered newspaper columns to be the highest literary form" (293). Hence, we should seriously consider the inference that The Black Book, with its incorporation of the narrative shape and strategy of newspaper columns, responds to this national tradition of journalistic practice.

I suggested earlier in this chapter that Celâl's articles function as ornamental commentaries or variations of the fictional world depicted in the main narrative. However, we could also read them differently and consider Pamuk an exact reversal of Galip's self-position as "the parvenu columnist" pretending to be "an illustrious author" (443). Galip and the retired colonel take Celâl's articles very seriously, as a magical collection full of encoded messages and hidden secrets that point to the mystery of the world. Thus, Celâl's columns can be considered a surrogate text of the Koran (or, in a slightly radicalised way as the scapegoat text of a false prophet). Then, in relation to the surrogate sacred text, Galip's narrative is merely decorative, or another variation of hidden world concealed therein.

Galip, as the implied author, self-identifies not as a rookie detective but an amateur columnist. For Galip, writing is "the only consolation" (461) after he has lost Rüya and Celâl, his innocence, and his happiness. When Galip's main narrative struggles to begin, the implied author is in fact procrastinating because he is aware of his inadequacy while narrating his own story. Galip-the-implied-author yearns for the originality and literary wit of Celâl. This is implied in their names since, as many critics have noted, Galip and Celâl allude to Sufi writers Şeyh Galip (or Sheikh Galip, a poet who carried on the Rumi tradition) and Celâlettin Rumi (or Jalal al-Din Rumi, a thirteenth-century Sufi mystic and poet) respectively. As Michael McGaha points out, "the novel's Galip is to Celâl as Sheikh is to Rumi" (2008, 106).

Galip's self-aware insufficiency of his position as the writer of Rüya and Galip also analogises him to the novel form, a literary form which is received problematically. Galip borrows Celâl's name in order to establish himself as a writer. The inequality between their respective reputation and writing skills further informs the rivalry between novel and column articles. Compared to the newspaper column, the novel is less influential and apparently more problematic in Turkish letters. To a certain extent, the idea of the "Turkish novel" is a paradox, if not an oxymoron.

For instance, Jale Parla summarises the delay in the Turkish novel canon's emergence in her recent article "The Wounded Tongue" (2008): "Although the first Turkish novels were written in the last decades of the nineteenth century, no novelistic canon emerged for more than a hundred years – that is, until the 1980s" (27). She sees this primarily as a consequence of the language reform of 1936, which "aimed to purge the Turkish language of its Ottoman vocabulary and syntax and replace them with a newspeak invented by a group of people appointed by Mustafa Kemal" (28). The language reform followed the alphabet reform of 1928 in which "Turkey abandoned the Arabo-Persian alphabet and adopted the Latin alphabet" (28). However, while she proposes that the "Ottoman script is not that difficult to learn but is hard to decipher," Parla insists that language reform of 1936 contributed more significantly to severing "the generations born after 1925" from the past (28).[53] Parla borrows "the wounded tongue" trope from the title of a column article published in the newspaper Radikal,[54] and suggests that Turkish novels written in the "invented language" of modern Turkish "[have] been traditionally regarded as a vehicle for social reform" (28). They operate like this language, which "together with the invented history, was expected to map a new national homeland, Anatolia, the territory reclaimed by the Independence War" (30). As for

the rise of the novel since the 1980s, Parla notes that there have been different modes of resistance to this homogenising language, including the "linguistic dissent" as Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, Yaşar Kemal, and Oğuz Atay practise it; the "linguistic diversification" favoured by Latife Tekin and Orhan Pamuk (31-4); and the recent linguistic experiments of Ali Toptaş and Perihan Mağden (34-8).

Erdağ Göknar similarly notes the problem of nationalist ideology as a predicament in the development of the Turkish novel. However, he does not dwell upon the linguistic resistance performed by different novelists. Instead, he focuses on the historiographic aspects that inform the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey (2004).[55] In his study of Orhan Pamuk's oeuvres, his arguments and observations are rooted in the assumption that "the Republican literary field" can be specifically understood and examined as "a cultural space defined by intersections of secularism and Sufism" (2013, 210). In his close reading, Gönkar suggests that "Pamuk's novels establish culturally productive relations between *din* and *devlet* that function as literary-political critique of the secularization thesis [of the Turkish nation-state]" (2012, 309).[56] He offers a straightforward definition on the pair "*din*" and "*devlet*" respectively as "the religion of Islam and the secular state tradition" (308). While the contexts of *din* cultivate the perception of mystery in the long traditions of Islamic practice and Sufi mysticism, *devlet*'s contexts are hostile to mystery or at least tend to disavow its existence. The attribution of this pair's geographical designation to the East (or Asia) and the West (or Europe) is implied in Göknar's thesis concerning the relations between *din* and *devlet* in the Turkish novel. Remarkably in this regards, Istanbul is more often than not identified as a crossroads between Europe and Asia, and in this sense, that between *din* and *delvet*.[57]

I mention briefly Parla's and Göknar's criticism in order to establish the generally accepted position among different critics of Turkish literature. The generalised stance is that there is a disagreement between the Turkish novel and the Republic of Turkey, especially regarding the Republic's language policy and its homogenising forces, and the "secularization thesis" that tends to obliterate Turkey's Ottoman past and Islamic tradition. Galip-the-implied-author embodies one of many possible attempts at liberating the novel from repressive secularised republican expectations.

Elsewhere in "A Selection from Interviews on <u>The New Life</u>" (2008 [2007], 258-61), Pamuk proposes a similar perception of overlapping and contesting realms through "two poles" in his cultural background and intellectual upbringing: "Perhaps my books rise out of these two poles, attracting and repelling each other" (261).[58] "These two poles" specifically refer to Pamuk's interest in "Sufism as a literary source" on the one hand, and his commitment to "Western Cartesian rationalism to the nth degree" on the other (261). The cultural realms governed by these two poles can be associated with Göknar's terminology of "*din*" and "*devlet*" respectively. Approaching each pole produces "pleasure" and "joy" (261); yet, like a magnet's extremities, they repel each other.

In reference to the two poles of cultural influence that are the perceived centres of East and West traditions, the "wanderer-between-homes" figure can be further and more specifically elaborated as one who longs to feel at home on either side of *din* and *devlet*. This figure best describes Galip-the-implied-author, who in his sentimental self-reflection muses upon his disappointment. This does not reside in his in-between condition but in the realisation that he was naïvely enjoying the illusory comfort at both perceived centres, while they are in fact out of reach. Within this narrative frame of anticipated disappointment, Galip, as the

implied author, situates himself, in the third-person "he," as an inadequate protagonist who gets caught between two poles, without ever reaching either of them.

If what holds Galip-the-protagonist back is his readerly unpreparedness to take up the detective role in his own narrative; then, for Galip-the-author, it is a writerly impasse that prevents the story from being narrated. This impasse emerges from his impression that Istanbul is a peripheral and unoriginal copy of a Westernised or secularised city. In the first few chapters, Galip-the-protagonist is sheltered in the happy ambiance of an ordinary, secular, republican, bourgeois family. Repeated references to the colour blue are a constant reminder of Europe, the perceived centre of Western secularism, to which both Turkey and Istanbul are peripheral, if not entirely exterior. It signifies inadequate authenticity.

Indeed, blue is the first colour to appear in the novel. Rüya stays in bed "beneath the billowing folds of the blue-checked quilt" (2006, 3). Through the colour blue, the narrator introduces domestic entrapment as the mood of discontent with provincialisation, monotonous repetition, and unoriginality.[59] As a signifier of visible inadequacy and everyday mundaneness, the colour blue appears frequently in the first chapter and is materialised in petty objects – not only "the blue-checked quilt" that opens and closes the book (3, 461), but also "the dark blue curtains" in the opening scene (3), "the blue-and-white checked tablecloth" in Galip's memory of childhood days (12), "the blue in the cloth the barber had taken off his grandfather and draped around him" (13).

The insignificance of each of these objects builds up a subtle sense of life's meaninglessness for an ordinary city-dweller like Galip, who is a young lawyer and who adapts himself to the boring routines of secularised and modernised society. For example, Galip's morning routine is like this: "rinsing the teacups, searching for clean knives and forks,

retrieving white cheese and olives that looked like plastic food from a refrigerator that stank of *pastırma* and heating up water in the teakettle so that he could shave" (14). The insignificance of these morning gestures is later echoed as a sequence of uninspiring everyday scenes of the city:

> The newly wiped stairs smelled of damp, dust, and dirt. The air outside was cold and thick with the black soot coming from the coat- and oil-burning chimneys of Nişantaşı. Puffing out great clouds of frozen breath, picking his way through the piles of litter on the pavement, he joined the long line at the *dolmuş* stop, from which shared taxis set out to all the most popular destinations in the city. (15)

The smell of "damp, dust, and dirt" and the visible "black soot" in the air unhurriedly introduce readers to a grimy city in decline whose glory and energy are long lost (15). Istanbul is depicted as a lifeless city, from which no sense of newness or beginning is demanded or anticipated. Indeed, for Galip, Celâl's daily newspaper article becomes the only source of excitement, while his wife Rüya compensates for uninteresting secular life in the city. By the end of Chapter One, these subtle signs provide telling evidence: "Digging his hands into the tobacco, loose change, and used tickets that lined his pockets" – all of these are objects of mundane everyday life. Galip "spent a few moments paying silent tribute to his lovely wife" (15). Although he initially decides to read Celâl's column by the end of the day, he suddenly leaves the long line at the *dolmuş* stop, runs to the newspaper seller at the corner, and purchases a second copy of <u>Milliyet</u>. Celâl's mockery of his readers rings in his mind: "Oh, Celâl Bey, Muharrem and I love yours columns so much that some days we can't bear the wait and buy two copies of <u>Milliyet</u> in one day!" (15) Later, as Galip-the-protagonist strolls in the city hoping to decipher its hidden secrets, the narrative is weighed down by dull images of "a shared defeat, a shared history, a shared shame" of Istanbul's "misfortunes, its lost magnificence, its melancholy and pain" (218). However, his endeavours do not take him

anywhere because, as the narrator explains, these scattered fragments of images are "not carefully arranged clues pointing to a secret world" (218). Even though the *dolmuş* and "shared taxis" are said to "set out to all the most popular destinations in the city" (15), it is implicitly ironic, as all these destinations are just different iterations of the city in the disguise of false destinations. The real centre is never reached or reachable, just as Galip-the-protagonist can never solve the mystery that initially makes him leave on long strolls in the city.

While Galip imagines himself following Celâl in the search for his wife, he is in turn being followed by another character, the retired colonel. Although Celâl is his real target, the colonel has several long phone conversations with Galip, after the latter successfully gets into Celâl's secret apartment. This happens around the narrative's midpoint, when Galip allows himself to impersonate his cousin. During their last conversation, the retired colonel recounts an uncanny scene from his fruitless pursuit, which is reminiscent of the narrator's observation in Poe's "The Man of the Crowd":

> Something told me I should follow him [Galip]. Something about this dreamy sleepwalking young man told me he'd know where to find Celâl. He must know, I told myself – what's more, he must know he knows. I followed him all over Istanbul like a shadow. We walked all the streets of the city – he in front, myself just far enough behind – together we explored handsome stone office buildings, old shops, glass-covered arcades, and filthy theaters and wandered all over the Covered Bazaar; we crossed bridges, venturing into dark streets and neighborhoods no one in Istanbul has ever heard of and other neighborhoods so poor they have no pavements, stepping through the dust, the mud, the filth. We never arrived but we never stopped moving. We walked as if we knew every last inch of the city, and yet we recognized nothing we saw. I lost him, only to find him again, and in the end he found me, in a run-down nightclub. (389)

In this passage we encounter once more these images of "the dust, the mud, the filth" that the narrator employs to depict Istanbul, as if, in collective memory, they comprise the city's

352

essence. There is no mention of a "destination."[60] Instead, the endless and tortured cycle of failure and trying again is featured once more: "We never arrived but we never stopped moving" (389). Earlier on, I suggested that all those false destinations of *dolmuş* and shared taxis are conjured in the novel's first chapter (15). These "destinations" correspond syntactically to the verb "to reach." Here, the old colonel admits the failure of arrival, instead of the falsity of destinations which he can reach. In other words, the journey is a source of disappointment in response to another verb, "to arrive." The difference between these two verbs is apparent in the English translation – one being transitive, the other intransitive – and alludes to the distance between Galip-the-protagonist and Galip-the-implied-author.

The main source of disappointment for Galip-the-protagonist is the mystery itself, which he assumes is solvable and to which he anticipates a definite answer. He is disappointed by the unsolvable mystery, or in different words, the unreachable destination of his hermeneutic journey. As discussed earlier, the solution to the mystery is an anticipated closure – that is, a destination, or simply an end that he would eventually reach. To borrow Said's distinction between the two types of beginnings, it is the protagonist's disappointment, or the naïve reader's, that responds to the anticipation driven by a transitive beginning. This anticipation depends upon and demands an object as a scapegoat for Galip's disappointment as soon as it is known that his high expectations cannot be met.

The implied author's disappointment, however, reflects his inadequacy in the subject position. Rather than responding to the unreachable destination or the unreached end of his journey, his disappointment fixes upon the verb "to arrive" and the anticipation that emerges from an intransitive or self-reflective mode of beginning.

Göknar reads the fictional Istanbul in <u>The Black Book</u> as "a labyrinthine and palimpsestic text inscribed in opposition to the discourses of the nation" (2013, 218). That is to say, the city is a labyrinth with no destination and a palimpsest of multiple sources of *din* and *devlet*, the incongruity of which subverts "the secularization thesis" of the nation. In my reading of <u>The Black Book</u>, I do not suggest that the two impressions of Istanbul can be reduced to a straightforward categorisation of *din* and *devlet*, as this would tend towards oversimplification. In Göknar's terms these two poles correspond to the perceived centres of the world: the mysterious centre where the true meanings of all secrets reside (*din*) and the ideological centre of the increasingly Westernised and secularised world (*devlet*). However, disappointment in the distance from these centres generates Istanbul and its double in the main narrative. Göknar suggests a double blasphemy[61] in this novel (2013, 221) and in Pamuk's body of work in general. Conversely, I suggest that the implications that there is more than one centre in the world, and that all are ideologically maintained may irritate Pamuk's readers. More importantly, readers are unsettled by the revelation that to varying degrees, we are all way off of these perceived centres.

If Galip-the-protagonist naïvely believes that he can physically and mentally return home and that Istanbul's mysterious side will eventually overlap with its secular side; by contrast, the implied author is well aware of the fact that he can never and in no way go home again and that mystery and secularism will forever remain separate and incompatible. In the parable retold in Celâl's column "Mysterious Paintings," the incompatibility of these two impressions alludes to the asymmetry between the painting and its mirror image: Galip-the-protagonist corresponds to the viewers described in the parable as "childish creatures" who are severely upset by the discrepancies between the painting and its mirror image and demand that

"someone bring the two back into perfect symmetry at once" (399). By contrast, Galip-the-implied-author is among those regulars who have "grown immune to the games the painting played with its reflection" and have conceded that the two images are engaged in a mise-en-abyme of multiple and asymmetrical reflections (400).

While the painting in this parable visually represents the city, it furthers the impression that Istanbul is indeed a Western city's unoriginal copy: its street scenes imitate the mise-en-scène of an imported film screened at a local theatre. Between the main narrative of "Rüya and Galip" and the alternate chapters of Celâl's articles, a constant reminder exists that the local inhabitants of Istanbul or the Turkish people gradually and unnoticeably mimic American and European bourgeois life, habits acquired from imported films and everyday products. Another article of Celâl's, or Chapter Six of the novel, "Bedii Usta's Children" (59-65) further explicates this impression.

"Bedii Usta" is the name of a mannequin maker who establishes his atelier in the cellar of his house "on the European side of [Istanbul], in Galata" (60). Celâl tells us that Turkish society "was for centuries entirely unacquainted with the art of making mannequins" (59). According to him, Bedii Usta is arguably the "first undisputed master" of the art and "to whom we [that is, Celâl and his readers] owe the secret history of the mannequin" (59). In the Naval Museum, Bedii Usta's mannequins, or his "children," portray "the valiant youths who had sunk so many a Spanish and Italian vessel in the Mediterranean three centuries earlier" (59-60). All of them have been so magnificently created that "the narrow-minded Sheikh al-Islam" considers their existence a blasphemous attempt at "replicat[ing] God's creations so perfectly" and therefore at "compet[ing] with the Almighty" (60). Bedii Usta subsequently

moves his workshop westward to the less religious part of city and, from the underground, continues to produce mannequins modelled on ordinary citizens of Istanbul.

In essence, I consider that this article resonates with the heart of the novel by virtue of the inadequacy and inferiority that Bedii Usta's "children" embody. They simply could not compete with the Western style mannequins that occupied the grand department store windows. Bedii Usta brings work samples to these stores hoping that they will replace their imported mannequins with his local and handmade ones, but he is always turned down. The reasons vary but all point to the core issue: these mannequins look too much like the customers. But, might the customers not want to see themselves in the mannequins? As a window dresser points out,

> Turks no longer wanted to be Turks, they wanted to be something else altogether. This was why they'd gone along with the "dress revolution," shaved their beards, reformed their language and their alphabet. (61)

In short, the primary purpose of shopping is not to buy clothing but to dream about being someone else. Bedii Usta believes that "a nation could change its way of life, its history, its technology, its art, literature, and culture, but it would never have a real chance to change its gestures" (62). For this reason he always pays ardent attention to the gestures of ordinary people in order to replicate them in his mannequin-making. At this point, he is overcome by the realisation that these gestures suddenly "began to lose their innocence" (63), because people "were discarding their old ways" and "embraced a whole new set of gestures" through imitation of the elegant gestures they see in the films "brought in from the West" (63). The article ends with a sinister note that the mannequins are doomed to remain in the cellar space forever. Their creator wishes that "our people would be so happy one day that they'd stop trying to imitate other people" (65). On the contrary, Celâl, who once visits his atelier,

suggests that "this crowd of mannequins longed for the same thing as I did: to leave this airless mildewed cellar, to walk again down sunlit streets watching other people and imitating them, to share in our happiness as we all tried so hard to become someone else" (65). The irony is that many Istanbulites are like the mannequins whose authenticity is buried alive. They are doomed to live up to their lives as replicates of other people's lives, in the misguided dream of being someone else.

Celâl's urge to escape from the atelier corresponds with Galip's departure from his home in search of his self. From the perspective of Galip-the-implied-author, it is important for Galip-the-protagonist to set out from his comfortable home not to discover where Rüya and Celâl are hiding, not even to determine whether they are safe and sound; instead, it is to confront the question that recurs throughout the narrative, namely "who I am" or "Is there a way a man can be only himself?" (179) Therefore, Galip's journey in search of his wife is narrated as a quest for the self. Yet, as Galip suggests in his conversation with the retired colonel, the truth is plainly and disappointingly that "[n]o one can ever be himself" (387). The dialectic between his quest for the self and this ironic truth is understood as an illogical paradox that the retired colonel refutes. He points out,

> Because no one can hope to discover this truth [that no one can ever be himself] unless he is truly himself. But if he does discover it, this too means that he has not become himself. If one of the above is true, the other cannot be. Do you see the paradox? (388)

For Galip-the-implied-author, matched to his perceived inadequacy in authenticity, the paradox becomes an invitation to self-reflection: is Galip among those who, according to Celâl, "can't tell stories" (267-9)? (And, by the same token, for the readers: am I, too, one of those who are incapable of telling my own story?) In the last chapter of the novel, the narrator

357

formulates this question specifically in relation to his protagonist through the implied author's few interventions addressing his readers:

> [Galip] asked himself a question that he would never ask himself again (and readers wishing to ask themselves this question are advised instead to skip the paragraph that now follows).
> As they [Galip and Uncle Melih (the father of Celâl and Rüya)] wandered together in the garden of memory, admiring the stories and recollections and legends blooming at their feet, which of these blossoms had told Rüya and Celâl that they should shut Galip out? Had they done so because Galip had no idea of how to tell a story? Was it because he wasn't as lively and vibrant as they were? Or because he just couldn't understand some stories at all? Had he been too admiring of Celâl, and had they found his idol worship tiresome? Had they wanted to escape from the heavy melancholy he carried with him everywhere, like a contagious disease? (449)

The implied author inviting the reader to refrain from reading the paragraph that follows is highly ironic. It can be justified as advice to readers who strive for active and autonomous critical thinking, and refuse to be passively led by the writer. In other words, the narrator tries to provide a possibility for readers to find their own path or to question themselves. However, Galip only gets to this question at the end of his unsuccessful pursuit of Celâl, where there is a mise-en-abyme that has already assumed that readers are led by Galip-the-protagonist and his words, hence getting caught between two homes.[62]

Regardless, all these questions point to Galip's and the reader's disappointment that they are kept outside of the secret world or the garden of memory where Rüya and Celâl retreat. A telling moment in which the narrator refers to this secret world as a "forbidden realm" appears early in the narrative: "But [Galip] would never know the strange herbs and ghastly flowers that engulfed this world; like the garden of Rüya's memories, it was closed to him" (54).

However, what exactly Rüya and Celâl are trying to escape remains unclear: is it dull and filthy Istanbul, the boring family and neighbourhood, or the unauthentic city in which

many inhabitants fail to tell their own stories? Their hideout symbolises another unreachable centre of Istanbul – the pole where mystery resides, the centre of the realm, which secularised Istanbul could never, and indeed would not care to, acknowledge or accommodate.

Galip-the-implied-author had already invoked the black colour that designates the impenetrability earlier than the instance cited above. Even though this articulation of blackness comes in the final chapter, it suggests the idea of a real beginning:

> It would be best, I think, if I asked the printer to submerge all the words on the pages that follow with a blanket of printer's ink. This would allow you to use your own imaginations to create that which my prose can never hope to achieve. This would do justice to the black dream that descends upon us at this point in the story – to the silence in my mind, as I wander like a sleepwalker through its hidden world. For the pages that follow – the black pages that follow – are the memoirs of a sleepwalker, nothing more and nothing less. (443)

Similar to Said's trope of a wanderer between homes, the narrator identifies himself in the image that already appears in the retired colonel's speech during their long phone conversation as "a sleepwalker through its hidden world" (443). Indeed, the blackness emerges in this final chapter. It suggests the irreducible melancholy, the inevitable death, and the impenetrable mystery that gradually thicken in the narrative. Though not in the solid form that the "blanket" in the passage above suggests, the "printer's ink" is indeed the material blackness that readers can actually see and touch. It implies that the impact of this book on readers should be like dark ink on a newly printed book: it sometimes stains the fingers of those who come in close contact with it. "The black book," finally, also refers to a metanarratological image, again in the "Mysterious Paintings" parable:

> A black book that the first artist had slyly placed in the hands of a blind beggar became in the mirror a book of two parts, two meanings and two stories; but when you returned to the first wall, you saw that it still held together as a single book, and that its mystery was lost somewhere inside it. (401)

The Black Book, like this "book of two parts" (401), is also divided into Parts I and II. The division point is the moment when Galip reaches Celâl's hidden apartment; from there on, he naturally impersonates Celâl and lives as his double. However, one could also relate this image of "a book of two parts" to another structural division: the alternating chapters between Galip's third-person main narrative and Celâl's newspaper articles written exclusively from the first person perspective. As I observed earlier, these articles can be read as commentaries on the fictional world depicted in Galip's main narrative. However, one can also consider Rüya and Galip a variation of the secret world concealed in Celâl's articles. While many of Celâl's readers are obsessed with deciphering the secret meanings in his articles, other loyal readers, such as Galip and the retired colonel, refer to them as they thread their own narratives. This is one of many contradictions embodied in this book, with readers, the implied author, the narrator, the protagonist, Celâl and Pamuk all wandering between the mysterious paintings in an absorbing mise-en-abyme of (self) reflection.

Translation, Back-translation, and The Black Book's Double Life in English

Orhan Pamuk is undoubtedly the most translated writer from Turkey: his works have been made accessible in at least forty different languages. Pamuk's readers are usually thought of as two distinct groups, namely Turkish national readers and international readers around the globe. In other words, it is inevitable that we consider how Pamuk's memoir and many of his novels depart from the original version and enter an afterlife in translation, as Benjamin suggests in "The Task of the Translator" (1996 [1923], 253-63). Ultimately, readers of Pamuk's translated works share a different starting point from those who can claim that they are insiders. In other words, there are always two discrepant beginnings to any single novel in translation.

Sevinç Türkkan (2012) notes that <u>Kara Kitap</u> (<u>The Black Book</u>) is remarkably "the only Turkish novel to receive two English translations" (161). As she phrases it in the title of her article, the novel's "double life in English" is highly relevant to the figure of the "double's double" that I argue in this chapter (159). Left untranslated, a Turkish novel would remain without access to a global readership. While the novel extensively follows the protagonist Galip's strolls through Istanbul, the two translators – Güneli Gün and Maureen Freely – offer two different experiences of these same flâneries, each with a seemingly different agenda and interpretative stance. In order to follow Galip and stroll in the Istanbul of his worlds, an English-language reader and outsider to Turkey must deal with the novel's double afterlife.

As Türkkan points out, an important concern for Gün (the first translator of <u>The Black Book</u> in 1994) is "how the text and the literature it presents are going to be perceived by the target audience […] when the target audience's interest in Turkish literature and culture [back then in 1994 before Pamuk won the Nobel Prize] was limited" (165). As an immigrant writer working in English in the United States, Gün is aware of the mainstream public's reading and writing indifference towards Turkish culture and literature as an "Other." In her translation of <u>The Black Book</u>, Gün therefore "avoids focusing on the 'unintelligible' aspects of the source text" and focuses instead on "the text's allusions to Western literary and cultural narratives" (Türkkan 165). In short, Gün's goal in employing this strategy is to "facititat[e] the Western reader's identification with the Turkish text" (165).

Türkkan provides specific examples of Gün taking great risks in her translation, as she intervenes creatively on the text. For instance, she inserts this sentence in the scene when Galip first sees Rüya's name in the postcard:

It hadn't surprised him that Rüya meant "dream"; but later, when they began figuring out the secondary meanings of names, they were astonished to find in a dictionary of Ottoman Turkish that Galip meant "victor" and Jelal "fury." (Pamuk 1994, 9-10 quoted in Türkkan 2012, 166)[63]

Türkkan suggests that Gün's creative intervention provides clues for the target reader to understand "the meaning of the names and their metaphorical implications" and pay closer attention to "specific historical and linguistic concerns of the original novel, such as the Turkish language reforms, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, and their implications for modern-day Turkey" (166). It also radicalises her role as a translator: that is, rather than someone who simply turns the Turkish text into English, she becomes a mediator between author and reader. However, more importantly, Gün's translation changes Celâl's name into Jelal, and thereby, emphasises his name's potential secondary meaning. Türkkan points out that "Jelal" also carries the meaning "divine" and "is one of the 99 names of 'Allah' in Islam" (166). She also suggests that there is "an obvious similarity between Gün's 'Jelal' and the biblical Jesus figure" (166):

Not only the letter "J" but also the characteristics of that character as a savior figure, whom his readers read and follow devoutly and who is murdered at the end, support this interpretation. (166)

For Türkkan, Gün's "transliteration of the original name Celâl" as "Jelal" intentionally "adds a Christian point of view to the source text's Sufi overtones" and effectively "creates a bridge between otherwise seemingly incompatible religious understandings, the Christian and the Islamic" (167).

As Türkkan notes, while the novel stresses the "contradictions of modern-day Turkey," Gün's 1994 English version "acquires a clear redemptive element, which allows for a positive interpretation of the ending" (165). If the mystery is made inaccessible in the main narrative,

Gün prevents the reader from easily assuming that cultural differences cause the novel's inaccessibility. By displacing the Islamic reference towards a Christian allusion, Gün sympathetically anticipates the inadequacy of an outsider-reader, and makes it possible for a reader from the English-speaking world to identify with Galip (both the protagonist and the implied author) or to relate more closely to him, as he or she follows in the steps of Galip's flâneries.

Interestingly, Freely's 2006 translation of this same novel exhibits a very different agenda and offers an utterly different reading experience. Türkkan notes that nostalgia plays an important role in Freely's translation style. According to her, Freely's translation "reveals the translator's nostalgic attitude to the city and its culture in which she grew up in the 1970s" (168). "Nostalgia, creative and stylized," explains Türkkan, "is an artistic device and a strategy of survival, a way of making sense of the impossibility of going back" (171). Pursuantly, translating Pamuk's The Black Book provided Freely with an opportunity to indulge in nostalgic longing for her lost hometown, or in Türkkan's words, "to revisit and explore an imagined homeland" (171).

Türkkan references Charles Ferguson's study of the national languages of developing nations, and particularly argues that "[t]he trope of the city is one key element that makes this novel 'translatable'" (169). According to Türkkan, in Freely's translation "the image of the city of Istanbul stands out" (168). It also reinforces Pamuk's image after winning the Nobel Prize in 2006 as "the writer of the City" (168).[64]

In the Translator's Afterword to The Black Book (2006), Freely highlights the background where "[t]he novel takes place" – that is, Istanbul in January 1980 – as "one of the darkest moments of recent Turkish history" (465). Immediately following this remark comes

the concessive clause: "but it is lit from within by the more innocent Istanbul we knew as children" (465). The pronoun "we" in this phrase refers at once to the translator herself, the author Pamuk and their entire generation. Importantly, Freely's translation marks some distance between Istanbul in 1980 and the city as she remembers it from her childhood. This distance also marks the path which Galip-the-protagonist and Galip-the-implied-author undertake in the narrative to meet each other. If Gün displaces the Islamic reference to a Christian context for the English reader, Freely translates Istanbul so that the deliberately obscure Turkish syntax of the original gives way to intended clarity in "the simpler and more straightforward logic of English": "Because I came, with time, to understand how [Pamuk's] long sentences contributed to the narrative trance, I tried, wherever possible to keep them at their original length. But I also wanted them to be clear – or clear enough" (Freely 464).

Many Turkish-reading critics of Pamuk, Türkkan included, find Freely's translation problematic, particularly her simplification of the syntactical structure. Türkkan indeed complains, "[While t]he original <u>Kara Kitap</u> is a dense and opaque text[, t]urning it into a clear, readable, and fluent narrative is a mistake" (170). Although the critique is justified to a certain extent, claiming that the translation is a mistake could be read as the symptom of a naïve reader who wants to travel back and forth between the original and the translated text. This parallels with the immature viewer's disappointment in the "Mysterious Paintings" parable: he or she would demand that the translator restore the symmetry between the painting and its mirror image. Of course, a translated text is a reflection of the original, and I do not think that Türkkan insists on restoring the symmetry between the original and the translated. I do, however, want to note here a question that Türkkan raises but leaves unanswered: "although both <u>The Black Book</u> and <u>The New Life</u> in Gün's translation were harshly

criticized, why is it that only <u>The Black Book</u> appears in a new translation?" (162) I am not going to speculate on such question. Instead, I would advance that <u>The Black Book</u>, because of its heavy reliance on doubles and on the book of two parts, was qualified – or even fated – to have two translations in the English language!

Finally, I conclude this chapter on a scene of translation and back-translation in <u>The Black Book</u>. It occurs near the end of the book, when İskender, Galip's friend, is assisting a BBC crew by head-hunting an appropriate interviewee for a television programme. Galip immediately thinks of Celâl; but as we know, he never successfully locates him. Galip finally turns himself in and persuades İskender to introduce him as Celâl to the British journalists. This scene involves translation back and forth between English and Turkish with İskender acting as the translator. I want to particularly focus on this dialogue:

> "Why are they laughing?" Galip asked.
> "I am not sure," said İskender, although he was smiling as if he were.
> "No one is ever himself," Galip whispered, as if divulging a secret. "None of us can ever be ourselves. Don't you wonder if other people see you as someone other than the person you really are? Are you so very sure you are your own person? If you are, are you sure that the person you are sure you are is really you? What do these people want? Let me tell you what sort of person I think they're looking for: a foreigner who will appeal to the after-dinner audience, a man whose troubles will trouble them and whose sadness will touch their hearts. And I have just the story for them! No one even needs to see my face. They could keep my face dark when they shoot the film. A celebrated columnist whose life is veiled in mystery – a Muslim, don't forget how much that adds to the allure – fearing assassination, sensing an imminent coup, mindful, too, of the brutal way his government treats its critics, has agreed to give an interview to the BBC, providing his identity is kept secret. What could be better than that?"
> "All right, then," said İskender, "I'll call up to the room. They'll be expecting us."
> […]
> "Our famous journalist – our columnist Celâl Salik – stands before you in person!" said İskender in an English that struck Galip as stilted, though – good student that he was – he translated it straight back into Turkish. (2006, 413-4)

Here, İskender admits that he is not sure why the BBC crew is laughing, but smiles anyway. This smile functions as a mask to cover his insecurity and confusion and points to the pretentiousness in his attitude which eventually irritates Galip. In a casual and unintended manner, laughter draws a boundary between those who get it and those who do not, the fact that İskender tries to appear as one of those who get it reveals his fear to be considered an outsider. His pretentiousness is also noted in his performance as a translator. As the narrator notes, for Galip, İskender's English sounds "stilted" (414). İskender exhibits a particular attitude toward translation, in which the translator is very conscious of the target audience's anticipation. With every gesture and message, he intends to please the audience. In so doing, he also loses his authenticity and genuineness.

Galip's back-translation is beyond what the narrator suggests should be the habit of a good student. It stages a protest against İskender's troubling pretentiousness and reverses his inside-out attitude into an outside-in form of resistance. In the process of mentally translating İskender's sentence *back* into Turkish, Galip endeavours to remain true to himself, rather than please anyone else, in preparation for his performance as Celâl in front of the camera. However, because the BBC represents a media that could reach a global audience, just like the English translation(s) of the novel itself, without intending to meet them, Galip strategically situates himself in response to the target audience's anticipation. He plays the role of a "celebrated columnist whose life is veiled in mystery" to catch their attention and the opportunity to be heard (413). On a metafictional level, this scene of translation and back-translation also anticipates the translation of this novel into English, the impact this translation could have in the English-speaking world, and the transformation that it would bring to the text. It is like that posture of Galip-the-protagonist, who eventually becomes the author of his

narrative as a result of him pursuing of his double (Celâl). Similarly, the anticipation of translation is also coherent with Galip-the-implied-author who translates his story into a third person narrative "he" as his double, and writes in the voice of the first person as his double's double.[65]

An Imaginary Conversation in lieu of Conclusion:
On the Unresolvable Paradox of Home

In this dissertation, the title of each chapter corresponds to a particular model of the imperfect flâneur. They are "The Dislodged Occupant," "The Unaccommodated Stranger," "The Hopscotch Player," and "The Double's Double." Each of them in turn is embodied by a character in a specific novel. It can also be said that they, at least partially, share the narrator's perspective. In Chapter Four, it is clear that the last model, "the double's double," corresponds to Galip in Orhan Pamuk's The Black Book. Indeed, by the novel's end, the implied author interrupts the text and reveals that he is Galip. But, he also suggests that the reader should not confuse Galip-the-protagonist with Galip-the-implied-author. By writing his narrative as the novel-within-the-novel Rüya and Galip, Galip becomes Celâl's double: ironically, Galip considers that Celâl is his Doppelgänger. Hence, he is the double of his double.

In discussing Chapter One, it is also clear that "the dislodged occupant" is in fact Suzy Creamcheez in Robert Majzels's City of Forgetting. Although this term can also be applied to other ex-heroic protagonists, their preoccupations with utopian dreams make them incapable of occupying contemporary urban space as flâneurs. In my reading, I also suggest a similar point – perhaps a bit surprising or radical one – with respect to Galip's double roles in the narrative: Suzy can be read as the figure behind the problematic narrative voice of the novel, as she attempts to perpetually (re)construct and deconstruct her own story since she lost her memory.

Importantly, as I subtly suggest in the Introduction, imperfect flâneurs insert themselves into imaginative cities of their narratives, and then become their protagonists, or mythicise their urban stories in a "co-incidental" dimension. In whichever case, this posture

creates a double role as they are *both* the protagonist who wanders in the textual city *and* the implied author who ventriloquises the omniscient narrator's voice. However, in this thick notion of the term, determining who is an imperfect flâneur may remain ambiguous as regards my examples in the middle chapters.

Indeed, in XiXi's <u>Flying Carpet</u>, dealt with in Chapter Three, many characters are potential flâneurs. Yet, considering that the narrative is told within a cross-generational storytelling frame between a parent and a daughter, or between a (great) grandmother and her (great) granddaughter, I propose that "the hopscotch player" is specifically matched to this storyteller. The novel's last sentence introduces this narrative's implied audience as Aimee Fa, descended from the Fa family. But, the storyteller's identity remains obscure. Taking XiXi's earlier and related short story "The Story of Fertile Town" as a point of reference, where a similar cross-generational storytelling scene occurs between the elder sister Beauty Bloom and her grandpa and between the younger sister Everlasting Bloom and her grandma. In the scene, Everlasting Bloom interrupts the narration twice and claims that she is the storyteller. As a result of my bad faith in consistency between these two stories, I propose that Constance Fa (whose name in Chinese is also Everlasting Bloom, that is, Hua Ke-jiu [花可久], or Fa Ho-gau in Cantonese transliteration) told the story of Feituzhen (Fertillia) to his daughter Aimee. Constance was born to Third Son Fa and Jeneusse Ip. Despite the feminine name in English translation, he is a boy. However, in "The Story of Fertile Town," the equivalent character of the same name is a girl. Indeed, it is perfectly alright to suggest that the narrative voice belongs to Flora Fa (Constance's sister), Jeneusse Ip, or any other member of the Fa family in the novel. The final fragment's obscurity allows for open-ended interpretations.

This question – the identification of the character who takes on the double role of third person protagonist and implied author – becomes a lot more difficult to address as regards Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance, discussed in Chapter Two. The term "unaccommodated stranger" could refer to Maneck, Ishvar, Omprakash, or Dina. Indeed the stranger could be any character or even the reader. In fact, he or she could be anyone who struggles to feel accommodated in the city, where hospitality cannot be taken for granted. Hence, in the first half of the chapter, I demonstrate that both Maneck and Omprakash can be read as adapted models of the flâneur in the context of an Indian postcolonial city. Specifically, they are adapted from nineteenth-century models such as Balzac's Eugène de Rastignac or of Hardy's Judy the Obscure. I admire the way in which Ishvar and Omprakash take necessary steps of hospitality and reconstruct their lives by following the pattern of a figurative quilt in their acts as storytellers. Yet, as I also mention it in a harsh comment by the end of the chapter, I struggle to celebrate them as survivors in the novel. It is important to compare this with the final scene in Majzels's novel: Suzy remains, with de Maisonneuve's dog Pilote, as the only survivor of an apocalyptic earthquake, and for that I consider (and indeed celebrate) her as an important anti-heroic figure set apart from all other ex-heroic characters.

Nonetheless, as concerns concepts of hero and anti-hero in Mistry's A Fine Balance, irony lies in the fact that the heroic characters endure and survive all sufferings. They thus require definite, though arbitrarily perceived, beginnings and ends to frame their stories. They can then be content and situate themselves in their stories as heroes. Despite his suicide, Maneck does not leap towards such a heroic dimension, but remains a choral or anti-heroic character with no possibility of redemption. Maneck's ultimate end brings home the cruel world's hostility and questions the apparent hospitality of English as the novel's language

medium. The novel's abrupt ending leaks open a hole in the narrative's supposed closure, similar to the other three novels' endings:

In Majzels's <u>City of Forgetting</u>, Suzy finds herself in the wreckage of books in a university library; in XiXi's <u>Flying Carpet</u>, the narrator perceives that, because of the magical power of the "self-vanish leaves," all his characters vanish and are set free from his authorial control; in Pamuk's <u>The Black Book</u>, Galip fails to locate Rüya and Celâl before they are shot dead on the street, and consequently chooses to take up Celâl's role and name as he writes the columnist's articles and a narrative of his own experience, in which Galip (not Celâl) is the protagonist. All these endings evade proper closure but deliberately address an implied audience simultaneously (for instance, Aimee Fa in XiXi's novel) and the novel's reader. They leave us with a bitter taste of imperfections, which is not confined to the fictional world, but the infernal city here and now.

In short, "imperfect flâneurs" specifically refer to the four models elaborated in the main chapters: Suzy Creamcheez (the dislodged occupant), Maneck Kohlah (the unaccommodated stranger), Constance Fa (the hopscotch player), and Galip – Celâl Salik's double (that is, the double's double). As I develop and structure this dissertation, all these examples remain largely isolated from each other. In the remaining pages of the dissertation, rather than offer a conclusion – which as a structural unit that implies a definite closure is antithetical to this dissertation – I choose to open a dialogic space in which I deliberately develop my imagined conversation with four key voices from the primary texts. I invite the reader to join or interrupt, whether you have an experience to share, a diverging opinion to offer, or an urge to disagree. For this, you don't have to raise your hand, but simply produce

your comments in the margins or between the lines (not simply on this dialogic space but any page accumulated earlier) and turn this dissertation into a never-ending palimpsest.

The Conversation

Characters

Suzy (Suzy Creamcheez from Robert Majzels's <u>City of Forgetting</u>)
Maneck (Maneck Kohlah from Rohinton Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u>)
Constance (Constance Fa [Everlasting Bloom] from XiXi's <u>Flying Carpet</u>)
Galip (Galip from Orhan Pamuk's <u>The Black Book</u>)
N-G (Simon Anne-Gee, the imagined devil's advocate during this dissertation research, he is a connoisseur of quotations and is responsible for most endnotes and counter-arguments)

Scene

[*On the staircases between the fifth and sixth floor of McGill's McLennan Library of Humanities and Social Sciences*, **Suzy** *sits on one of the steps with a laptop on her lap and a handful of books around her. On her left are the two English translations of Orhan Pamuk's <u>The Black Book</u>: the thicker one is Güneli Gün's 1994 translation, and the slightly thinner one, Maureen Freely's 2006 version. On her right is Rohinton Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u>. Behind her is Simon Yiu-Tsan Ng's <u>Imperfect Flâneurs</u>. Leaning next to her is Robert Majzels's <u>City of Forgetting</u>. On her laptop screen, Diana Yue's English translation of XiXi's <u>Flying Carpet</u> appears in the web-browser via McGill University library portal*.]

Suzy [*whispers to herself*]**:** Now, all are ready. I have done this before: this was how I met Clytæmnestra. I didn't care whether it's in thunder, lightning, or in rain. For me, they happen at once and are always the same. The hurly-burly'd never be done, while the battles'd be neither lost nor won.

Maneck Kohlah, Constance Fa and Galip. Hmm, how do we pronounce this name? "N", "g"? Is it a full spelling? It sounds unpronounceable. Lemme call you Simon Anne-Gee.

[Maneck, **Constance**, **Galip**, *and* **N-G** *suddenly appear around* **Suzy**, *who perceives their appearances naturally as if it were expected*.]

N-G [*winks at* **Suzy**]**:** Suzy, I am glad we meet here in this city, this library. [*addressing* **Galip**, **Constance**, *and* **Maneck**, *one by one*] Galip, I always want to tell you how much I admire your writing – though I don't understand Turkish, nor do I read the newspaper Milliyet. Constance, I believe we can be best friends. (I also speak Fertillian by the way. It is my mother tongue, and Dragonese my step-mothertongue.) Ah! Maneck, my chap, how you have broken my heart… I hope you all are well.

The reason why we are all here, I believe, is that in Yiu-Tsan Ng's book, Imperfect Flâneurs, all of you are involved as protagonists, or imperfect flâneurs so to speak. (And, don't be mistaken. I am Simon Anne-Gee, the double of Yiu-Tsan Ng in *his* book. Listen, unlike his difficult name, all parts of mine "Simon Anne-Gee" could quite perfectly be accommodated in the English language (et en français peut-être. N'est-ce pas, Suzy?) [**Suzy** *rolls her eyes*.] I am the one responsible for gathering many of the quotations, writing most of the endnotes, and making sure the language of the dissertation is up to the standard of perfection. But, this dissertation will not end if we don't fix this paradox: okay, let's call it the paradox of home. Are you ready for some serious topics? [*Dead air*.] Oh, well, I am not really good at this. But, anyway, let me simply throw two quotations at you:

In his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" (1995), Charles Baudelaire attempts to define the flâneur, not ontologically as an answer to the question who he is, but phenomenologically in terms of pleasure:

> The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. (9)

And here the idea of home (*chez soi*) is mentioned, listen:

> To be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world – such are a few of the slightest pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial natures which the tongue can but clumsily define. (9)

Reading this long passage also makes my tongue feel clumsy. But, now, let's hear what Theodor Adorno suggests in <u>Minima Moralia</u>, published almost one full century after Baudelaire's essay. Well, I don't really think Adorno has Baudelaire in mind when he made this statement: "It is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (1978, 39). The first time I came across this ironic interpretation of home was not through Adorno, but through Pamuk in an interview (Mirze 2008), where he paraphrased Adorno: "Morality begins when one feels not at home in one's home" (179). This paraphrase involves a shift from the ontological understanding of *being* at home (or not at home) to a phenomenological question of *feeling* at home (or not at home). I was aware of this contradiction and could not find a convincing way to solve it: that is, the perfect flâneur's pleasure in being at home when away from home, and Adorno's irony of being not at home at home. (Wow, that feels like a tongue twister, I hope I haven't mixed up the ideas.) So, do you get this paradox, or see some contradiction here?

Suzy: Thank you Simon Anne-Gee, well, for finally making a pause. Phew. No, I am not going to be serious on any ready topics, or ready for any serious topics. You should not assume that there is any reason for which we all gathered here. So, no, you are not responsible

for this current scenario. I have short-term memory and could not remember exactly what you just said. But, there are a couple things I want to throw at you.

First – and this does not suggest that I will offer a "second" or a "third" point, it's just a figure of speech – first, you shouldn't have expected that Yiu-Tsan Anne-Gee's book <u>Imperfect Flâneurs</u> would ever come to perfection. No "well done," but never get done, a continuous "well, well, well, well" or "to-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow"… Here is a copy of the book that you fear may never end. I managed to find it on the fifth floor in this library. It will have to end anyway, so you can free yourself from this project and move on. Yes, I am speaking of a contradiction: either you strive for excellence and keep working on it, or leave some paradoxes unresolved, questions unanswered, and gaps un-bridged. A good book, like Clytæmnestra's life or afterlife, or like a cup of coffee, comes to an end with a bitter taste or aftertaste of imperfection.

What is that sentence again? … "mortally begins when one is home and not home"? Hmmm – I can't recall the subject in this sentence. But, is a subject mandatory? Might just be another sign of my amnesiac echolalia – begins but mortally, her story, when home is not home. Because the ending always anticipates her death. Why did Clytæmnestra have to die? My story can hardly even begin when I have no memory of home. It is nowhere. The book that you read – PS8576 A47 C58 1997 – could be a collection of fragments from my journal, with which I endeavour to reconstruct my memory. There are all these books around me in this library. They provide me names and events that I can relate to people whom I vaguely remembered before I ended up here. My way to establish home in this city? Can I really say it? Well, I might have to restart all over again. For homeless people, home is an impossible dream.

N-G: In reading <u>City of Forgetting</u> and <u>A Fine Balance</u>, I couldn't help but worry that one day the homeless people would end up like pigeons (or doves) in any city, that is, as Mr. Palomar Calvino observes in the terraces of Rome,

> The doves whose flying once cheered the city's squares have been followed by a degenerate progeny, filthy and infected, neither domestic nor wild, but integrated into the public institutions and, as such, inextinguishable. (Calvino 1985, 51)

Suzy: I am amazed by the distance between two names for the same species. Doves and pigeons, flâneurs and ragpickers, flâneuses and prostitutes…

Galip: Suzy, sometimes, we should simply concede that what is done cannot be undone. It's heartbreaking to hear that someone like you has to go through the same process again and again, as fruitless and tedious as it is to Sisyphus. But from what you said, it seems each time something new comes up. So, each narrative should be unique and different. I am indeed going through a similar narrative loop. For this, may I ask if you could do me a favour? [**Suzy** *is not looking at him when he speaks to her, as if she does not hear him, but she leafs through the two copies of* <u>The Black Book</u> *laid open in front of her*.] I have the impression that some signs and memories of Rüya's should be hidden nastily as secret signs inside books all over the world. I can't stand the thought that they are so close and yet so far. This university's libraries seem big enough to possibly have them. On my way here, I realised that they actually have an Islamic Studies Library, humbly located several steps uphill from here, on McTavish Street. There is an impressive collection of books in Turkish and Arabic. We might be able to trace some signs and footprints of Rüya's there.

N-G: Suffice it to say that flâneurs may have already retreated from the streets and arcades of nineteenth-century Paris to the university libraries of contemporary cities.

Walter Benjamin considers the street, or the city itself, a shelter for the flâneur, in terms of what he called an interior space ("*l'intérieur*"). He refers to it as a result of the rapid implementation of gas lighting in nineteenth-century Paris under Napoleon III: "This way of increasing safety in the city made the crowds feel at home in the open streets even at night" (2003 [1938], 28).

The safety of "feel[ing] at home" evokes twentieth-century urban planner Jane Jacobs's utopian view on the city that "[t]he bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers" (1964, 30). The modern infrastructures of safety and security turn the city into an interior space. Benjamin further associates this *intérieur* with the arcade structure – "this is the way the street presents itself to the flâneur" – and likewise, the flâneur is linked to the commodity of the arcades: "The flâneur is someone abandoned in the crowd. He is thus in the same situation as the commodity" (2003 [1938], 31). Of course, Benjamin had Karl Marx's notion of "commodity-soul" in mind when he wrote this. This explains the flâneur's mentality, which "would be bound to see every individual as a buyer in whose hand and house it wants to nestle" (31). This "house" is a temporary shelter in which a flâneur seeks to nest – as a fleeting or even make-believe construct of comfort and protection.

It is important to acknowledge that behind this vivid conceptualisation of the flâneur, Benjamin did not stroll in the commercial space of Paris, but as Dianne Chisholm recounts, his "[h]istorical sensitivity is heightened not by hashish, dream, or memory, but by visits to the Bibliothèque Nationale where Benjamin spent his days collecting data for his Project" (Chisholm 2005, 147). (Of course, this "Project" refers to the unfinished and ambitious Arcades Project.) She continues,

He fills convolutes with citations culled from every archival source, blasted out of context, and reassembled in emphatic antitheses. Montage becomes the critical counterperspective to dream and narcosis, and the optics with which Benjamin views the Paris of his (pre)occupation (or Paris before its occupation). (147)

Chisholm does not make the following point, but, the important role that libraries played in Benjamin's work reminds me of an exceptional point that he made earlier in The Origin of German Tragic Drama: "The Renaissance explores the universe; the baroque explores the libraries" (1998, 140). Specifically, he is referring to Albrecht Dürer's engraving Melencolia: "In it the knowledge of the introvert and the investigations of the scholar have merged as intimately as in the men of the baroque" (140). Flâneurs are introverts. I don't question it much. Perhaps, well, maybe we should say that flâneurs can also be men – and women – of the baroque.

Galip: Mr. Anne-Gee, maybe I should say that I also admire your work, but with certain reservations. I read Imperfect Flâneurs – I found it online as a digital version of your dissertation a while ago, it was a false positive in the search engine after I used "Rüya" and "Celâl" as keywords. You (or Yiu-Tsan) make a good point on the two different kinds of disappointment behind the verb "to reach" and "to arrive" respectively. I am intrigued by it and wish that I had written that myself.

But, frankly, I don't know if I could really trust you. Are you the writer of this work, or as you said, *just* a shadow of Yiu-Tsan behind this book? Let's come clear on this point: I mean, let's face off. You and I both claim to be the double of another authentic existence. But, how could I be sure that you are Simon Anne-Gee, as you claim you are, and different from Yiu-Tsan (Ng)? You said you could recognise us right away, but how could you be so sure that I am

Galip and not anyone else? Couldn't I be Celâl in disguise? But, yes, you are right, I'm Galip. No matter how hard I try, I would never ever become, or perfectly impersonate, Celâl.

And, now, let's look at your paradox: first, it's important that we refer to the original sentence, even if I am aware of the fact that, as Celâl once wrote in his column, "it was as difficult to trace the origins of a story as it was to trace the origins of life" (Pamuk 2006, 42). Here, I got a copy of Adorno's Minima Moralia in German.

N-G [*interrupts*]**:** I'm sure you're Galip, and not Celâl or anyone else. And, yes, let's look at Adorno in German, which for me, like Turkish, is a language I can't penetrate. Jephcott's English translation gives us a double and incompatible sense of home, in the original German phrase, the word "*Haus*" appears only once: "nicht bei sich selber zu Hause zu sein." (I don't even know how to pronounce this.) Anyway, its relatively literal word-to-word translation would be "not to be with oneself at home," in which the implication of "self" appears twice in German as the reflexive "*sich*" and the pronoun "*selber*" respectively.

Galip: I'm sure you are aware of this. The double *self*, just like Galip and Celâl: when I yearn for becoming Celâl or feel inadequate compared to what he has achieved, I no longer feel at home with myself. I couldn't help but try by every means to become Celâl: say, to get into his apartment and take up his home and live my life as him. [*Long silence. Maybe someone raises an eyebrow or two*.] I have to confess that I never treasured my home, or the wonderful feeling of being at home, until my wife, Rüya – and oh, my dream, too (I hope you get the pun in her name) – disappeared. It remains an unresolved mystery, a regret that I prefer not to admit. Home can so easily be taken for granted that one only misses it or realises its importance when it's lost or stolen. To say that my home is stolen, perhaps I am trying to find a scapegoat for a convenient reason, or an excuse so to speak, to explain why I could not feel at home anymore.

And this is the point where my story ultimately *begins*, with the hope that I'll retrieve it. But, alas, this destination could never be reached. I wouldn't dare consider which one of the following is more daunting (or heartbreaking): the moment when I realised Rüya had vanished from my life or the moment I learnt her death. Is it the end? Is it the beginning of a fruitless journey? I am still looking for the answer, while at the same time I am so scared of reaching it. I have learnt to come to terms with these imperfections –

Suzy [*raises her head from the books and interrupts*]**:** and, of course he has not learnt the lesson, and has never conceded his failure.

Galip [*keeps speaking without being affected by the interruption*]**:** – that constitute the journey known as my life. Would the readers of <u>Rüya and Galip</u> undertake this journey as a philosophical quest? I would hope they would pursue it. But, at the same time, I warned them not to. There should always be roads not taken. I said I could not trust you because you remind me so much of myself. I am aware of how unreliable I can be sometimes. There is always something fishy or untrustworthy about someone who considers himself the double of any one, particularly *that* of his Doppelgänger.

Maneck [*has been sitting on the stairs with his head buried into his arms as if he was in serious contemplation, now slowly raises his head, lowers his arms, and stands up*]**:** Regret is what I perceive in your confession, Galip. We share a certain kinship to each other, not only because of this mood of regret, this sense of helplessness, that I detect in your voice, but also because of the "co-incidence" that our narratives are both in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Galip: Ah, yes, my friend. I am a good reader of faces. I can relate to your face of melancholy that perhaps resembles mine. I have a question for you but I want to let you continue first.

Maneck: And, storytelling, to paraphrase a friend whom I only briefly met twice throughout my lifetime, allows us to go forward without fear of losing ourselves in this ever-changing world (Mistry 2002b, 790). So, now it's my turn, I guess. Let me finally try to tell my story.

The destruction upon my life after I left home was irrecoverable. It snowballed into an avalanche. Had I known the irreversible effects of leaving, I would not have agreed to get my diploma and to leave home for the city in the first place. At that time, although I might have not spent enough time on my study, I at least spent a lot of effort establishing a home in Aunty Dina's flat in Bombay – a city I finally grew to consider as my second hometown, or a compensating other hometown after the original was forever lost. But this journey, her name was disguised as "life," this journey would never allow me to settle at home. I was deprived of any sense of it. Fate did not allow me to go back there for a degree programme – a pretext to spend a couple more years with Dina and the Darjis. I once again was sent to a faraway place because of my parents' miscalculated decision. I spent eight years of empty life in the desert city. It took me great effort to come back home, only to realise that everything had changed beyond repair. And, yes, I killed myself.

Would people consider my suicide courageous or cowardly? But, at that point, it was convincingly more comforting to hit the railway blades than to go home with engulfing regret. [*Long silence*.] I could not imagine how my mother would respond to my death. She would collapse, physically, [*a necessary pause*.] then mentally, as I can almost imagine. But it's unthinkable. Maybe she would really express her anger and scold me – my body, I mean. Shouldn't I take death as my final consolation? It's after all the ultimate destination that we all finally reach. No exception.

N-G: "Destination." Now, you remind me of Richard Goodkin's argument on Oedipus. He suggests that "[Oedipus] is both the destination of his search and the vehicle by which that destination is to be reached, both home and a path to home, both at the foundation of his house and on the way to finding that foundation" (1984, 5). Goodkin is making a point here on what he understands as the tragic hero:

> the tragic hero aims to forge a permanent identity for himself, to create an idea of himself that will never change, that will be permanently sheltered from the vagaries of time and chance and nature. To this extent he wishes to use his home as a repository, as a kind of altar which prevents the alteration of his name and his reputation and thus seems to give him a kind of idealized immortality, insofar as it allows his idea, the idea of him, forever to survive, as a sort of paradigm by which human life is to be measured. In this sense of his home is what allows him to approach the permanence of divinity, which is all the more fitting as the home is itself an attempt to reach up toward the heavens, to allow human existence to aspire to certain characteristics of the divine. But it is precisely because this image of the home and the name is indeed an idealized one, a distillation, a freezing in time, that it cannot be accurate, and is by its very nature apt to separate itself from the truth of human existence. The truth in Tragedy is experienced as a recognition precisely because it is always a displacement of structures which exist to hide it more than to express it, or at least of structures which must deform it in order to express it in an acceptable form. (7)

To be honest, Maneck, I don't really recognise you as a tragic hero or any hero. Mind you, no offence is intended. But certainly, I don't think you are aspiring towards a destination in the sense of permanent identity or heaven or characteristics of the divine, as Goodkin proposes. Have you found home, or a permanent shelter in the afterlife?

Galip: Simon, that actually sounds like a forbidden question! You are really demonic. But, I am tempted to tag on here: what is it like in the afterlife? Would there be any way I could communicate with, or simply peek into, that world? I would do whatever I could to bring Rüya back like Persephone is allowed to return from the underworld every year.

Suzy: Oh boy! These questions should remain in the realm of mystery. Pandora's Box is a temptation that can be more unbearable and dangerous than you can imagine. Now, you

mention Persephone: but, if she really manages to establish a permanent home with Hades, why does she care to take all this trouble and come back? She cannot stay in the earthly world or wish to remain in the underground forever. Unable to be at home in her home; unwilling to remain at home in her home, what a double loss of home ad infinitum…

N-G: Suzy, you are right. The first speaker among numerous in Orhan Pamuk's <u>My Name is Red</u> claims to be "nothing but a corpse now" (2001, 3). He is obviously speaking from the vantage point of the afterlife. His name is Master Elegant Effendi, by the way – which is not very important. What matters here for us is that he actually anticipates what the reader would ask, just like one way or the other we all want to learn what Maneck knows about the afterlife,

> After hearing the miracles of my voice, you might think, "Who cares what you earned when you were alive? Tell us what you see. Is there life after death? Where's your soul? What about Heaven and Hell? What's death like? Are you in pain?" You're right, the living are extremely curious about the Afterlife. (Pamuk 2001, 4)

Here, let me skip a few sentences. Then, he says,

> I gave no intention of tempting the faith of those who live rightfully through their hopes and visions of the Otherworld, so let me declare that all I've seen relates specifically to my own very personal circumstances. (4)

In short, let's suppose that what we see in the afterlife varies from one person to another. We'd better put these questions in brackets, or in footnotes – well, as you know, parentheses and endnotes, they are the spaces where I thrive. Yes, I'm Hades in the underworld under the main text (that otherworld where things remain bracketed).

Maneck: I always enjoy listening to others' stories. All your stories, including yours Simon, are unique and interesting. I once suggested that if there were an uninteresting life, then, it would probably be mine (Mistry, 789), but I might be wrong. You don't have to encounter all

the ups and downs to have an interesting life. Ironically, it's from the vantage point of the afterlife – I like your way of putting it, Simon – that I feel able to frame my life as a story. The writer who invents me as a protagonist once delivered this view of redemption through writing in an interview that

> I once read, and I think it was by Camus, that one can redeem oneself by writing and that has stayed with me and I think that is why I began to write. I wasn't sure how redemption would come through writing but I'm still writing. (McLay, 18)

Well, I don't know if there can be any redemption at all. If redemption means destination – which I think is what Goodkin suggests, then, I have not reached any destination. (Does Oedipus have any vision or belief in the afterlife by the way?) There is no destination, so one dies without getting anywhere. Sometimes I cannot help but speculate about my relationship with the novelist who invented me.

I wonder if this possibility could be entertained: well, perhaps I, Maneck Kohlah, the coward character in Rohinton Mistry's novel A Fine Balance, have not really died at the end. I am obviously inspired by your story, Galip: your story can only begin after you realised that Rüya and Celâl are forever lost. Would the reader accept a similar explanation to my story? I am the implied author behind this novel, that I stage my own suicide at the end? But, my suicide is not intended to give any sense of redemption, but quite the opposite – it destroys redemption, perhaps. (And, in this case, I haven't even been to the underworld and could not offer you any hint about it. Sorry.) If a perfect end or destination entails an idealised "image of the home and the name [...], a distillation, a freezing in time" (as Goodkin suggests), then my suicide abolishes any possibility of this freezing: everything in short remains in the unrefrigerated world.

Constance [*who has been leaning against the stairs' handrail, his arms folded across his chest, looking cool, claps his hands and effortlessly catches everyone's attention*]**:** What an inspiring conversation! I was waiting for a moment to thread my voice into this thick fabric of vocal tapestry, a four-part symphony. I don't want to tread on any of your dreams and destroy the beautiful architecture of this ongoing conversation, but perhaps this fabric that we are making is like a carpet, with which we cover and protect the land, and on which we should carefully place our steps.

I am an architect, fortunate enough to be working in my hometown, which I nickname "Fertillia" in a never-ending story that I have been telling my daughter Aimee. Because of my professional training, I am more sensitive to architecture-related stories and references. So far in this conversation, I am particularly intrigued by the image of a "man of baroque" that Simon introduces into the Islamic Studies Library that Galip mentions. That Library, as we know, is very close by, indeed, only several steps away from here. If we pay attention to its architectural details, it is not hard to perceive a paradox in the mélange of architectural terms: an Islamic Studies library not located within a mosque but inside a building with a Gothic façade. The campus map shows that that building is called Morrice Hall. Now, several steps downslope from Morrice Hall is this Humanities and Social Sciences Library. It is a hybrid combination of at least three libraries. The entrance and most of the ground floor is Redpath Library Building – a late nineteenth century construction in Richardsonian Romanesque style designed by architect Sir Arthur Taylor. Did you all recognise that?

This wing where we are now is joined with the Redpath Library on the ground floor: the six-floor McLennan Library, which was built in 1960s and is shockingly designed in a different style from the Redpath Library. In architecture, we call it "brutalism." Mind you, "brutalism"

has little to do with the adjective "brutal" in English. It originates from the French phrase "*béton brut*" which means "raw concrete." It is Le Corbusier's diction and designates his choice material for his design. British architectural critic Reyner Banham coined this term "brutalism" in English in addressing this style.

Suzy [*interrupts*]**:** Ah! Le Corbu! I had never realised his omnipresence in this city. He always talked about a strange cylindrical object that he affectionately called "Modulor" as if it were the most precious thing on Earth.

Constance: Wow! You met Le Corbusier? I would love to talk to him in person if I could. Back in my sophomore years, I entered a design competition with the given theme "The Architecture of Tomorrow." My design got me a humble prize, and it was partially inspired by Le Corbusier. Many of the architecture books I have read indicate that a married couple should always share the same master-bedroom. My design responds to this awkward point: I added an additional master-bedroom to each residential apartment, so both husband and wife would have a room of their own. It was the moment of quiet revolution in my career as an architect – my first step so to speak. [see XiXi, Flying Carpet (2000, 387-9.)]

Now, let's go back to this library – McGill University's Humanities and Social Sciences Library. I said it's a hybrid of three libraries. If you are following my words carefully, you should be wondering: where is the third one? If we go down to the ground floor, and get to Redpath Library, we will be on the way. Somewhere on the left along the corridor of the study area and next to the men's washroom is a stairwell, which could lead up to another library that is housed on the third floor of Redpath: the Blackader-Lauterman Library (it, well, is not as hidden as it sounds). Yes, I have just been there before I got here. It has a large collection of books on architecture, urban planning, and fine arts. There is a big stained-glass window

outside that library – an unmistakable element that belongs to the nineteenth-century Richadsonian-Romanesque décor of Redpath library, but detached in style from the functionality of the twenty-first century university library.

The point that I am going to make is: I can feel very much *at home* in this city, where I can simply study architecture and imagine the stories behind these buildings. The change in their style and functionality refers to the question of home: to a certain extent, we can't take what we understand as home for granted. Just look at how ironic it is for the Islamic Studies Library to be housed in Gothic-style Morrice Hall. To further complicate the picture: let's say now Simon is strolling inside that library as a man of the baroque. It's a mixture of Islamic, Gothic, Baroque images.

We may add that Simon, as someone relating to Fertillia, is indeed a man of "baroque with a difference" or a "Fertillian man of Baroque" in that sense. Yes, I once explained to a prince from the Petroleum Kingdom that there is a unique and local architectural style in Fertillia right there on Fertile Water Street:

> Some people think that Fertillian baroque and sixteenth-century European baroque are equally ugly, grotesque, absurd and irrational, and that their formal and visual elements show no harmony whatsoever and the ultimate effect is imperfect. (XiXi 2000, 315)

A similar note could be made in the unexpected adjacencies of different styles here in this city.

But, I argue,

> maybe the baroque structures that we have in Fertillia can be a source of inspiration for future builders of residential dwellings, with relation to the aesthetics of the receptors. In future, it would probably be good to involve the dwellers themselves in the planning and designing of residential dwellings. After all, they are the residents, and they should have freedom to plan the space outside their own homes. (XiXi 2000, 315-6)

That being said, what I want to say as my contribution to this discussion on home is that: we should never abandon the idea of home. My mom used to tell me that the importance of home

should always be taken for granted. We should accept, concede, and indeed be grateful for, the fact that home is not, and will never become, perfect. We tend to enlarge all its flaws and then think that we could abandon it and get a new one.

N-G: I am flattered to be called a "man of baroque with a difference." Constance, I should offer you a quotation as my compliment or a gift in return. We have been talking about home, but what does it mean to be at home or to feel at home? The original German phrase in Adorno's writing has already given us a hint: being with oneself. If I were to translate that into Chinese or Dragonese, it would render a phrase which also does not conjure the sense of "home": it would be *zizoi* in Cantonese-Chinese (or Fertillian), or *zizai* [自在] in Mandarin-Chinese (or Dragonese), which can be translated into English as free, unrestrained, comfortable, and literally means "self-presence." Do you agree, Constance?

Constance: Yes, totally. It sounds bizarre that we talk to each other in this Anglo language, but not in our mother tongue or even our step-mothertongue. But, where is the quotation?

N-G: Yes, there you go: during this research, we came across many readings but hardly located one that cares to define or elaborate this vague sense of at-home-ness. Here is an exception: in his article "Passage/Home: Paris as Crossroads" (2001), Robert Schwartzwald defines what it means when one is "feeling at home": "these itineraries come to make me feel at home, by which I mean free to think freshly, critically, and even counter-intuitively" (180). And "these itineraries" refer to what Adrian Rifkin suggests in his essay "Travel for Men" (1994), as the historical, spatial, sexual, and literary matrices (or crossroads) by which to journey into the city.

Constance: I always think that a wonderful day in a city should be spent like this: I casually enter some hidden alleys in the city's busiest part, get into some unexpected corners, or simply

ride on a bus or minibus randomly to get off somewhere and stroll around in an unfamiliar

neighbourhood. Stories can either emerge from an unexpected corner or be found in a hidden

alley. And, I want to repeat your phrase, Maneck: "the novelist who invented me" – yes, that

novelist, different from the one who invented you of course, she once suggested,

> one can spend many happy afternoons, just to study these shops. If I have time, I
> would love to stroll into every alley and see every shop along my way. I would study
> the shop, its every corner, the bowls at the corner, and even the tiny dust on a bowl.
> Dust also deserves our attention, just as a Latin American writer once says, "Things
> have a life of their own, it's simply a matter of waking up their souls." (XiXi 1992
> [1975], 267, Ng's translation)

But, these "souls" should be different from the Marxian "commodity-soul" that Simon quoted

a while ago. I am usually not interested in a commodity's market value. Or, put it differently, I

don't like to consider a thing or an object primarily as a commodity. I always have the

impression that an object becomes interesting, or can be said to have a soul only after it has

successfully left the market system. And, fair enough, it should also imply that once an object

enters the market system, it instantly risks losing its soul. Shoes of the same brand and design

all look the same, even if they differ in size. It's only when they are worn and used by

someone that they begin to have their own story.

Galip: To follow suit, the novelist who invented me said something like this: "I enjoy reading

a novel that no one else seems interested in – enjoy the feeling that I've discovered it myself.

[…] I might add that I also like going to museums no one goes to" (Pamuk 2010, 142-3).

Perhaps feeling at home is similar to the pleasure of discovering a novel or visiting a museum

that no one visits. The special feeling that the novel or the museum has been so patiently

waiting for someone who understands its treasure is like being welcomed into a long-

abandoned home. Well, this experience is something that "the tongue can but clumsily

define." That's why everybody loves Alâaddin's shop in my neighbourhood in Istanbul. Celâl, too, expresses this sentiment in one of his most celebrated column articles:

> After a lifetime telling stories, I wanted to sit back and listen to Alâadin tell me tales about the cologne bottles, revenue stamps, illustrated matchboxes, nylon stockings, postcards, artists' drawings, sexology annuals, hairpins, and prayer books that I had seen in his shop once upon a time, only to have my memories of them vanish without a trace. (Pamuk 2006, 42)

And, of course it is true in his remark that "all over Nişantaşı, there were children lying in their sickbeds, waiting impatiently for their mothers to come home with a present from Alâadin's" (41). I, too, would love to spend the last day of my life in that shop and listen to all the stories behind these objects.

Maneck: I don't want to refer to the novelist who invented me anymore. But, if I wonder how one spends a wonderful day in a city, I admit that my fondest memories of feeling at home are all rooted in my one-year stay in Bombay. Dina Aunty once suggested that I visit all the wonders of the city, the aquarium, the museums, the sculpted caves and the Hanging Gardens etc. Those visits were fun and never bored me. But the day I enjoyed the most, the day when I could say I felt totally at home, and what triggered a lot of exhilaration and counter-intuitive experience, would be that ordinary, boring and humid monsoon day I spent with Omprakash. Om suggested that we go to Jeevan's shop. Jeevan is a tailor who opened a small women's clothes shop in the city. At first, I felt rather nonplussed. But then, Om told me that his plan was to convince the shopkeeper to let us measure the female customers. What a delicious plan! [**Galip** *whistles*.] Jeevan of course did not allow us to do that. But, after I suggested hiding behind the curtain in the changing booth to secretly observe how the customers tried on their clothes, Jeevan led us behind the counter to the rear of the partition that formed the back of the booth and showed us a crack popped in a corner. Jeevan indeed tempted us to look, but of

course he's asking for two rupees each as the price. We had fun there, even if Om made a tiny noise and kind of messed up the whole thing. [**Constance** *whistles*.] It may not be a good idea to enjoy the city this way. I don't encourage any of you to do so.

After, Om asked me what I had seen. I only said that it was great and that the woman was wearing a bra (Mistry 2002, 549). Trust me, for me, that's much more exciting than seeing colourful fish in the aquarium. Jeevan then responded, "What did you expect? […] My customers are not low-class village women. They work in big offices – secretaries, receptionists, typists. They apply lipstick and rouge, and wear top-quality underwear" (549-50). I didn't really have village women in mind. I indeed did not have any preconception of a woman's daily life in the city. Don't laugh at me, [**Suzy** *has been trying so hard not to, but bursts with laughter as soon as she hears the word "laugh*."] but I have only had a couple of women in my entire life, my mom, Dina Aunty and no one else. That surreptitious experience at the back of the changing booth at Jeevan's was an eye-opener. Strangely, it was the day that granted me the happiest memory of feeling at home in Bombay.

Suzy: To follow suit, well, I am *not* going to mention at all anything about the novelist who invented me. (Well, maybe he is the one I imagine as the writer who invents me.) Clytæmnestra dreams how she dances out of the authorial control of Æschylus (the writer who invented her) but it's to no avail. It remains only a dream. I feel at home in the city even though it fails to provide me with a decent shelter. As a homeless person, I am usually not welcomed in shops, malls, or even metro stations. But I like going through recycle bins – collecting recyclables that are out of the value system or don't have a price tag in the market. I believe that these objects are just like human beings – we can all be easily abandoned and end

up homeless in the world. But, in this homelessness, some other sense of feeling at home could surprisingly arise: a sense that you feel comfortable with yourself.

Indeed, I think we have been here for too long. I would be happy to go outside for a "counter-intuitive" smoke or some "fresh" air. Anyone?

[**Suzy** *begins picking up those books around her*. **Maneck**, **Constance**, *and* **Galip** *help her, and each picking up a couple*.]

Let's go.

N-G: [*suddenly addresses you, the reader, who are reading this dissertation*.] Guess what? You have *already* reached the final page of this dissertation. Perhaps the conversation will continue, or indeed you may wish to join the conversation outside the library.

My final quotation is for you, reader, from the Afterword of Blanchot's <u>Death Sentence</u>. This afterword was omitted in the 1971 French edition. It's a curse to the reader, quoted below, for you:

> These pages can end here, and nothing that follows what I have just written will make me add anything to it or take anything away from it. This remains, this will remain until the very end. Whoever would obliterate it from me, in exchange for that end which I am searching in vain, would himself become the beginning of my own story, and he would be my victim. (Blanchot 1978, 81)

Yiu-Tsan begins this dissertation with a brief discussion of the word "already" (stolen from Calvino's <u>Invisible Cities</u>), now I end this dissertation with a similar phrase that shall open up a space of possibilities and imagination. You ask me if we have reached the library's ground floor, or if we have now really reached the end of the dissertation. Well, now, on my way down the stairs in this McLennan Library, I wish I could respond with a definite "yes." However, as with Achilles and the Tortoise in their perpetual race that stairs do not seem to

end yet – and I am tempted to speak in parentheses again – and my answer to your question will be: (not yet…) …

Notes

Notes to **Introduction**

---

[1] Here, I am reminded of Dianne Chisholm's final sentence (in part VI of Conclusion) in her book Queer Constellations (2005): "This, then, is not a book for anyone seeking escape on the aftermath of 9/11" (256). Her book is a Benjaminian study of the city as a "subcultural space," with particular focus on gay and lesbian literature and politics. Her last remark of course references Benjamin's image of the Angel of History (in his reading of Klee's engraving Angelus Novus), to which I devote some discussion in later parts of this Introduction. Regardless, her interpretation of this angel is different from mine (of which I base my understanding on Hannah Arendt's, Michael Löwy's and Jeremy Tambling's readings, among other sources). For Chisholm, Benjamin's allegorical interpretation on Klee's angel of history should be interpreted as such: "[t]hat we look back in retrospective fantasy and reconstruct on a grander plane is the catastrophe" (256). Chisholm despises the attitude of those who seek escapism in the face of, or in the wake of, catastrophe. She highlights the aftermath of 9/11 as an instance of such catastrophe, to which the twenty-first century reader can easily relate. One example that she gives is David Lehman's "poet's view on finding solace in the wake of disaster," which "point[s] readers of The New York Times (9 December 2001) to a city literature of 'escape'") (256). For Chisholm, this suggestion is but a "retreat to stately innocence" (256). Yet, in the context of Calvino's fictional conversation between the Great Khan and Marco Polo, the word "escape" in Polo's word differs from what the same word would usually implicate, as in the case of Lehman's suggestion that Chisholm criticises. The idea of "escape" in Calvino's words via Polo is an active step from being carried away by progress.

[2] Here, I have in mind the confusion in Baudelaire's and Benjamin's interpretation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd" in relation to their understandings of the flâneur. As Ben Highmore points out in Cityscapes (2005) "it is unclear who exactly the 'passionate spectator' is" in Baudelaire's essay and Benjamin's discussion on the former: "is it the convalescent following the unknown old man, or is it the old man himself?" (40)
Many critics pay little attention to this ambiguity, and tend to use the term "the Man of the Crowd" as a self-explained alternative term to "the flâneur." For instance, Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson in her chapter "The Flâneur: The City and its Discontents" (1997) identifies the "poet" character in Baudelaire's prose poem "Les Foules" as the "poet-man of the crowd" and in an adjacent sentence of her discussion referred to this character as the flâneur: "The flâneur's ambivalent, and ambiguous, relationship to the city now enters and defines the very condition of creativity" (94). Similarly, Elizabeth Wilson in her influential article "The Invisible Flâneur" (1992) employs a simile twice in associating the flâneur with the man of the crowd. First, in her attempt to define the flâneur, she references an anonymous pamphlet published in 1806 on an ordinary day in the life of a M. Bonhomme, and immediately considered this figure "a typical flâneur of Bonaparte era," who demonstrates "all the characteristics later to be found in the writings of Baudelaire and Benjamin" (94). This flâneur, Wilson comments, "is essentially a solitary onlooker, activated, like Edgar Allan Poe's Man of the Crowd, by his fleeting, but conscious and necessary, contact with the anonymous crowd" (95). Second, in reaching her conclusion that this flâneur is invisible from the perspective of understanding the city as a labyrinth "and the flâneur an embodiment of it" (108), she deduces that "the flâneur himself never really existed, being but an embodiment of the special blend of excitement, tedium and horror aroused by many in the new metropolis, and the disintegrative effect of this on the masculine identity" (109). Therefore, she continues, "The flâneur does indeed turn out to be like Poe's Man of the Crowd – a man of solitude, he is never alone; and when singled out, he vanishes" (109).

For Wilson, this flâneur is the Man of the Crowd, who gets himself caught in the labyrinth of the city in "an instance of eternal recurrence – the eternal recurrence of the new, which is 'always ever the same'" (109).

[3] The same idea appears in his "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire":

> If the arcade is the classical form of the *intérieur* – and this is the way the street presents itself to the flâneur – the department store is the form of the *intérieur*'s decay. The department store is the last promenade for the flâneur. If in the beginning the street had become an *intérieur* for him, now this *intérieur* turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of commodities as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city. A magnificent touch in Poe's story ["The Man of the Crowd"] is that it not only contains the earliest description of the flâneur but also prefigures his end. (2003 [1938], 31)

[4] While the English translation of Benjamin's Arcades Project first appeared in 1999, Buck-Morss references Benjamin's words in her English translation: "'Until 1870 carriages dominated the streets'; it was because this that 'flânerie first took place principally in the arcades…'" (Buck-Morss 36).

[5] Immediately following this sentence, Tester indeed goes on and adds an aside in parentheses that

> This problem also runs through Benjamin; on the face of it he pays scrupulous attention to the historical specificity of Paris, but he is perfectly happy to refer to London or Berlin if that will enable him to make a point more forcefully. (1994, 16)

[6] This idea corresponds to the third definition of the adjective "*parfait*" offered by <u>Le Robert</u>: "(Avant le nom) Qui correspond exactement à (ce que désigne le nom)." It can be considered synonymous to the adjectives "*accompli*" (accomplished) and "*complet*" (complete).

[7] Benjamin also mentions August Strindberg as the source where Benjamin borrows this idea. And, in turn, very possibly Calvino uses both Benjamin and Strindberg as intertextual reference. Strindberg's vision comes from his fictional autobiography <u>The Inferno</u> (1913 [1897]). The vision of hell as this life here and now in turn comes from Emanuel Swedenborg:

> we are already in hell. Earth, earth is hell – the dungeon appointed by a superior power, in which I cannot move a step without injuring the happiness of others, and in which others cannot remain happy without hurting me. Thus Swedenborg depicts hell, and perhaps without knowing it, earthly life, at the same time. (147)

[8] Benjamin possessed the original print copy of Klee's painting and kept it on his desk until he left Paris in 1940 and gave it to Georges Bastille.

[9] Michael Löwy in <u>Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"</u> (trans. Chris Turner 2005 [originally written in French under the title <u>Walter Benjamin. Avertissement d'incendie, une lecture des theses «Sur le concept d'histoire»</u>, 2001]) suggests that "what it describes [in Benjamin's thesis IX] bears very little relation to the painting: what is involved here is, in the main, the projection of his own feelings and ideas on to the German artist's subtle and austere picture" (62). Jeremy Tambling (2001), however, considers that this passage in Benjamin's thesis IX should be "imagined in three forms": First, the absent Paul Klee picture <u>Angelus Novus</u> [absent, because it is not attached to the text], which must be read as an image in an emblem book demands, allegorically. Then, like a seventeenth-century emblem book, with the Gershom Scholem verses printed under the emblem ["My wing is ready for flight,/ I would like to turn back./ If I stayed everliving time, I'd still have little

luck." From Scholem's "Greetings from the Angelus" which appears as an epigraph to this thesis], and then as an *impresa* which unfolds the ambiguities within the image" (118). The passage of description that Benjamin produces in this thesis is what Tambling calls the "*impresa*." Tambling further explains how these three parts are supposed to work: "In the seventeenth-century emblem books, there different forms – the image, the couplet and the *impresa* – made for discontinuities and a lack of single attributable meaning in the allegorical emblem" (118).

[10] Slightly earlier in the same book, Adorno delivers a relevant point on the irony of home: "it is part of morality not to be at home in one's home" (1978, 39). I address this irony largely in Chapter Four with reference to my reading of Orhan Pamuk's works.

[11] It also incorporates Nietzsche's idea of eternal recurrence.

[12] Taylor also recognises this means of framing in Ezra Pound's "ideogrammatic method" (1989, 475).

[13] For instance, the word "anamorphic" relates to the visual experience of viewing Hans Holbein the Younger's painting The Ambassadors (1533) wherein a distorted skull is placed at the composition's bottom centre, whose accurate (or perfect) rendering can only be seen either from high on the right side or low on the left side. Tambling makes an innovative use of this adjective – possibly via Jacques Lacan – in addressing the ironic discrepancy between history and the narrative in Maurice Blanchot's Death Sentence (L'arrêt de mort 1978 [1948]):

> J.'s death, which is the "event" of the first half of the *récit*, is said to take place on Wednesday, 13 October 1938, which was actually a Thursday, so that her death is outside history, suspended, as if the events are made anamorphic to any history that can be told, and as if the effect of the *récit* is to abolish time, to de-realise history, neutralising it, giving it its death sentence. What is anamorphic is fragmentary, outside narrative (like the anamorphic skull in Holbein's painting The Ambassadors). It becomes the hole in the narrative, pulling everything towards it, including the public narrative. What remains is what is not narrative at all. (Tambling 2001, 19)

Suffice to say it that my use of the word "anamorphic" here owes a lot of inspiration from Tambling's interpretation. I will talk a bit more on Blanchot's Death Sentence in a later part of this Introduction.

[14] Today perhaps the better-known English version of this description is Edmund White's translation of Baudelaire in his book The Flâneur (2001).

> For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate observer, it's an immense pleasure to take up residence in multiplicity, in whatever is seething, moving, evanescent and infinite: you're not at home, but you feel at home everywhere; you see everyone, you're at the centre of everything yet you remain hidden from everybody – these are just a few of the minor pleasures of those independent, passionate, impartial minds whom language can only awkwardly define. (Baudelaire quoted in Edmund White 36-7)

Chisholm quotes this passage from White in Queer Constellations (2005, 156), but mistakes in her footnote the source of this quotation as "Les foules" ["Crowds"] (293 fn 17). "Les foules" is a prose poem collected in Petits poèmes en prose, which is also known as Le spleen de Paris (Baudelaire 1970 [1869], 20-1). And, I quote below the original French version from Baudelaire's Constantin Guys: Le peintre de la vie moderne [1853]:

> Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire

domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant, dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini. Être hors de chez soi, et portant se sentir partout chez soi; voir le monde, être au centre du monde et rester caché au monde, tels sont quelques-uns des moindres plaisirs de ces esprits indépendants, passionnés, impartiaux, que la langue ne peut que maladroitement définir. (1943, 14)

[15] That "the catastrophic does not mean the end of everything, but rather the continuance of things as they are" may sound surprising. However, let us consider the apocalyptic setting in Samuel Beckett's Endgame (1958) or the condition of stalemate in a chess game (which is very much the scenario of the play Endgame): it can be perceived as the end – the end of the world – perhaps, where there is no way out, nothing more that could come afterward, but a condition in which everything remains as such forever. Nonetheless, it is also an overwhelming condition in which things simply unbearably continue as such – barren and useless – in eternity. I think the paradoxical understanding between end and continuation can best be understood in this way. Tambling in his Introduction, also references Derrida in relation to this point on the catastrophic as continuance:

> In his essay ["Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy" (1984)], Derrida's linking of the Greek "*apocalupto*" – I uncover, I unveil – with the Hebrew "*gala*" enables a link with the idea that the apocalyptic reveals what has been hidden from narrative: "enveloped, secluded, held back." (Derrida 1984, 5; Tambling 2001, 23)

Tambling continues,

> This means that the apocalyptic – especially if it is a condition of discourse – becomes a "reincorporation of excluded contradictions," which coincide not with the narrative of a history which has come to an end, but rather with the end of a certain history, which disallows otherness, the end of a history marked out by the idea of progress. It is that form of the apocalypse which is "living on." (23)

[16] Here, I am reminded of Milan Kundera's perception of Nietzsche's idea of "eternal recurrence" in terms of weight in The Unbearable Lightness of Being (2008 [1984]):

> If every second of our lives recurs an infinite number of times, we are nailed to eternity as Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross. It is a terrifying prospect. In the world of eternal return the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make. That is why Nietzsche called the idea of eternal return the heaviest of burdens (*das schwerste Gewicht*). (5)

[17] In "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (2003 [1938]), Benjamin comments that Baudelaire "dedicated his 'Salon de 1846' to all 'bourgeois'; he appears as their advocate, and his manner is not that of an *advocatus diaboli*" (4).

[18] Of course, as the translator-editor Jonathan Mayne's footnote suggests, "[t]he belief that [Rousseau] committed suicide is now considered to be without foundations" (Baudelaire 1956, 127 fn 1).

[19] Benjamin's 1938 essay on Baudelaire "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" differs from the modified version of 1940, that is, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in that the former attempts to situate the context of nineteenth century Paris in Baudelaire or to forge the relationship between the literary (Baudelaire) and the historical (Paris), while in the latter, as David Kelman points out in his reading, "there was no attempt, in the title at least, to relate these motifs in an intentional way to the Paris of the Second Empire" (2005, 126).

[20] David Kelman argues that the phrase "stands out in its non-relation to what surrounds it" (2005, 134). He goes on to elaborate the significance of its position: "This means that at any moment a configuration might form in which this instant ('a star without atmosphere') will relate to other contexts in its afterlife" (134).

[21] I am aware that in a footnote to their edition of Benjamin's Selected Writings Volume 4 1938-1940, Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings mention a different source from which Benjamin borrows this image: "Nietzsche's uncompleted, posthumously published early work Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen (Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks)" (2003, 355 fn 96). Regardless, as David Kelman points out in his study on Benjamin, Harry Zohn's first English translation of Benjamin's "Motifs" essay – which first appeared in Arendt's edition Illuminations (1978) and is also more or less the same version compiled in Eiland and Jennnings's edition (2003) – "does not include the source footnotes provided in the German original" (Kelman 2005, 129). Indeed, rather than Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen, Benjamin indeed "refers to Friedrich Nietzsche's Unzeitgemäfse Betrachtungen (Untime Meditations)," and specifically, as Kelman speculates, "perhaps the most widely-read essay of Nietzsche's early book: 'Vom Nutzen und Nchteil der Historie für das Leben' ('On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life')" (129).

[22] In this footnote (footnote 96 in Eiland and Jennings's edition of Benjamin's "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," the interpretation on "the original context" specifically refers to Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks, where a similar phrase "a star devoid of atmosphere" (1962, 67) appears and specifically addresses the Greek philosopher Heraclitus in Nietzsche's discussion.

[23] Corresponding to this anticipation is what Critchley calls "religious disappointment." In Very Little… Almost Nothing, Simon Critchley (1997, 2004) makes a stunning point in the first line that "philosophy begins in disappointment" and categorically "both religious and political" (2004, 2). He briefly elaborates,

> That is to say, philosophy might be said to begin with two problems: (i) religious disappointment provokes the problem of meaning, namely, what is the meaning of life in the absence of religious belief?; and (ii) political disappointment provokes the problem of justice, namely, "what is justice" and how might justice become effective in a violently unjust world? (2)

However, in the first edition of this book (1997), Critchley neither elaborates his understanding of disappointment nor explains why these problems could be described as "an experience of disappointment" (2).

In the Preface to Second Edition (2004), he finally provides a belated note of explanation that sheds some light on his understanding of the term "disappointment." He explains that in relation to ancient traditions wherein philosophy can be said to begin "in an experience of wonder at the fact that things (nature, the world, the universe) are" (xvii). From here, he delivers some words on his understanding of disappointment: modern philosophy differently begins

> rather with an indeterminate but palpable sense that something desired has not been fulfilled, that a fantastic effort has failed. One feels that things are *not*, or at least not the way we expected or hoped that they might be. (xvii, original italics)

In other words, disappointment here is rephrased as the non-fulfillment of desire, the non-arrival of an expected outcome despite all efforts, or the bitter realisation that things are void of any purpose or meaning (that "things are not"). Put differently, disappointment is understood *negatively* in relation to

what should have been (in a subjunctive meaning of anticipation) but turns out to be not (in reality). Critchley sees the two main phases in Western philosophy, the pre-modern period of wonder and the modern period of disappointment. The transition across these two phases could be called an epistemological turn from the wonderful experience that "things are" to the shocking disappointment that "things are not." Political and religious categories of disappointment, as Critchley suggests, are but two most pressing questions of disappointment which concern his works. He encouragingly proposes, "[o]ne could, and perhaps should, give an entire taxonomy of disappointment," and mentions that he is on the way of writing about "epistemological disappointment in some work" (xvii). This is a concise and credible account.

Although I find Critchley's take on disappointment insightful and persuasive, the experience of disappointment relating to the city which I address in this dissertation cannot be conveniently mapped in Critchley's taxonomy – neither in any of the two categories which he prominently underscores, nor in the possible but not yet articulated other categories that he suggests. Indeed, there is a subtle implication of tyranny or authorial control in any model of taxonomy.

[24] From a different trajectory, I elaborate on the problematic of the anticipation towards "moving beyond" or "being moved beyond" in Chapter One, in my discussion of Robert Majzels's City of Forgetting and particularly with reference to Erín Moure's reservation on the word "beyond" in an interview with Dawne McCance (2003), in which she talks about her poetry collection O Cidadán (2002).

[25] Tambling points out that Blanchot's Death Sentence should not be read as a novel (*roman*) but as a *récit* (2001, 18-9). The beginning of this book self-reflectively interrogates if it could be considered a novel:

> If I have written novels, they have come into being just as the words began to shrink back from the truth. I am not frightened of truth. I am not afraid to tell a secret. But until now, words have been frailer and more cunning than I would have liked. I know this guile is a warning: it would be nobler to leave the truth in peace. It would be in the best interests of the truth to keep it hidden. (Blanchot 1978, 1)

The distinction between a novel (roman) and a *récit* relates to the distinction between these forms in Blanchot's earlier essay "The Song of the Sirens" (1999 [1959], 443-50). For Blanchot, a novel (roman) is "the narration of an event" (447), while a *récit* is "the event itself, the approach to that event, the place where that event is made to happen – an event which is yet to come and through whose power of attraction the tale can hope to come into being too" (447). In this dissertation, I do not particularly take the novel in the Blanchotian sense. If I were to follow this distinction, it would be more relevant to consider some of the primary examples in this dissertation (Majzels's City of Forgetting and XiXi's Flying Carpet) as *récits* or fragments of narrative rather than novels.

The original French title of Blanchot's Death Sentence is "L'arrêt de mort." Lydia Davis makes a wonderful choice for the English title in her translation as "Death Sentence." On this title, Derrida wonders if it is readable (1979, 109). He quotes Geoffrey Hartman's Introduction to Davis's English translation and asks, does "l'arrêt de mort" mean "death sentence" or "suspension of death"? (1979, 109) In his re-translation of these phrases back in French as "triomphe de la vie," he expands the question: "Does The Triumph of Life triumph over life [triomphe de la vie] or express the triomphe of life [triomphe de la vie]?" (109-10). He does not attempts to settle on a definite answer but further elaborates and complicates the picture:

> In French an *arrêt* comes at the end of a trial, when the case has been argued and must be judged. The judgment that constitutes the *arrêt* closes the matter and renders a legal decision.

It is a sentence. An *arrêt du mort* is a sentence that condemns someone to death. It is indeed a question of *une chose*, a thing, as case, *cause*, *causa*, and of a decision about *la chose*. As it happens, *la Chose* is here (as in Blanchot's text) Death, and the decision (verdict, sentence) of death concerns death as cause and as end. Death does not come *naturally*, just as *la Chose* does not. Death has an obscure relationship to decision, or more precisely to some sentence, some language that constitutes an *act* ("acts and deeds," "acts of a congress") and leaves a trace. *L'arrêt de mort* makes death a decision. *I bestow, I give* [*donne*] death. *He, il*, gives, death: the *Il* (who says "I," who occupies the place of the narratiorial voice, the place of the narrator in the *récit*) gives death, after *declaring*, announcing, *signifying*, and then *suspending* it. And *he* (I) does indeed *give* death, both as a gift and as a murder. In French *donner la mort* means first of all "to kill." (110)

[26] But, ironically, I would insist that the anxiety over an uncertain future, over which one has little control in political terms, remains a curse in Hong Kong: let us take a look at the "promise" in the rhetoric of the Sino-British Joint Declaration and Hong Kong Basic Law: "The socialist system and policies shall not be practised in the HKSAR, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years" (Article 5). The period of 50 years started from the date of the reversion from the British to the Chinese rule on 1 July 1997. Now, in 2015, anxiety on what would happen after the expiry date of this promise in 2047 ensues. Film director Wong Kar-wai most explicitly responds to this political question (obviously in the film title, which serves as an important symbol through the film) in his 2004 film 2046. Indeed, in Stanley Kwan's Rouge, as Abbas notes, an obvious remark on this idea of "remaining unchanged for a period of 50 years" is evoked: at the sight of Fleur as a revenant from the 1930s, Chor doubts if it is possible to remain "unchanged for fifty years" (Abbas 1997, 41).

[27] Hong Kong (with its somehow out-dated question of 1997) recurs prominently as an important case study in Chapter Three, in which I draw into a literary example, that is, XiXi's Feituzhen series, rather than a cinematic one.

[28] Ironically, Calvino himself died in 1985 shortly after the publication of this novel [1983]. Mr. Palomar becomes his last novel.

[29] Original passage: [就在討論和思考越界延擱這問題時，原本的界線已經不存在了。] (Lang-Tian 2003, 16).

[30] Original passage: [大家大抵不會對古希臘那個關於限制的詭辯感到陌生：飛毛腿永遠追不上烏龜] (Lang-Tian 2003, 12).

[31] Original passage: [人所共知，真實的情況飛毛腿一下子便可超過烏龜…要破此詭辯一點也不困難，只須採用飛毛腿和烏龜之外的座標（例如終點）便可—假定飛毛腿與終點的距離是 2x 公呎，則烏龜離終點便只有 x 公尺。現在過了時間 t，飛毛腿離終點近了(2x − b)，烏龜雖然同樣近了(x-c)，但由於 b 遠遠大過 c，不用多久時間，只要(b-c)大於 x，飛毛腿便可追過烏龜。] (Lang-Tian 2003, 12-3).

[32] Original passage: [由是，時間仍是一串鏈的話，「後九七」便是一個空位：– □ –。宛如在地圖上鐵路線上的一個「站」，我們停留其上，出出入入。] (Lang-Tian 2003, 22).

---

[33] And, of course, we can also consider Borges a connoisseur of stories.

[34] Obviously, this image of City of Disappointment also relates to the Marxian figure of revolutions as the locomotive in Benjamin's thesis XVIIa "On the Concept of History" which I discussed earlier (2003 [1940]). This imagery relates most strongly to City by the Sea in Rohinton Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u> discussed in Chapter Two. The novel is bookended by two scenes that involve the railway system as an important means of transportation for the everyday life of the city.

Notes to **Chapter One**

[1] Scott rephrases this question in her 1998 essay "My Montréal: Notes of an Anglo-Québécois Writer" in simpler terms and straightforwardly as such: "Can she be English and still be the heroine of a novel in Québec[?]" (Scott 1998, 7) The original question in the novel Heroine as I quote in the first paragraph is more self-reflectively and poetically worded.

[2] Majzels acknowledges Gail Scott's exceptional influence on his writing. In an interview he says, "I think her work is important for Montreal. And I think, for instance, that it would be foolish, even wrong, to write about Montreal in English without in some way writing from or about or through Gail Scott's Montreal" (1998, 23).

[3] Referencing several of his characters in the novel, Majzels further elaborates,

> Le Corbusier would not be received in the offices of Place Ville Marie. No one wants to hear his schemes, to hear de Maisonneuve's resistance to commercialism or Guevara's revolution or Clytemnestra's anti-masculinism. These are discourses which have no place. So they are homeless in the city. Once I realized that, I produced homelessness. (1998, 19)

[4] The trope of the hero is traditionally associated with the concept of home. Richard E. Goodkin, for instance, suggests that the central problem rooted in the heroic figures in his discussion – Oedipus and Mallarmé – is "the question of identification and idealization" (1984, 7). He goes on to elaborate:

> the tragic hero aims to forge a permanent identity for himself, to create an idea of himself that will never change, that will be permanently sheltered from the vagaries of time and chance and nature. To this extent he wishes to use his home as a repository, as a kind of altar which prevents the alteration of his name and his reputation and thus seems to give him a kind of idealized immortality, insofar as it allows his idea, the idea of him forever to survive, as a sort of paradigm by which human life is to be measured. In this sense of his home is what allows him to approach the permanence of divinity, which is all the more fitting as the home is itself an attempt to reach up toward the heavens, to allow human existence to aspire to certain characteristics of the divine. (7)

This can more or less be referred to as the same preoccupation shared by different heroes in other narratives or literary contexts. Goodkin points out the problem behind this heroic obsession with a permanent home and an ideal identity that "it is precisely because this image of the home and the name is indeed an idealized one, a distillation, a freezing in time, that it cannot be accurate, and is by its very nature apt to separate itself from the truth of human existence" (7).

[5] As Richard E. Goodkin observes in his study of Oedipus Tyrannus and of Mallarmé's poetry (1984),

> If the hero [Oedipus] takes up the trappings of the investigation into Laius' murder only in order to go beyond them, [...] he may be seen as a model of the poet who takes up the pen and the linguistic apparatus it represents only in the hope of going beyond it[.] (5)

[6] My elaboration here draws reference partly from Zadie Smith's "Speaking in Tongues" (2009, 41-44) – an article based on her lecture at the New York Public Library in December 2008, in which Smith talks about President Barack Obama's persuasive rhetoric. Unprecedentedly in United States presidency history, Smith notes, Obama shows the "disorienting talent" in not simply "speak[ing] *for* his people" but in "speak[ing] *them*." Unlike any of those previous presidents, he does not establish a heroic voice in the "straight and singular" first person "I." Instead, he has been careful to use the plural

or choral voice of "we" particularly throughout his campaigns. In America as "a place of many voices, where the unified singular self is an illusion," Smith suggests in the second person, "You have no choice but to cross borders and speak in tongues."

Montreal or Majzels's barbarophone is not exactly the same "Dream City" in Smith's figurative description but similarly shares this comparable necessity of border crossing and adaptation of voices in everyday life. Remarkably in Smith's observation is the beautiful way in which Obama situates himself in relation to his parents' dreams: "and the world is that they thought they'd left behind reclaimed each of them, I occupied the place where their dreams had been" (Obama quoted in Smith 2009). Smith comments that "To occupy a dream, to exist in a dreamed space (conjured by both father and mother), is surely a quite different thing from simply inheriting a dream. It's more interesting." Page Richards in her recent study of lyric biography – "Ambiguities of Biography: Introducing Rita Dove's Lyric Life Writing" (2013) – picks up this thread of observation from Smith, and focuses in her discussion on the verb "to occupy."

[7] This map drawn by Jim Roberts is delimited by the rectangular edges of the page, on which we see partially the eastern summit of Mount Royal in the top-left corner and a section of the upper coast of the Saint Lawrence River in the bottom-right (Majzels 1997a, 6). Contrary to one's anticipation, this map begs more enquiries than it offers information. Rather than function as a guiding tool for the reader to passively position herself and to easily locate the streets and landscapes featured in the narrative, it deliberately reveals its own deficiencies. On this map, streets are reduced to simple, mostly perpendicular and parallel lines, and the spaces between them appear as empty cells on a relatively regular Cartesian grid. In effect, the reader would sooner or later wonder: what is missing or omitted? At what cost do we maintain a singular, flattened, and static representation of the city? The reader is thus led to critically reflect upon her reliance on this map (or any map) in understanding urban space, or in this case, in making sense of the urban narrative. Importantly, the novel does not gesture to fill in these holes but leaves them open. Even if the cartographical practice is not entirely abandoned, the map raises questions about its inevitable inadequacies.

[8] Lisa Godfrey, in her review of the novel, states that "City of Forgetting makes for difficult reading" (1998). She elaborates, "In the absence of plot or fully realized characters, the reader hopes for a connective tissue of narrative tension or energy" (1998). Her words spell out the reader's anticipation towards a connectivity that would work throughout the novel. She goes on to point out how the reader has to be disappointed. But, I do not agree with her comment that Majzels relies too much on scholarly references rather than his own imagination.

[9] At least two of Majzels's other works, Hellman's Scrapbook (1992) and Apikoros Sleuth (2004), deal with the difficulties in writing about – the preposition is valid only if we agree that there is an aboutness in these novels – Montreal. The former, Majzels's first novel, is as its title suggests created as a scrapbook, narrator Hellman's personal diary, which also contains newspaper clippings, scattered notes, and a map cut from a Guidebook, among other elements. Apikoros Sleuth, on the other hand, is deliberately based on the form of the Talmud from Rabbinic Judaism, in which, as Majzels explains in the afterword, "a central sacred text is surrounded by the commentaries of scholars and sages accumulated over more than a thousand years" (n.p.).

Both these works are explicitly palimpsestic – a quality which City of Forgetting also shares. In other words, for Majzels, the stories of Montreal could only be written as palimpsests – that is, a scrapbook, a Talmud, or in the case of City of Forgetting, a frame narrative of contested cartographies.

[10] I borrowed this term from Lianne Moyes's discussion on the novel. See "Unexpected Adjacencies: Robert Majzels's City of Forgetting" in Adjacencies (Eds. Lianne Moyes, Licia Canton and Domenic A. Beneventi, 2004).

[11] Therefore, the French translation of this book, Montréal barbare (trans. Claire Dé 2000), betrays this intention to a certain extent I would say, as the title brings back the colonial name of Montreal.

[12] This title reappears as a chapter title in Apikoros Sleuth (Majzels 2004, Chapter Eight 5b-6a).

[13] Indeed, it remains inconclusive whether Tutonaguy is really the pre-colonial name of the area now known as Montreal or Greater-Montreal.

[14] I am indebted to Prof. Robert Schwartzwald on this point.

[15] Abbas elaborates his understanding of this term with reference to Freud's "negative hallucination" in his discussion on Hong Kong: "If hallucination means seeing ghosts and apparitions, that is, something that is not there, reverse hallucination means *not* seeing what is there" (1997, 6).
I will briefly come back to this idea in Chapter Three.

[16] The two solitudes are most notably perceived by Hugh MacLennan in his novel Two Solitudes (1945): the anglophones and the francophones in the city have determined that "the best way to coexist was to ignore the existence of one another" (295-6).

[17] In his attempt to position the Jewish-Canadian tradition and its discontinuity with this well-established map of two solitudes, Michael Greenstein conveniently forges the term "third solitudes" (1989): Jewish-Canadian writers, he concludes, "separated from both English and French mainstreams, see themselves as third solitudes, reaching out to connect cultures from a lost semitic world" (206).

[18] Indeed, Eagleton disagrees with the claim that the proletariat is no longer relevant in today's world:
> As for the disappearance of the proletariat, we should recall to mind the etymology of the word. The proletariat in ancient society were those who were too poor to serve the state by holding property, and who served it instead by producing children (*proles*, offspring) as labour power. They are those who have nothing to give but their bodies. Proletarians and women are thus intimately allied, as indeed they are in the impoverished regions of the world today. The ultimate poverty or loss of being is to be left with nothing but yourself. It is to work directly with your body, like the other animals. And since this is still the condition of millions of men and women on the planet today, it is strange to be told that the proletariat has disappeared. (2003, 42)

[19] Indeed, Clytæmnestra's question can be explored in terms of Agamben's discussion (2005) on the sovereign as the exact mirror image of *homo sacer*: as the one who can be condemned (within law) but has the power to suspend law (outside law).

[20] See Feldman's Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion (2004).

[21] The inexpressible, which Richards sees primarily as a poetic topos, can be understood as "a rhetoric that is deeply concerned with uncertainty and loss in the face of high expectations" (5). In the Middle Ages, for instance, poets and writers find themselves forever short of meeting the high expectations of

salvation demanded by Christianity, in the wake of "earthly uncertainties" such as "illness, plagues, and war" (5). In the hands of modern writers, too, Richards suggests, "the inexpressible is a tool of uncertainty, the stuff of ungraspable forces or events, lined up staunchly with missed opportunities" (5). The most obvious example is perhaps the post-war responses to the Holocaust. Richards summarises George Steiner's discussion on Adorno's famous adage – that is, "No poetry after Austchwitz" – that the inexpressible, or silence in this instance, is considered "the possible proper alternative to speech" (46-47), while there is a "staggering gap between what can be said and what cannot be said" (5).

[22] This is his line of self-introduction when he first encounters Suzy. Later, when Le Corbusier meets Clytæmnestra, he tries the same line with slight modification, again, in anticipation of recognition: "Ronchamp? La Maison Citrohan? The Villa Stein…" (Majzels 1997a, 67).

[23] It is unclear which member of the Rockefeller family Le Corbusier is addressing in the novel. In the fragment "Dear Mr. Rockefeller" (58-61), in which we read the letter Le Corbusier intends to write to Mr. Rockefeller, the recipient's address is "Rockefeller Center," which implies the recipient is probably Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., after whom the building was named.

[24] I am tempted to make an analogical interpretation here: while Le Corbusier would not be able to get his proposal delivered to Mr. Rockefeller, Majzels's novel, as this scene foretells as a self-parody, would not occupy an easy position in the market of literary circulation in America.

[25] See Kukla's Ineffability and Philosophy (2005).

[26] A more detailed description of this cross's size and its components is given in this passage from the novel:

> tin tubing from an oil furnace, half a car fender and a strip of blown tire, slices of broken window pane, brown-leafed branches scavenged from a dying maple, busted bits of a recycling bin, the jagged pole of a stop sign… Standing straight up, it measures almost a metre across and more than two metres high. (Majzels 1997a, 73)

[27] An interesting intertextual reference is the first act of Caryl Churchill's 1982 play Top Girls, in which characters similarly from historical and fictional contexts are invited to attend a feast as "guests" to celebrate the central character Marlene's promotion to a managerial position in the company where she works – that is, the triumph of reaching the peak of social hierarchies. The opening scenes of Majzels's novel vaguely resemble this act in Churchill's play: three women – Clytæmnestra, Lady Macbeth, and Suzy Creamcheez – gather and exchange dialogues atop Mont-Royal.

[28] See Schwartzwald's "Passage/Home: Paris as Crossroads" (2001).

[29] This quarrel between the two characters set up the conflict between them as regards what a woman should be:

> "You'd best beware," Lady Macbeth calls out to Le Corbusier. "That's a man-killer speaking."
> "And proud to say so," Clytæmnestra barks back. "As though that one were innocent of crime. See the blood on her hands?"
> […] "Innocence has nothing to do with it," [Lady Macbeth] says […] "Only a fool would wield the blade herself and seize the crown. Any woman knows enough to place a man before her as a shield."
> "Any coward," Clytæmnestra fires back.

"A woman's power should be clothed in the robes of submission."

"Plotting and scheming like some tavern slut."

"I never murdered my own husband."

"You lacked the courage." (Majzels 1997a, 110-1)

[30] Addressing the case in the novel that all the female characters are drawn from fictional writings, Majzels explains that when he first realised it, he intended to fix it, but soon decided to recognise and acknowledge it (1998).

[31] The idea that the omniscient perspective is an illegitimately borrowed one, of course, relates to Michel de Certeau's idea of poaching or *braconnage* in The Practice of Everyday Life, which in the context of Quebec, Simon Harel has most notably elaborated in his book Braconnages identitaires with respect to the formation, fabrication, and construction of contemporary Quebec identity.
Harel argues, "Le Québec est malade d'une identité volée, d'un territoire usurpé" (2006, 21). But, he insists,

> Ce n'est pas le nationalisme qui pose problème au Québec, mais l'impossibilité même de postuler de manière sereine l'existence d'une nation sans en faire le matériau d'une nouvelle ontologie identitaire. Ce n'est pas tant la nation qui fait problème que la honte larvée de la nation. (24)

Quebec is caught between two kinds of discourse, as Harel puts it, "comme s'il nous fallait hésiter entre la parole autoritaire (paternelle?) du discours national et les joies d'un discours libertaire qui nous demande de braconner sur le territoire pluriculturel de l'Autre" (24). Harel inserts the adjective "paternelle" in brackets within the phrase "la parole autoritaire du discours national," which could refer, in a broad sense of this adjective, to the law of patriarchy, the symbolic order, or what Gail Scott has once put it, "the 'fathertongue' of education, the media, the law – all patriarchal institutions" (Scott 1989, 67).
For Scott, when people asked, "What does Québec want?" they were misled by a tendency to address Quebec in terms of a reductive means-and-end plot, while the ultimate end would always and only be what nationalism they consider illegitimate, the same way, as Scott further elaborates, that certain English-speaking male writers and editors asked her, "What does the narrator [in any of her stories] want?" or "What will she do to get it? What is stopping her?" (68) Indeed, what matters in her stories (and dare we say? for Quebec) is not the question how to get there (that is, whatever destination that can be supposed as a pretext, because more often than not it would not be reached as the story is not getting anywhere), as the urge "to express what surges from 'inside' […] but has been traditionally reduced to silence" (68).

[32] For the lesbian flâneur, Munt insists on using the masculine form instead of the feminine "flâneuse" for the same reason that she favours the term "hero" over "heroine": "Because of the problematic associations attached to the status of hero*ine* – which can only ever be a heterosexist qualifier to the ordinate hero – I refuse to use this term here" (1998, 2-3). There is a subtle incongruity between Beneventi's reading of Suzy as a "lesbian flâneuse" and Munt's heroic model of the "lesbian flâneur." For Munt, lesbian flâneurs reappropriate the male gaze and try "heroically to construct intelligibility from their experience" (1998, 48). However, Suzy is unprepared for such a traditionally heroic position, and so potentially associating Suzy and the lesbian flâneur remains questionable.

[33] See Suleiman's Introduction to her edited volume Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travellers, Outsiders, Backward Glances (1998, 1-5).

[34] The title of this fictional autobiography is <u>Towards a Socialist Feminist Pedagogy: The Example of Writing Literary Theory Together</u> (unpublished manuscript, 1988).

[35] Kathleen Martindale died of breast cancer in February 1995.

Shortly before the publication of <u>City of Forgetting</u>, Majzels produced an edited version of this fragment as his contribution to the December 1997 issue of <u>Resources for Feminist Research</u>. A large section of this issue, co-edited by Barbara Godard and Pamela McCallum, is dedicated to Martindale, for her contribution to the academic field of feminist studies.

Majzels's excerpt goes with a headnote, in which he acknowledges the influence of Martindale and also briefly introduces the main action in the novel:

> The novel brings together a number of figures, icons, discursive myths of Western culture in the streets of contemporary Montreal where, as one would expect given the historical context, they find themselves homeless. These figures include Clytaemnestra (wife and assassin of King Agamemnon), Lady MacBeth, Che Guevara, Le Corbusier (the renowned Modern architect), Paul de Chomedey, le sieur de Maisonneuve (founder of Montreal), Rudolph Valentino and Suzy Creamcheez. In so many ways, this text is indebted to Kathleen Martindale, to her courage, her precious anger and her dreams. (1997b, 50)

In his interview with Lianne Moyes, Majzels mentions the link between Kathleen Martindale and the character Suzy Creamcheez as follows:

> [Suzy Creamcheez] has roots in two places. One is Frank Zappa […] And then there's another movement which is Kathleen Martindale. Kathleen Martindale was a teacher and she was director of Women's Studies at York University for a while, and died a couple of years ago now of cancer. She was a teacher of mine when I was in graduate school. I took a course with her and really learned a lot from her. I have enormous respect for her work and what she did. It was uncompromising and intelligent and gave a lot of thought to ethics. She wrote a piece, a fiction, not long before she died which had a character, really an autobiographical character, an academic called Suzy Creamcheez. It was a kind of homage to Kathleen to take up that figure again. (1998, 23)

[36] In his interview with Lianne Moyes, he says,

> The library for me is underground. To fight we need to study. People like Gail Scott, for instance, are intellectuals without being academics. They're not part of a system of knowledge and power, a system which killed Kathleen Martindale for me. But we still need to study and we need knowledge and we need the university in the ideal sense of the place. So I tried to bring Suzy there and see what would happen. I don't know what happens. For me it is a sign of hope. (Majzels 1998, 23)

[37] And, at this point, the narrator also collectively addresses them as the plural second person "*voi*":

> You are in bed together, you two Readers. So the moment has come to address you in the second person plural, a very serious operation, because it is tantamount to considering the two of you a single subject. (Calvino 1981, 154)

[38] Simon goes as far as to suggest that this novel of Calvino's can be taken as the beginning of "the proliferation of translators who have become heroes and heroines of contemporary novels" (2006, 144).

[39] Majzels recounts in "Anglophones, Francophones, Barbarophones" (1996) the words of Arthur Koestler from "The Three Domains of Creativity" (1981) that "the stimulus comes from one environment, the distant landscape. The response acts on a different environment, a square surface of 10 by 15 inches. The two environments obey two different sets of laws. An isolated brushstroke does not represent an isolated detail in the landscape. There are no point-to-point correspondences between the two planes" (Koestler 1981, 12-3 quoted in Majzels 1996, 58).

Notes to **Chapter Two**

---

[1] The intertwining relation between the interior and the exterior recurs as an important thread in Benjamin's incomplete <u>Arcades Project</u>. In Section R, for instance, Benjamin delivers this idea: "Actually, in the arcades it is not a matter of illuminating the interior space, as in other forms of iron construction, but of damping the exterior space" [R1a, 7] (1999a, 539).

[2] Due to the British colonial influences in its urban development, Mumbai/Bombay features buildings that exhibit strong elements of Victorian styles. For instance, as architect Rahul Mehrotra (2008) notes in his elaboration on the critical models of "Static City" and "Kinetic City":

> The phenomenon of bazaars in the Victorian arcades of the Fort Area, Mumbai's historic district, is emblematic of [a] potential negotiation between the Static City and the Kinetic City. The original use of the arcades was twofold: first, they provided spatial mediation between building and street; second, they were a perfect response to Bombay's climate, serving to protect pedestrians from both harsh sun and lashing rains. Today, with the informal bazaar occupying the arcades, the original intent of the area has been challenged. The emergent relationship between the arcade and the bazaar not only forces a confrontation of uses and interest groups but also demands new preservation approaches. For the average Mumbai resident, the hawker provides a wide range of goods at prices considerably lower than those found in local shops, and the bazaars that characterize the Fort Area arcades are therefore thriving. For the elite and for conservationists, the Victorian core represents the old city center, complete with monumental icons. (212)

[3] See Peter Morey's chapter on this novel – "Thread and Circuses: Performing in the Spaces of City and Nation in <u>A Fine Balance</u>" – in his monograph on Rohinton Mistry as part of the University of Manchester Press's Contemporary World Writers series (2004, 94-124).

[4] Derrida coins the term "*hostipitalité*" ("hostipitality" in English) as the title of his paper (1999), highlighting the dual but opposite implication behind the word "host" – which can mean either the hostile enemy (*hostis*) or the benign host (*hostis*). As Kearney summarises, "The Latin root for both hostility and hospitality is the same. And the term 'host' may in fact be used to designate one who welcomes or one who invades" (Kearney 2003, 68).

[5] This, again, relates to Benjamin's idea that the street becomes the interior space and provides safety for the flâneur in nineteenth-century European cities. Of course, there will be a lot of questions concerning how this idea of the shelter can be transposed to late twentieth century Bombay – an overpopulated city in postcolonial India – where the streets are not as safe as those in nineteenth-century Paris.

[6] Here, Yaeger quotes both of these phrases from Lefebvre (1991, 345).

[7] Rajeev S. Patke, likewise, in his article on Mumbai (Bombay) identifies similar parameters for studying the city such as "density of population, heterogeneity of local cultures, and disparity in incomes" (Patke 2003, 297).

[8] Yaeger also casts doubt here, relevant to Benjamin's scepticism about the true value of statistic figures, on the empirical methodology of research.

[9] I derive this argument from Derrida's distinction between "invitation" and "visitation" in his discussion on hospitality:

> For pure hospitality or a pure gift to occur, however, there must be an absolute surprise. The other, like the Messiah, must arrive whenever he or she wants. She may even not arrive. I would oppose, therefore, the traditional and religious concept of "visitation" to "invitation": visitation implies the arrival of someone who is not expected, who can show up at any time. If I am unconditionally hospitable I should welcome the visitation, not the invited guest, but the visitor. I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of *any* other. Is this possible? I don't know. If, however, there is pure hospitality, or a pure gift, it should consist in this opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation, an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be. (Derrida 1999, 70, original italics)

[10] In relation to Derrida's idea of hospitality, Dina here exhibits the limits of hospitality – that is, her welcoming gestures only show that the hospitality that she is offering Maneck is conditional. Dina shows her face as a welcoming hostess only upon her recognition of Maneck as an invited guest suggests that her hospitality is short of the absolute hospitality that Derrida enquires. For the absolute hospitality requires that one "give the new arrival all of one's home and oneself [and] give him or her one's own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfilment of even the smallest condition" (Derrida 2000a, 77).

[11] We later learn in the reminiscence of Dina that Mrs. Gupta has just offered Dina what is supposed to be an easy work as a contractor by supervising the jobs of two hired tailors. The tailors, in turn, would make clothes according to the patterns provided by the company. This advice is given to Dina as a golden rule at their first and casual meeting in Dina's friend Zenobia's salon, where Mrs. Gupta is having her hair treatment.

[12] Indeed, Ishvar once suggests "moving the Singers to the front room" for the reason that it is "much brighter" there (Mistry 2002b, 101). The suggestion is immediately rejected by Dina without a brink:

> "Not possible. The machines will be seen from the street [through the windows], and the landlord will make trouble. It is against the law to have a factory in the flat, even if it is only two sewing machines. Already he harasses me for other reasons." (101)

In this response of Dina's, she points to the fact that such a small-scale work cannot be accommodated due to the strict terms of her lease. She also implicates the fact that even as a tenant herself, she does not feel accommodated in her flat, because of the harassment of her landlord.

[13] I deliberately modify this question from Dianne Chisholm's in Queer Constellations: "can today's Paris accommodate this perfect flâneur?" (2005, 156)

[14] This is an important theoretical concept that I develop in this dissertation. For more elaboration on concession and "concessive steps," please see Chapter Three.

[15] Here, rather than Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin's celebrated 1999 English translation of Benjamin's Arcades Project, the fragments of Arcades Project that Patke quotes all come from an earlier edition: Gary Smith's edited volume of essays on Benjamin, which includes significantly Leigh Hafrey and Richard Sieburth's translation of Section "N [Re the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]" from Benjamin's Arcades Project (1983, 43-83). Patke indeed quotes the fragment [N2a, 4] partially as follows, I alter it to fit it into my argument:

These facts […] construed as causes […] allow the whole series of the arcade's concrete historical forms to emerge, like a leaf unfolding forth from itself the entire wealth of the empirical plant kingdom. (Benjamin 1983, 50; Patke 2003, 203)

I quote below Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin's translation of the same passage for comparison: these facts […] gave rise to the whole series of the arcade's concrete historical forms, just is the leaf unfolds from itself all the riches of the empirical world of plants. (Benjamin 1999a, 462)

[16] In McLay's interview with Mistry, McLay points out the passage from the novel where Maneck is on the train sitting next to Valmik and is tempted to listen to his life story. When Valmik hesitates and emphasizes that "[i]t's such a long story," Maneck encourages him to go on, acknowledging that their train ride is going to take time anyway: "But we have lots of time […] It's such a long journey" (297). Regarding this McLay asks Mistry, "Do you think that storytelling is itself a journey?" (16) – a question that I raise again in a later section of this chapter with reference to Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" (2002 [1936]).
But, here in McLay's interview, Mistry makes a humorous point on the mention of the phrase "such a long journey" which subtly serves as "a little treat for anyone who had read the earlier novel" (McLay 16). In response to McLay's question, Mistry says, "I think journeys are themselves stories and vice versa but without some sense of core values it is difficult to know if and in what direction you are moving" (16). He continues with this elaboration of storytelling, but now moving on to the importance of family:
I suppose that if we consider families which are very important in India – as they are everywhere – then the whole extended family, especially the grandmother and the grandfather, is the source of story telling and it gives the individual a very good sense of where they come from. (16)

[17] Among the numerous intertextual references in A Fine Balance, the most obvious ones are Balzac's Le Père Goriot, Tolstoy's Anna Karenina and Hardy's Jude the Obscure.

[18] We are reminded here that Valmik uses the metaphor of "stepping-stone" in his conversation with Maneck during the train journey. Significantly, the city would not be a stepping-stone to anywhere. Instead, Valmik suggests failure be considered a stepping-stone to success: "Sometimes you have to use your failures as stepping stones to success" (Mistry 2002b, 301).

[19] From a southern village of France, Rastignac arrives in Paris with an aspiration that is in turn sprouted from his family's expectation: as one among those who "se préparent une belle destinée en calculant déjà la portée de leurs études, et, les adaptant par avance au mouvement futur de la société, pour être les premiers à la pressurer" (Balzac 1837, 500). Initially, he is looking for integration into the Parisian life, in order for himself and his family to advance from the "constante détresse" of the rural life in the village, where they own nothing but annuities and live on the small farm of Rastignac ("la petite terre de Rastignac" 508), to the comfort of the bourgeoisie.
In Balzac's novel, Rastignac's occupancy in the boarding house Maison Vauquer humbly signifies his first step of progress. However, rather than follow the initial plot of gradual transition by totally devoting himself into his study ("se jeter à corps perdu dans le travail," 508) so as to exchange his time and efforts for success, Rastignac reaches a point where he could no longer get satisfied by simply obtaining a legal profession in Paris. He would rather hope to make a further and more aggressive ascension along the social ladder from the boardinghouse to the aristocratic salon: "séduit bientôt par la

nécessité de se créer des relations, il remarqua combien les femmes ont d'influence sur la vie sociale, et avisa soudain à se lancer dans le monde, afin d'y conquérir des protectrices," 508). If Maison Vauquer is considered an insufficient shelter for Rastignac, the aristocratic salon idealises the comfortable position on which he aspires to land.

[20] See Hardy: "points of light like the topaz gleamed [...] the topaz points showed themselves to be the vanes, windows, wet roof slates, and other shining spots upon the spires, domes, freestone-work, and varied outlines that were faintly revealed" (2006, 21).

[21] While I invoke the Bildungsroman in relation to both Maneck and Omprakash, there may be a contradiction here between the figure of the flâneur – which embodies an attitude of purposelessness or a resistance to the non-utilitarian sense of purpose – and the implications behind the Bildung. Here, I would like to insert a footnote here that attempts to solve this paradox. The purpose-driven impulse in the life of a coming-of-age protagonist – or the Bildung – in a Bildungsroman is comparable to the figure of the passenger that I introduce by the end of the Introduction. Like Hardy's Jude, Balzac's Eugène de Rastignac, or even Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre, the protagonist in a Bildungsroman undergoes a process of growth that involves integration into the society and the self-discovery of one's role in adulthood. But, this process is neither smooth nor straightforward. One cannot stay in a vehicle leading towards one's goal without having to alight to the ground and get astray at different intervals. These steps of being lost, being led astray or wayward, are those of the flâneurs. Omprakash in particular is severely deprived of any access to such "vehicle" of progress. His struggles in real-life situation that drives him away and away from any linear plot of coming-of-age growth and enlightenment turns him into an imperfect flâneur in this sense.
For this point, I am again indebted to my supervisor, Prof. Robert Schwartzwald, who brought up this question and stimulated me to ask myself: to what extent can the Bildung and the flâneur relate to or contradict each other?

[22] Indeed, the idea of success is questioned in a scene near the novel's end: When Mrs. Kohlah (Maneck's mother) encourages Maneck to visit the city again after he already leaves the city and now works in Dubai for eight years. She reminds Maneck, "If it wasn't for her, you wouldn't have finished your certificate […] You owe your success to Dina Dalal and her accommodation" (Mistry 2002b, 765). In response, Maneck only says, "I remember." But at the same time, without saying it loud, as the narrator suggests, "Hearing his mother say 'success' made him cringe" (765).

[23] Dina's flat, one may argue, is largely modelled on Balzac's Maison Vauquer. Both spaces, in each case, epitomise the city as a shelter for its inhabitants.

[24] Vishram Vegetarian Hotel in City by the Sea, therefore, is comparable to a café or hair salon in a European city as a point of interaction in the public sphere of the city. Maneck, at one point, to Dina's disappointment and disapproval, joins the tailors for a tea there.

[25] This phrase of Marx's vividly captures this pattern of the disappearance of such small businesses: "all that is solid melts into air." Marshall Berman (1988) associates this phrase with "the sort of thing we are prepared to find in Rimbaud or Nietzsche, Rilke or Yeats – 'Things fall apart, the center does not hold'" (89). Again, it is the same line which the proofreader Vilmak quotes in his conversation with Dina in Mistry's A Fine Balance. Berman suggests, "this image comes from Marx, and not from any esoteric long-hidden early manuscript, but from the heart of the Communist Manifesto. It comes as the climax of Marx's description of 'modern bourgeois society'" (89).

[26] Throughout the chapter in which Maneck's country life in the mountains is portrayed, we learn how his family manages to make a great fortune in the beginning from the business of their store: "extremely wealthy" as the narrator tells us, while a character plants her doubt in the reader's mind, "How wealthy can you get these days with a small shop in some little hill place?" (Mistry 2002b, 265) Of course, it is only during the good old days.

[28] Not to mention the unpleasant battle with cockroaches that happens in this scene shortly afterward: "He started, suddenly remembering what it was that had woken him. The crawling thing on his leg" (Mistry 2002b, 307). And, it is immediately after this encounter with the cockroaches that he meets Avinash, who occupies the room next door and offers Maneck the spray pump Flit for exterminating the insects (308).

[29] One telling reference here from the novel is the scene when Omprakash is allowed a break from his hard sewing job with Dina's and Ishvar's realisation that "it was bad enough having to earn his living at an age when he should have been going to college like Maneck" (2002b, 542).

[30] Morey's term "national allegories" obviously alludes to Jameson's diction in the infamous 1986 article. Jameson suggests, "All third-world texts are necessarily […] allegorical and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*" (1986, 69). He elaborates, "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society" (69).

Jameson's assertion – reinforced by his use of adverbs such as "necessarily" and "always" – has provoked much criticism. With reference to the writers that I study in this dissertation, Orhan Pamuk – the focus of my study in Chapter Four, actually responds to Jameson in an article "Mario Vargas Llosa and Third World Literature" (2008 [1996], 168-73). Pamuk says,

> when someone like Fredric Jameson asserts that "Third World literatures serve as national allegories" he is simply expressing a polite indifference to the wealth and complexity of literatures from the marginalized world. (168)

[31] Here, Morey references Amit Chaudhuri's criticism from her article "The Construction of the Indian Novel in English" (2001, xxiii-xxxi).

[32] In an interview, Mistry indeed suggests that he wants to look at "history from the bottom up" in this novel (2001) – a recurrent diction that we have seen in Chapter One with respect to Gail Scott's idea.

[33] In addition to monsters, Kearney also considers strangers and gods as "figures of Otherness" who "represent experiences of extremity which bring us to the edge" (2003, 3). These three figures indeed occupy the prominent positions in the main title of his book Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness (2003). The book begins as such:

> Strangers, gods and monsters [in this order] are the central characters of my story. Their favourite haunts are those phantasmal boundaries where maps run out, ships slip moorings and navigators click their compasses shut. No man's land. Land's end. Out there, as the story goes, "where the wild things are." These figures of Otherness occupy the frontier zone where reason falters and fantasies flourish. (3)

He further elaborates,
> They subvert our established categories and challenge us to think again. And because they threaten the known with the unknown, they are often set apart in fear and trembling. Exiled to hell or heaven; or simply ostracized from the human community into a land of aliens. (3)

[34] What I mean is that although the novel features the story of the tailors and their family, it also implies, quite ironically, that there are many others similar or vastly dissimilar to these tailors whose stories cannot be included owing to the scale of the novel.

[35] Here, I reference Wilson's arguments from two different but related sources, which I think should be most fruitful if read side by side each other: her 1991 book The Sphinx in the City and 1992 essay "The Invisible Flâneur."

[36] Indeed, Wilson also questions whether it is a contradiction to consider that there is a centre in the labyrinth:
> This recurring image, of the city as a maze, as having a secret centre, contradicts that other and equally common metaphor for the city as labyrinthine and centreless. Even if the labyrinth does have a centre, one image of the discovery of the city, or of exploring the city, is not so much finally reaching this centre, as of an endlessly circular journey, and of the retracing of the same pathways over time. (1991, 3)

[37] To a certain extent, Wilson's dichotomy alludes to Nietzsche's interpretation on "the duality of the Apolline and Dionysiac" in The Birth of Tragedy:
> just as the reproduction of species depends on the duality of the sexes, with its constant conflicts and only periodically intervening reconciliations. There terms are borrowed from the Greeks, who revealed the profound mysteries of their artistic doctrines to the discerning mind, not in concepts but in the vividly clear forms of their deities. To the two gods of art, Apollo and Dionysus, we owe our recognition that in the Greek world there is a tremendous opposition, as regards both origins and aims, between Apolline art of the sculptor and the non-visual, Dionysiac art of music. There two very different tendencies walk side by side, usually in violent opposition to one another, inciting one another to ever more powerful births, perpetuating the struggle of the opposition only apparently bridged by the word "art"[.] (2003, 14)

The two sides of urban life – that is, order and disorder – should more or less compatibly correspond to the duality in one's experience in the city, to borrow Nietzsche's terms, as the Apolline *dream* (illusion) and the Dionysiac *intoxication* (ecstasy). Especially, we should note, Nietzsche vehemently criticises Euripides's efforts in driving Dionysus out of tragedy in his play Bacchae as the murder of tragedy – the removal of Dionysus destroys the artistic balance of Attic tragedy.

[38] Like the unnamed City by the Sea, the Prime Minister is only referred to in the novel simply and symbolically as "the Prime Minister" – her name remained unmentioned through the narrative. But, because the title of the Prologue bears the year 1975 (and the scenes in the Epilogue takes place roughly a decade later in 1984), the Prime Minister in the historical context could be read as Mrs. Indira Gandhi who held the office of the Prime Minister of India from 1966 to 1977 and from 1980 until her assassination in 1984. In 1975, she declared a State of Emergency across the country. During the 21-month period of the Emergency, Gandhi ruled by decree. Mistry takes Gandhi's India as the

backdrop (particularly the year 1975 when the Emergency was declared) against which the novel <u>A Fine Balance</u> is set.

[39] This is part of Nawaz's advice to the tailors. During the first days after their arrival in the city, the tailors temporarily stay in Nawaz's place, while Nawaz is their teacher Ashraf's friend in the city. Nawaz, after hearing that the tailors successfully earn the tailoring job, urge them to find their own accommodation (so that he can get rid of them from his flat). On this, he advises the tailors, "When something becomes available you must grab it" (Mistry 2002b, 211).

[40] For a rough comparison, the monthly rent for that place in the hut is one hundred rupees (in the year 1975), while the two coffees that Maneck orders in the Epilogue (in 1984) costs six rupees in total (Mistry 2002b, 799).

[41] This indeed reminds me of the ridiculous scene, involving the reversal of logical order in Lewis Carroll's <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u>, in which the Queen of Heart demands, "Sentence first – verdict afterwards" (1998, 108).

[42] This remark comes from a taxi-driver who takes Maneck from the train station to the place where his relatives live after Maneck's eight year of absence in the city, now in 1984, the year in which the Prime Minister was assassinated.

[43] For instance, in her review on this novel "States of Emergency" (1996), Hilary Mantel expresses her disappointment in the plot by accusing Mistry of trapping his characters in "the cyclical pattern of disaster" (6). This pattern, according to Mantel, is "almost unbearable" for the reader: "Every time life improves a little, every time they [the characters] raise their low expectations a notch, disaster strikes. In the end one feels controlled, as if by a bad god" (6). In her review, she holds the realist mirror from the beginning, by quoting Stendhal's words as the standard reference: "Un roman est un miroir." Following her praise of Mistry's first and previous novel <u>Such a Long Journey</u> (1993 [1991]) as an illustration of documentary realism, Mantel indeed anticipates that Mistry would again

> carry a mirror for us down the dusty highways of India, through the jostling Bombay streets behind compound walls and into the huts and houses where the millions sit, reinventing themselves, constantly reciting the stories of their own lives and times. (Mantel 4)

Hence, her comment ironically puts her in the position of the implied but unqualified reader whose reactions and complaints are already anticipated in the novel's epigraph. With this epigraph, the reader is warned of the overwhelming misfortunes that are about to unfold themselves in the novel. However, in the rhetorical sense, the epigraph does not perform in any way near what Mantel has proposed in her reading. Rather than a persuasion that the novel should be read realistically and that all the misfortunes narrated are true, the epigraph points to the problematic image of the title – "a fine balance" – which for the reader (and all the protagonists) serves as the anticipated end of the narrative. Indeed, the novel vehemently doubts the possibility of maintaining such a fine balance in real life scenarios. At many incidents in which the imagery of this balance, or equilibrium, emerges in the novel, it pertains not to the mystery how things usually turn out in reality but to the phenomenon how it is part of human endeavour to seek patterns and "to maintain a fine balance between hope and despair" (Mistry 2002b, 301). If the reader's realisation of the perfect coincidence of different encounters and the symmetrical pattern in the cyclical narrative is rhetorically intended, then the epigraph would seem to function as a warning with an unexpected twist.

415

Not that the story should be read as real, but that the reader would inevitably and eventually face the tremendous disappointment beyond repair. The consolation they seek from such a fine balance of a symmetrical narrative structure is deemed to be nothing more than the artificial pattern woven by the writer. What remain real are indeed scattered and could not be threaded together, if at all. The insistence on measuring the novel against the flawlessly realist mirror, as Mantel performs in her readings, is in other words an attempt to cling onto the final consolation by disavowing this disappointment and replacing it with another less tormenting one: the reader would very likely retreat to her armchair with an oxymoronic interpretation that the fiction is not real enough.

In fact, the cover art of the novel in its first and several other editions already gives the reader a similar rhetorical effect as would the epigraph with the words from Balzac: a photo from Dario Mitidieri's series Children of Bombay (1992) that shows a two-and-a-half year old girl, messily and disproportionately dressed, standing at one end of a long pole (whose length is about threefold of her height) with her left hand holding it firmly, her right arm stretching forward to make a salute gesture, and both her feet on a little stand extending from the pole, while it is vertically maintained in an improbable fine balance on the other end which only marginally touches the thumb of an adult left hand. If anything relevant to the working of the novel could be derived from this image, it would be an analogy that the characters and the reader should sooner or later meet an anticipated failure of their endeavours in maintaining a balance. This is actually spelt out, though quite implicitly, in one novel scene when the Monkey-man gives his similarly breathtaking acrobat performance with his little niece and nephew in front of an audience, including Ishvar and Omprakash. The reader in the face of the tragic sequence in this novel probably shares the similarly roller-coasting and confusing emotions with the audience of this scene:

> The cheering was scattered, the audience anxious and uncertain. Then the clapping became urgent, as though they hoped the hazardous feat would end if they gave the man his due, or, at the very least, the applause would somehow sustain the balance, keep the children safe. (Mistry 2002b, 473)

However, rather than the author, or the narrator, to be accused of crushing the lives of all his protagonists – as Mantel has it, it is the city itself which constantly frames the anticipation of these ordinary characters and the reader towards different false hopes.

[44] This reminds us of Mr. Kurtz's cry "The horror! The horror!" in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" (2002 [1899], 178).

[45] Original passage:

> Ainsi ferez-vous, vous qui tenez ce livre d'une main blanche, vous qui vous enfoncez dans un moelleux fauteuil en vous disant: Peut-être ceci va-t-il amuser. Après avoir lu les secrètes infortunes du père Goriot, vous dînerez avec appétit en mettant votre insensibilité sur le compte de l'auteur, en le taxant d'exagération, en l'accusant de poésie. Ah! sachez-le: ce drame n'est ni une fiction, ni un roman. All is true, il est si véritable, que chacun peut en reconnaître les éléments chez soi, dans son cœur peut-être. (Balzac 1837, 497)

[46] I shall discuss more on the subtle discrepancy between the acts of "reaching" and "arriving" in Chapter Four, with reference to my reading of Orhan Pamuk's The Black Book (2006 [1990]).

[47] I am aware that this can be a moment of confusion – importantly, what I mean by their "first arrival" does not so much refer to the opening scene when they accidentally meet each other in the train, as their actual first arrival in the city when they arrive in the evening and manage to get to Nawaz's place.

416

[48] Indeed, to be exact, it is not so much Maneck's *first* city experience as his *second* visit to the City by the Sea. The first time was a trip with his mother to visit her family, many years ago when he was six. Though during the first two days, he "had been fascinated by the towering buildings and palatial cinema houses, the avalanche of cars an buses and lorries, and the brightness of streets as the lights went on when night had fallen," such wonders of the city ceased to interest him. He missed home badly to the extent that he said, "I am never going to leave the mountains again [...] Never, ever" (279).

[49] Fisher derives it from an interpretation of Hamlet's line – "And therefore as a stranger give it welcome" (Hamlet 1.5.165 quoted in Fisher 1998, 49). This line, in Shakespeare's play, emerges as a response to Horatio's remark on the sight of the ghost.

[50] In short, Socratic silence is involved here on the "gigantic deformity" of the surrounding in Maneck's context that should remain off the grid.

[51] In fact, I do not think Derrida is not aware of this question. That is why he suggests that hospitality is impossible. In his paper "Hostipitalité" which he delivered in a workshop Istanbul in 1997 and published subsequently in Cognito in 1999, he made it quite clear that "we do not know what hospitality is" (translated into English by Barry Stocker with Forbes Morlock, Derrida 2000b, 6).
I think Kearney deliberately oversimplifies Derrida's idea and he does not address the pun in Derrida's discussion on hospitality: "*pas d'hospitalité*."

[52] For the ideas of *illéité* and *il y a*, see Levinas's Otherwise than Being: Or, Beyond Essence (1981) – in this English translation, the concept of *il y a* is translated as the "there is."

Notes to **Chapter Three**

---

[1] The title of this parable is also alternatively translated as "On the Marionette Theater."

[2] According to the OED, the primary connotation of the verb "to concede" is "To admit, allow, grant (a proposition), to acknowledge the truth, justice, propriety of (a statement, claim, etc.); sometimes in weaker sense, To allow formally for the sake of argument" (1 a). It seems the verb can in most cases serve as a synonym to the verb "to admit." If there is any crucial different between these two verbs, it would be the implication of unwillingness behind the former. In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, "to concede" is defined as such: "to admit as true, correct, or proper, often unwillingly."

[3] The key word here in my discussion is "willingness" – which sounds contradictory to the unwillingness involved in the verb "to concede." Again, I refer to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English for supporting the link between willingness and "concessive clause." The latter term is defined as such: "a clause, often introduced by although, which shows willingness to concede (= to admit) a point that goes against the main argument of a sentence."

[4] I am aware that I am proposing a leap across languages, too, that is, from English to Chinese. This leap, I insist, is significant for my discussion in this chapter. One reason is that the main texts for discussion are, unlike those in the previous chapters, originally written not in English, but in Chinese.

[5] The myth appears in two parts, both of which are delivered orally by the protagonist Yuddy [旭仔] a character in <u>Days of Being Wild</u> (Chinese title: [<u>A Fei zheng chuan</u> 阿飛正傳], 1990):
> Part I
> "I have heard that in this world there was a kind of bird with no foot. It could only fly and fly. When it got tired in flight, it slept in the wind. This kind of bird could land only once. That was the time it died."
> Part II
> "I once believed that there was a bird, which flew and flew until it died. Indeed, this bird never got anywhere, because it had died from the start."

[6] XiXi is the penname of Zhang Yan [張彥] (In Chinese, the surname Zhang comes first). She was born in Shanghai in 1938 and moved to Hong Kong with her family during her childhood in 1950. In her early literary career, she also occasionally adopted other pennames such as Aguo [阿果], Nannan [南南], Lunshi [倫士] among others. See XiXi 1992, 338-40.

[7] The title of this Preface in Chinese is "Zao Fangzi" [造房子] ("Building a House"), which appears in the collection <u>Xiang Wo Zheyang de Yige Nüzi</u> [像我這樣的一個女子] (<u>A Girl Like Me</u> 2007 [1984], 1-2, 1992, 323-4). This Preface and most short stories in this book, as far as I know, have never been fully translated into English. I rely on the excerpt in Stephen C. Soong's [宋淇] article "Building a House: Introducing XiXi" (translated into English by Kwok-kan Tam, and published in the first collection of XiXi's short stories in authorised English translation <u>A Girl Like Me</u> (1986c, 1996a).

[8] The full list of XiXi's works in the Feituzhen series can be found in Chan Kit-yee's study (1998, 2). She considers six short stories and one novel as the main pieces in this series. They include: the short stories "Feituzhen de Gushi" [肥土鎮的故事] ("The Story of Fertile Town") [1982], "Pingguo" [蘋果]

("Apple") [1982], "Zhenzhou" [鎮咒] ("Town Curse") [1984], "Fucheng Zhiyi" [浮城誌異] ("Marvels of a Floating City") [1986], "Feituzhen Huilanji" [肥土鎮灰闌記] ("The Fertile Town Chalk Circle") [1986], "Yuzhou Jiqu Buyi" [宇宙奇趣補遺] ("Cosmicomics: an appendix") [1988], and the novel Feizhen [飛氈] (Flying Carpet) [1996]. Chan notes three additional stories that also feature Fertile Town or Fertillia: "Gongshi – Dianshi pian" [共時—電視篇] ("Shared time: Television") [1991], "Chongjian Xiaoshi de Shenghuo" [重建消逝的生活] ("Reconstructing the Life of the Past") [1995] and Leigu [肋骨] ("The Rib") [1995]. Among these three pieces, the first one initially appeared in literary magazine Suyeh Literatures [素葉文學] (1991, 85) and is belatedly compiled in XiXi's short story collection in 2006 (see below), whereas the latter two are incorporated into the novel (375-77 and 417-19 respectively in the English version).

In addition to these stories, I would consider "Bolixie" [玻璃鞋] ("A Glass Slipper") [1980] – a story, which like "Pingguo" ("Apple"), borrows references from Brothers Grimm's fairy tales ("Cinderella" and "Snow White" respectively) – as the earliest piece of the series.

In 2001, XiXi wrote one more short story "Jurien Diao" [巨人島] ("Giant Island") relating to the series, which together with "Gongshi – Dianshi pian" [共時—電視篇] are eventually compiled in her 2006 short story collection Baifa E-e ji Qita (White-haired Old Ma and Others).

[9] Magritte's paintings are all chosen from an exhibition that happened to take place around the time of publication (1986) in Hong Kong.

[10] While the image of this painting of Magritte – Castle in the Pyrennes – is used as the cover art for Italo Calvino's book Le città invisibili (Invisible Cities). Calvino is one of the several contemporary writers who influence XiXi's works. Other notable writers from whose works XiXi learns, adapts, and modifies new techniques or ways of storytelling include Milan Kundera, Mario Vargas Llosa, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Jorge Luis Borges and Günter Grass.

[11] Abbas, however, never refers to XiXi as one of the relevant sources of this "floating identity."

[12] Gourgouris considers that literature and myth are always linked together via a dialectic and "co-incidental" tension: a tension that is exerted "between the idea that literature achieves a unique theoretical sense of the world and the idea that myth is a performative mode of worldly knowledge" (xvii). Literature exhibits a "so-called mythopoetic character" (xvi), but cannot simply be pronounced as "mythopoetic" (xvii). "They are neither interchangeable nor do they collapse into one composite singularity. In a post-Enlightenment universe, literature and myth may be said rather to strike a *co-incidence* in their work – their work *on* knowledge, their work *to* knowledge" (xvii, original italics).

[13] Original line: [浮城是香港嗎？我肯定告訴讀者它不是！浮城雖然似乎是香港，其實卻也可能是地球上任何一個城市。] (Zhang 1987, 2).

[14] The idea of citizenship in Hong Kong is an awkward one. It is a city where a permanent resident would be granted the right of abode and legitimate citizenship without any proper sense of a nation-state whether it is before or after the Handover.

[15] The Sino-British Joint Declaration, which was signed by Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and Zhao Ziyang on December 19 1984, states that "the socialist system and socialist policies shall not be practised in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and that Hong Kong's previous *capitalist*

system and life-style shall remain unchanged for 50 years" from the appointed date of Handover on 1 July 1997 (my emphasis).

[16] This phrase, he admits, is discursively idiosyncratic. It formulates the "peculiar focus" on which his book is developed (Gorugouris 2003, xv).

[17] Here my argument diverts slightly from Harold B. Segel's reading of the story. He points out (1995),

> Collodi was as if of two minds on the matter of respect for authority. On one hand, the disobedience of Pinocchio carries with it something of the nostalgia of the mature person for the carefree outlook and lack of respect for authority of the young […]
>
> But then there is the other side of the picture to be considered – Pinocchio's own, oft-stated desire to become a real boy and to take his proper place in the world […] Pinocchio does not want to remain a puppet forever. His desire to become a real boy certainly can be read as a manifestation of Collodi's social conservatism and his intention in Pinocchio to inculcate into the young a sense of responsibility toward society and state. (41)

[18] See He Furen's [何福仁] "Zenyang Kaishi yige 'Shijian' Wenti: Yu XiXi Duitan" [怎樣開始一個「時間」問題—與西西對談] ("How to Start a Topic of 'Time': He Furen in conversation with XiXi" 1994, 24-6).

[19] Original passage: [文論家告訴我們小說裡有三種不同形式的報告：敘事、對話、描寫。跟真實的時間比較，對白的時間最接近，敘事的時間較快，描寫則最慢。] (He 1994, 26).
XiXi derives this idea from Eric S. Rabkin's essay "Spatial Form and Plot":

> Novels in general use three different modes of report: narration, dialogue and description. Understanding that even with a given mode, such as the description of a stone, the relation between the diachronic flow of language and the synchronic focus of attention can be manipulated, we can still note that in general narration reports occurrences in a reading time considerably less than actual time ("He ran all the way home."), dialogue reports occurrences in a reading time roughly congruent with actual time ("How are you?" "Fine."), and description reports occurrences in a reading time considerably greater than actual time ("The stone weighed heavily in his hand, clammy yet deeply textured, the solidity of its feel somehow incompatible with the delicacy of its silver veining.") Thus with the interweaving of narration, dialogue, and description a narrative not only defamiliarizes what it reports but guides the reader's consciousness through rhythms of correspondence between reading time and actual time. (Rabkin 1981, 81)

XiXi references this idea at least twice: first in "How to Start a Topic of 'Time'" (He 1994, 26), second in "Bajiasi Lüesa Zuopin de Shikong Nongsuo Jiegou—Shixi Pandaleiang Shangwei yu Laojun Nülang de Diyizhang" [巴加斯・略薩作品的時空濃縮結構—試析潘達雷昂上尉與勞軍女郎的第一章] ("The Structure of Temporal Concentration in the works of Vargas Llosa: Critical Essay on the First Chapter of <u>Pantaleón y las visitadoras</u>") (1985, 192).
Rabkin reintroduces this idea in his recent essay "Reading Time in Graphic Narrative" (2009), in which he distinguishes time in graphic narrative from what he calls the "text-only narrative" [sic] – in that he seems to suggest graphic elements are not considered "textual." For the "text-only narrative," he modifies his earlier idea of the three modes of report into three "techniques of representation" which are "description, dramatization, and summary" (37).

[20] Original passage: [三種時間之外，可能還有第四種時間：議論的時間，即是整個報告裡的停頓，比方狄德羅、菲爾丁等人，在作品裡不斷大發議論，議論一過，繼續講述故事。好像籃球比賽，教練暫時叫停，因應形勢，部署戰略。] (He 1994, 26).
XiXi mentions two novelists in the eighteenth century Europe – Henry Fielding and Denis Diderot – as the masters of managing the time in discussion through their narrative voices.

[21] Original passage: [時間零則是一種精挑細選的特殊處境。] (He 1994, 26).

[22] Original passage: [時間零…開拓了解一種新的視角。是的，時間沒有開始，時間沒有終結，正因為形式是開放的，可以怎樣開始，可以怎樣終結。] (He 1994, 26).
In another article, "Reading Italo Calvino" [Dou yixie Kaerweinuo 讀一些卡爾維諾] (1986b: 195-220), XiXi mentions again the contribution of "t zero" to the art of fictional narrative: "For those readers who only demand a complete narrative with head and tail and detailed scenes, Calvino's stories offer a new reading perspective" (213, my translation). Original passage: [對於那些祇要求看有頭有尾、豐富情節的讀者，提供了新的閱讀層面。] (XiXi 1986b, 213).

[23] Calvino quotes this line in the original French: "Il faut être léger comme l'oiseau, et non comme la plume" (Calvino 1988, 16). The English version that I quote is provided by Calvino's translator Patrick Creagh.

[24] In the first chapter of Kundera's novel, we are introduced to two incompatible perspectives, from which the same event or decision can be so differently weighed: the world of eternal return, in which "the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make" (2008 [1984], 5); and its antithesis, wherein "a life which disappears once and for all, which does not return, is like a shadow, without weight, dead in advance, and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime, its horror, sublimity, and beauty mean nothing" (3). Mutually exclusive as these two perspectives are, meanings – and respectively their antagonistic senses of meaninglessness – are attributed figuratively to both worlds as the two poles of weight and lightness. Easy solution to this dilemma is perpetually deferred or doubted, like the simple conclusion made by the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides of Elea – "lightness is positive, weight negative" – which only puts itself under interrogation again. Kundera's narrator asks, "[w]as he correct or not? That is the question" (6), and subtly recalls Hamlet's struggle "to be or not to be?" Not only does the narrator frame the novel with this philosophical enquiry, he threads the whole narrative with a hinting verb in simple future "shall choose," suggestively and paradoxically putting weight and lightness (with all their connotations and figurative meanings) on the same balance, weighing against each other. The implications of decision and subjectivity behind this verb resituate the query from the metaphysical plane to the meta-narrative dimension of fictional imagination.

[25] This scene as far as I know does not exist in any previously published novels. I believe that XiXi invents it as a summary of an imagined novel.

[26] What is this "critical moment" which the narrator keeps mentioning? Within the myth itself, it refers to the temporary condition that the city remains in its prosperous and stable status of floating. As long as it remains afloat, there is always the inevitable risk of sinking or falling. It is relevant to the conditions of any city in which the stability and sustainability are only temporary but uncritically taken for granted. However, in the context in which the story in written, one can read it as an allegory of the political conditions of Hong Kong during the Sino-British Negotiations.

Abbas describes this transitional period of Hong Kong in the prospect of 1997 as "interesting times" which came with "violent transitions and uncertainty" (1997, 1). Local media and politicians were noted to utilise the term "through train" figuratively as a metaphor, by which to articulate the hope that the transitional period between 1984 and 1997 would go smoothly on track. For instance, in an article entitled "The Handover Dictionary: A to Z" by Todd Crowell published on 20 June 1997, there is an entry on "through train," which reads

> A metaphor describing continuity of institutions from one era to the other. 1997 is the station where no one wants to stop. On board, Hong Kongers would nap, read or play mahjong as "1997" passes by barely noticed. Reality: the core issue was the Legislative Council, elected to a four-year term in 1995. When Beijing decided to disband it in response to [Chris] Patten's [the Last Governor of Hong Kong British Crown Colony] reforms, the legislative through train was derailed. There'll be a new train (the provisional legislature) in Hong Kong on July 1 [1997]. The judiciary and civil service are on the through train.

Via this trope of the vehicle, Hong Kong was attributed to a dynamic position that was moving in a high velocity yet maintaining within it an illusory and miraculous stability of a free floating object.
In his 1997 essay "Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics," Abbas compares the crisis moment of Hong Kong in the face of the Handover in 1997 with the sensory illusion of free floating in the physical experience of parachuting:

> Parachutists tell us that at 6,000 feet above ground level, the falling body does not notice the earth getting closer at all. It feels itself to be freely floating. However, at around 2,000 feet, the body begins to experience things differently, perspectives change. The earth seems to be coming at it, not just getting closer, but opening up, as if the ground were splitting. Perhaps, in similar fashion, critical moments in history are subject to an effect analogous to gravitational pull: they are seen differently when they are close up than when they are far away. As Hong Kong nears the appointed date of the handover to China, the historical ground begins to open up, perspectives on things split and multiply. This is History with a capital H, sensational and veritiginous; and just in case we should forget it, there is the world's media to remind us. (Abbas 2004 [1997], 273)

In this critical analogy, Hong Kong is once again associated with a fast-moving object, similarly in a unidirectional fashion of a through train. Abbas also makes obvious that the force setting this body in motion is external. Later in the essay, he further proposes in more explicit terms to what this gravitational field could refer in the light of the cultural conditions of the city:

> This city might try to float in the space of flows of the global economy, but sooner or later, it has to peg itself to something, whether it is the value of the US dollar or Chinese cultural tradition. At a certain point, like the parachutist, it is pulled in by some economic, political or cultural gravitational field. Its history is not its own. (281)

The message behind this idea is clear. He means that the floating condition, as he saw it in that particular moment just before the Handover in 1997, would only be temporary and would come to an end one day. However, what he does not spell out, but implicitly suggests in this analogy, is that even though Hong Kong might eventually have to get out of the vehicle, or to terminate this state of floating, it would still get on yet another set of agenda, another vehicle. Ironically, then, for this parachutist, the anticipated moment of alighting and landing would never come: he would not be given chance to lay his steps, however humble he wishes they be, nor would he be able to depart for a journey of his own. The city will always be suspended in a position among different fields of interests that are foreign to its local people.

[27] According to Newton's first law of motion, "Every body persists in its state of being at rest or of moving uniformly straight forward, except insofar as it is compelled to change its state by force impressed."

[28] In Brothers Grimm's fairytale, Cinderella wears a pair of glass slippers with which she gets off the carriage, attends the ball, and dances with her Prince Charming.
In another earlier short story "Bolixie" [玻璃鞋] ("The Glass Slipper") – this story has not been translated into English but is available in Véronique Woillez's French translation as ("La pantoufle de verre" 1997b, 45-55), XiXi's narrator produces a travel report to Cinderella's hometown. Of course the tour is fictive. The story, as He Furen notes in one of his published conversations with XiXi on fairy tales (He 1992 [1982], 341-53; 2007 [1984], 189-207), is analogous to the fear of 1997 – the end date on the lease of the New Territories that triggered the Sino-British Negotiations – in Hong Kong at the time when she wrote the story "Bolixie" in 1982: "Hong Kong people were very strange at that time, as if there were nothing to worry about. The society looked prosperous. But, when the time approaches, they suddenly become very anxious. Hong Kong dollar keeps getting depreciated" (189, my translation).
Original passage: [那時候香港人很奇怪，好像沒有什麼擔憂，社會看來很繁榮，到時間逼近，卻慌張徬徨，港元貶了又貶。] (He 1992 [1982], 342).
In the travel report (in the short story "Bolixie"), XiXi's narrator relates the fairy tale to the people of her city. While only one girl could have her feet fit into the glass slippers, in our city, she says, "large feet can be made small; small feet can be enlarged: any foot can be modified into any type and any size of shoe. The people in our city are born with great adaptability" (26, my translation). Woillez's French version for comparison: "Savez-vous que, chez nous, les grands pieds peuvent être rapetissées et les petits agrandis? N"importe quell soulier, quell qu'en soit le modèle. Les gens, chez nous, sont doués d'une capicité d'adatation prodigieuse" (XiXi 1997b, 47).
Original passage: [在我們那裡，大的腳可以改小，小的腳可以改大，任何的腳都可以改成適合任何種類的鞋子。我們那裡的人，天生有一種了不起的適應能力…] (XiXi 1992 [1980], 26).
She then offers two examples demonstrating this adaptability: first, in housing policy, an average size of a flat is initially 700 square feet for a family of three, which could be adapted to 300 square feet for a family of five. Later, when a flat could be as small as 100 square feet, it could incredibly accommodate as many as eight people. For the second example, she explains that each columnist is given a particular size of their article on a newspaper. If the size demands a newspaper article of three hundred characters or that of sixty-five characters, then the columnist would adaptably produce an article every time of the exact length, be it three hundred, sixty-five, or whatever required number of characters. In other words, as the narrator remarks, everybody in her city could become Cinderella.
In Brothers Grimm's story, Cinderella's slippers are indeed not made of glass but feather. It is the mistranslation of "*vair*" (feather) as "*verre*" (glass) from French into English that makes it become glass in some other versions. Either way, the slippers, which initially fit like wings on the feet of Cinderella, become containers to which the feet of the people of the narrator's city adapt in XiXi's "Bolixie."
While XiXi's narrator suggests that their adaptable feet to the glass slippers are really nothing, compared to these two examples; she warns of her audience the surprising matter concerning the people of her city: "There is one more thing that will blow you mind, which I am not sure if I should tell you […] In our city, no one believes that after midnight, one would instantly become a pumpkin" (1992 [1980], 27, my translation).

Woillez's French version for comparison: "Il y a encore autre chose qui pourrait vous surprendre, je ne sais si je dois vous en faire part [...] Personne, chez nous, ne croit que l'on puisse se transformer en citrouille lorsque sonnent les douze coups de minuit" (1997b, 49).

Original passage: [還有一件叫你吃驚的事，不知道該不該讓你知道一下…在我們那裡，沒有一個人相信，到了午後十二時正，自己會變作一個南瓜。] (1992 [1980], 27).

"Pumpkin" of course refers to the pumpkin that is transformed into a golden carriage until midnight in Brothers Grimm's fairy tale. Here, it serves as a metonym for all other items in the story that would face similar fate after the appointed time at midnight – the horses would turn back into mice, the ball gown becomes rags. But, it also implicates the condition that is uniquely relevant to Hong Kong at that time: the prosperity that the city enjoys would turn back into poverty, or that the spotlight and attention on the city would fade away, after the appointed moment of an end in 1997. XiXi's "Bolixie," in short, subtly suggests that the people in Hong Kong never anticipate this date. They are unprepared for it; and as a reluctant version of Cinderella, they would rather stay in the carriage and never get off.

[29] The absence of Cinderella's slippers also reminds us of the winged sandals of Perseus – the hero who cuts off the head of Medusa, as well as the first figure whom Calvino introduces in his lecture on "Lightness."

Calvino notes that "Perseus's strength always lies in a refusal to look directly, but not in a refusal of the reality in which he is fated to live; he carries the reality with him and accepts it as his particular burden" (1988, 5). Calvino then continues and brings us to the scene in this myth that features Perseus as the hero of lightness. Taking into tender consideration of the fragility of Medusa's head, "[Perseus] makes the ground soft with a bed of leaves, and on top of that he strews little branches of plants born under water and on this he places Medusa's head, face down" (Homer quoted in Calvino 6). Calvino emphasises that something unexpected and miraculous happens after this scene: "the little marine plants turn into coral and the nymphs [...] rush to bring sprigs and seaweed to the terrible head" (6). Without making any explicit interpretations, Calvino only hints at how Perseus can be related to our own times. He says,

> Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don't mean escaping into dreams or into the irrational. I mean that I have to change my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification. (6)

The determination to change one's approach and to look at the world in insistently different ways alludes to what I call the step of concession, or *rangbu*, in the beginning of this chapter.

[30] Calvino's second story in the series of "t zero" – "The Chase" – provides an analogy of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of making this step. As XiXi recalls in "Reading Italo Calvino," "The Chase" is about a pursuer and the pursued, from the point of view of the latter. They drive on the same road heading towards downtown of a city. The narrator is leading a distance of several cars ahead of his pursuer. Can the pursuer succeed in killing his target? Or, can the narrator escape? This is situational, according to XiXi's proposition, because it all depends on the condition of the traffic jam, the regularity of the traffic signals, and the irregularity of the cars moving in the transverse flow (XiXi 1986, 212; Calvino 1967, 112-127). Calvino's narrator makes a hypothesis of impossibility:

> To evade this situation the simplest method would be to get out of the car. If one or both of us left our automobiles and proceeded on foot, then space would exist again and the possibility of our moving in space. But we are in a street where parking is forbidden; we would have to leave the cars in the midst of the traffic [...] such an escape would attract attention and I would immediately have the police on my heels. (1967, 116)

[31] "In order to move onto existential ground," Calvino insists that he should "think of literature as extended to anthropology and ethnology and mythology" (1988, 26-7). In folktales of oral literature, "a flight to another world is a common occurrence" (27). From this observation, Calvino then quotes Vladimir Propp's idea of "transference of the hero" from Morphology of the Folktale (1968): "Usually the object sought is in 'another' or 'different' realm that may be situated far away horizontally, or else at a great number of depth or height" (quoted in Calvino 1988, 27). In many of these tales, there are shaman or hero who transforms a condition of privation into a sense of lightness, and "makes possible a flight into a realm where every need is magically fulfilled" (28). But, he complicates this idea with the concluding example in his lecture: Kafka's parable "Der Kübelreiter" ("The Knight of the Bucket" or "The Bucker Rider," trans. Edwin Muir and Willa Muir, 2002 [1931], 94-6). In his reading of Kafka's parable, Calvino notes that

> the hero […] doesn't seem to be endowed with the powers of shamanism or witchcraft; nor does the country beyond the Ice Mountains seem to be one in which the empty bucket will find anything to fill it. In fact, the fuller it is, the less it will be able to fly. Thus, astride our bucket, we shall face the new millennium, without hoping to find anything more in it than what we ourselves are able to bring to it. (28-9)

[32] I have elaborated these terms in my Master's dissertation (2009), with reference to the famous myth of the footless bird mentioned in the 1990 film of Wong Kar-wai Days of Being Wild.

In Chinese characters, it is already enclosed within disappointment a perspective of disappearance. "Disappearance" – the key word in Abbas's model in reading Hong Kong through critical lens, if translated into Chinese, becomes *xiaoshi* [消失]. The term carries tautologically (in accordance with the aesthetics of parallel pairing) a repeat of the sense of "loss": *xiao* [消] as "to eliminate" or "elimination" and *shi* [失] as "to lose" or "loss." The redundancy within this term underlines an anxiety of double loss in Hong Kong, first the threat to its prosperity in the face of the diplomatic negotiations, second in the clichéd cultural representations of the city. However, while *xiaoshi* [消失] (i.e. disappearance) refers externally to the objects of seeing, the act of seeing is in a passive condition and secondary to what is seen. *Shiwang* [失望] (i.e. disappointment) – the critical term that I introduce in this chapter with reference to the theory of disappointment – is internally a state of the subject in one's seeing. Both terms are mutually exclusive. Whereas disappearance refers to the failure of a passively anticipated view, disappointment is the deprivation of any active attempt at viewing.

To use again the analogy of vehicle, disappearance corresponds to the fast and continuous shuffle of images from the perspective inside the vehicle. For those who had been satisfactorily carried away along this unidirectional path, they got anxious of the appointed moment of arrival at the destination, where the progressive motion would come to a halt. It is therefore not surprising to note that Abbas and many critics who understand Hong Kong culture via this critical lens of disappearance merit the cinema as a media, through which, as Abbas puts it, "to find means of outflanking, or simply keep pace with, a subject always on the point of disappearing" (1997, 26). However, for those who cannot catch up with the fast pace of disappearance, for those who hope to unravel the different layers of the city in a slow motion, and for those who wish to firmly secure a more static vantage point with their own feet, the model of disappearance ironically and inevitably brings forth the disappointment which it fails to recognise: the act of viewing itself, rather than the view or the object of viewing, is jeopardised, as implied in the term *shiwang*.

[33] Eva Hung explains why she chooses the unusual compound noun "mud-plat" in her Introduction: "The choice of the usual compound 'mud-plat' in this translation aims at alerting readers to the fact that the original word [lanni 爛泥] is not a standard one" (1997, xiv). As she suggests in an earlier

paragraph that *lanni* [爛泥] is a Cantonese word, which "denotes something which is of no value at all and which will never come to any good; it is also used as a metaphor to describe people" (xiii-xiv). I do not have any objection to this choice of word. However, as far as I know, *lanni* [爛泥] is indeed a standard word in Chinese.

[34] Here, the narrator performs a strategy, which XiXi once notes in Calvino's rewriting of traditional fables. A fairy tale usually ends with such typical line: "The prince and the princess live happily hereafter." However, for Calvino, XiXi notes that he would let the narrator appear in the foreground all of a sudden and add after such line a coda such as: "But I remain as pitiful as before" (XiXi 2004, 197-8).

[35] Original passage: [寫小說，我希望能夠提供一樣東西：新內容，或者新手法。] (He 1992 [1982], 342).

[36] Original passage: [那麼多的店：涼茶舖、雜貨店、理髮店、茶樓、舊書攤、棺材店、彈棉花的繡莊、切麵條的小食館、豆漿舖子，每一間店都是一個故事。這些店，只要細心去看，可以消磨許多個愉快的下午。如果有時間，我們希望能夠到每一條橫街去逛，就看每一間店，店內的每一個角落以及角落裡的每隻小碗，甚至碗上的一抹灰塵。灰塵也值得細心觀看，正如一位拉丁美洲的小說家這樣說過：萬物自有生命，只消喚醒它們的靈魂。] (XiXi 1992 [1975], 267).

[37] In the beginning of this story, the narrator assumes the role of a reader and provocatively interrogates the practice of reading:

This world is quite strange. While there are many novelists, there are more readers of novels that there are novelists. We ceaselessly demand a novelist to take new approaches and develop her unique voice and innovative style. But, for the readers of novels, we rarely say anything about their techniques or their approaches; nor do we demand them to become innovative readers. It is as if to say that novelists should always be creative and contemplative, whereas the readers are only stones. (XiXi 1986 [1985], 239, my translation)

Original passage: [這個世界頗為奇怪，有許多人寫小說，有更多的人讀小說，對於寫小說的人，大家不斷要求他們創新，成為有獨特風格的作者；而對於讀小說的人，卻極少有人說甚麼話，也不要求他們成為有獨特風格的作者。彷彿凡是作者，就是想像力豐富、喜好思索的人，而讀者，只是一塊一塊的石頭。] (239).

The narrator then offers some of her reading experience. There is a book, she says, which provides two separate paths at every turn in the narrative plot, demanding the reader to make decision. That book looks interesting and provides as many as forty-four different paths of reading. Yet, the narrator complains, the narrative is still manipulative and only makes her roll a tiny bit as a stone (XiXi 1986, 239-40). She wants to become "a slightly different reader" [一個和以往有點不同的讀者] and "a more active reader" [積極一點的讀者] (240).

[38] Original passage: [我並不是找一本小說來看，而是兩本，我會打開兩本小說，一起看…不過，在兩本書打開的書上，我可以自由選擇，隨時轉變。我可以這分鐘看這本書的第三十六頁，下分鐘改看另一本書的第六十三頁。這樣子看書，不就亂了嗎，不就把這本書的故事和另一本書的故事混在一起了嗎？事實上，這正是一件好事，兩本書本來只是兩個獨立的故事，一起看，可能因此衍生出第三個故事來…] (XiXi 1986, 241).

[39] In relation to Hong Kong, the narrator suggests that it is a place where she can find translated novels in Chinese or in English, especially the famous writers whose works she could not read in the original (XiXi 1986, 257). (The narrator mentions that she tries to learn French and Spanish, but could not master these languages well enough for reading.) She also remarks that in this city where she lives, she has access to a variety of books and enjoys an absolute freedom of reading (274). Here, she makes an implicit criticism on the conditions of censorship depicted in dystopian fictions such as Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 and George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-four, and that in Communist China in the aftermath of cultural revolution.

[40] They both appear in the same short story collection: Huzi you Lian [鬍子有臉] (Beard with a Face [1986], my translation).

[41] Original passage: [香港有一個研究廢物的政府部門，以科學的方法把廢物分解，利用細菌吃掉其中的有機物體，餘下的渣滓，就丟棄在屋背空地上，一些雀鳥飛過，帶來了種子，那裡居然長出了非常肥壯的果實，譬如番茄、蘿蔔，比原來的要大許多倍。一位親人趁工作之便，曾獲得一份肥土的資料報告，整個過程、方式據說都記得很詳盡，我知道後大感興趣，這是肥土鎮的由來。其實我一直想寫一系列關於這個鎮的故事，即使不冠上這個鎮的名字。可惜後來這份資料還沒有翻讀，從另一位親人那裡失去了。肥土這種東西，我只能根據想像，從側面下筆，恐怕這就缺少了佐證的細節了。] (1992 [1985], 362).

[42] The idiom in original Chinese: [水能載舟，亦能覆舟].

[43] Here I owe a large part of my interpretations to Page Richards's reading of Herman Melville's "Bartleby." See Richards 2009, 90-97.

[44] In Chan Kit-yee's analogical comparison, Flying Carpet exhibits different styles of paint strokes on the canvas that resembles a long Chinese landscape painting. She suggests,
> Scroll One offers a detailed close-up view of the early days of Fertillia. Scroll Two shows the obviously rougher strokes that outline the industrialising period of Fertillia, in the manner how historical events are neatly recorded in the book of history. With dynamic and busy strokes, Scroll Three finally brings us to different corners of the city and shows us the activities of the people, like the pictures in a magazine. (Chan 1998, 144, my translation)

Original passage: [三卷小說雖然有不同的「筆法」，第一卷以工筆細繪小鎮開埠的情景，第二卷則以粗線條勾劃轉型期的改變，寥寥數筆仿將各事的條目綱領記在歷史帳薄上，天災人禍當中自見，卷三則以紛繁熱鬧的筆法劃出城市的各個角落、各項活動、各色生活，仿若看雜誌上的圖片，是小市民的街頭寫照。] (144).

[45] Zhang Zeduan (1085-1145 A.D.) was a famous Chinese painter of the Song Dynasty. The Romanisation of his name can alternatively be spelt as Chang Ts-tuan or Zhegn Dao.

[46] Original passage: [當我們把全卷展開，就好像終於登上山頂，放眼全景，但更多的時候，還是隨人上船，或者擠在橋邊，到橋上橋下流連。而視點，不斷移動。空間的變化，令我們同時意識到那流逝的時間。] (He 1999, 241).

[47] Original passage: [如今，作者彷彿立體主義繪畫的畫家們，把一個人的正面，側面都疊畫在一個平面上，使我們看見同一張臉的幾個面，可以有三隻眼睛，三隻耳朵，以及一個既屬於側面的鼻子。運用新的構成方法，作者把許多場景並列，成為綜合的整體，既不分頭逐一描寫，也可以把極細緻的場景輕易捕捉，讓當事人親自登場，正面講述，渾成一個統一的空間。] (1995 [1985], 188).

[48] This document is the second piece of the three short reading notes that XiXi produces under another penname Aguo [阿果], collectively published under the title "Yuedu Biji Sanze" [閱讀筆記三則] ("Three Pieces of Reading Notes") in Suyeh Literatures [素葉文學] 24-25 (1984): 34-6.

[49] Original passage: [一個巨大的櫃子，鑲嵌了無數的小抽屜，這一個抽屜忽然打開了，那面的一個抽屜接著打開，或者是上格的抽屜打開了，接著卻是櫃底的一個抽屜打開來。抽屜相隔好遠，抽屜裡裝的都是可以配選，混伴的藥材。良藥，或者苦口。] (Aguo [阿果], 35).

[50] In Translator's Introduction, Diana Yue notes that the novel consists of 204 short passages, which she calls "sequences" (2000, viii). These sequences are arranged like patches on a patchwork, or the squares on a canvas as we unpack a cube onto a flat surface to examine all its different facets. The narrative sequence, therefore, is again similar to the unique pattern of hopscotch. The reader is not required to approach it in the conventional pattern from the beginning to the end, but could hop from one sequence to another and reproduce the narrative of Fertillia out of this reading pattern.

[51] Original passage in Chan Kit-yee's discussion: [黃子平指出，飛氈的「百科全書」式敘述加上童話調，使飛氈可以「大膽略去『現實』中的種種『沉重感』，整部小說失去關心肥土鎮百年命運的「焦點」。] (Chan 1998, 139).

[52] Indeed, we can add that the novel is not even intended to be read as a historical novel.

[53] Original passage: [何貴乎突出幾宗政治事件，為歷史找一、二個中心主宰？] (He 1996, 31).

[54] Original passage: [讓歷史上一直默默無聲的邊緣小民說話。] (He 1996, 31).

[55] Later near the novel's end, the narrator similarly describes the roads and streets in Fertillia:
In Fertillia there are two kinds of roads, those that run on flat ground, and those that run over hilly areas. Most roads running on flat ground are car roads. They were originally built for horses and ox-carts and the carriage of goods, and then the cars took over, and people who want to cross to the other side must use the zebra crossings. The road in the hills were original narrow paths leading up to the Peak. Later they were widened and re-built, and are now used by vehicles too. Bus-drivers in Fertillia have wonderful skills and can steer their vehicles along these narrow and winding hilly paths, making twists and turns with acrobatic ease. But in Fertillia are there still streets and roads that belong solely to the people? Yes, and we are not referring to those three or four sections of streets circled out in noisy downtown as a walkers' paradise on Sundays. Rather, we are talking about the streets paved with stone slabs that rise in tiers along the hilly slopes. On these streets there are no cars or horses, and you can stroll freely in the middle of the street, and take in the views around you. (XiXi 2000, 399-400)

[56] See Chan Kit-yee 1998, 141.

[57] In her translation, Diana Yue details "holland-water" in a footnote. She explains, the term is "[l]iterally translated from 荷蘭水, an old Chinese term referring to a kind of soda water drunk in the old days. The source of the Chinese term is unknown, but there is a possibility it may have originated among Chinese people living in Indonesia which was once a Dutch colony" (XiXi 2000, 432-33, footnote on p. 13).

[58] With respect to Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance (2002b [1995]) – the primary example that I study in Chapter Two – this is reminiscent of Maneck Kohlah's family business in the mountain station.

[59] Here again, we are reminded of the jhopadpatti or slum that Ishvar and Omprakash once take as their dwelling place in Mistry's A Fine Balance that I read in Chapter Two.

[60] The Chinese name of Heart Town [心鎮] ("Xinzhen" in Mandarin) is a perfect homophone of Shenzhen [深圳] in Cantonese – the name of the town adjacent to Hong Kong on the north – (both are pronounced as "Sumtsang").

[61] Original passage: [莊子不知道，人之仰看和鵬之俯視，視野其實大不相同。] (He 1993, 17). Here, however, He Furen is referring not to "Zhuang-zi dreamt that he was a butterfly," but another text of Zhuang-zi "Free and Easy Wandering" in which Zhuang-zi contemplates on the perspective of a mythical bird peng [鵬]: "While the sky looks very blue, is that its real colour? Or is it because it is so far away and has no end? When the bird looks down, all he sees is blue, too." [天之蒼蒼，其正色邪？其遠而無所至極邪？其視下也，亦若是則已矣。] (He 1993, 17).

[62] Original passage: [飛行⋯是一種精神自由的境界⋯] (He 1993, 18).

[63] Original lines: [嫦娥應悔偷靈藥，碧海青天夜夜心。] (Li Shangyin quoted in He 1993, 18). There are many versions of Li's Chang'e poem in English. For anyone like me who is capable of reading the Chinese original, none sounds adequate. The English version that I quote in the main body comes from Janice Wickeri's translation of Chan Po Chun's short story "Addendum to a Conversation" (1999, 64-91), in which these two lines are quoted (Chan Po Chun 78). While Wickeri mentions that the original lines come from Li Shangyin (78 fn 1), she does not provide the source of translation of these verses. I take it to mean that this version is indeed her translation. I find it relevant to quote this version rather than many other possibilities, concerning that it is within the corpus of Hong Kong literature in English translation.

[64] Myth has it that Chang'e accidentally or purposefully swallows her husband's elixir, which is a pill for prolonging his life. She ends up flying to the Moon and living there alone for the rest of her life.

[65] The original passage here comes from De Saint-Exupéry's Terre des homme: "Il ne s'agit point ici d'aviation. L'avion, ce n'est pas une fin, c'est un moyen" (1959 [1939], 237).

[66] Not to mention that this novel also bears the title "flying carpet" as a pun.

[67] The Chinese name of Constance Fa is exactly the same as that of Everlasting Bloom in "The Story of Fertile Town": in the standard Romanisation of Chinese name in Hong Kong, it will be Fa Ho-gau

(pinyin as Hua Ke-jiu) [花可久]. While Everlasting is a girl in "The Story," Constance Fa is a male character, the son of Thirdson Fa and Jeunesse Ip.

[68] Atlas should be considered a novel. It consists of numerous short pieces which can be read like micro-essays or anecdotes in a way comparable to XiXi's Flying Carpet. The book was originally written and published in Chinese under the title Ditu ji: Yige Xiangxiang de Chengshi de Kaoguxue [地圖集：一個想像的城市的考古學] in 1997 and was translated by the author himself in 2012.

[69] This article is originally written in Chinese and is translated by Kwok-kan Tam as an Afterword to the first collection of XiXi's short stories in English translation A Girl Like Me and Other Stories, which was first published in 1986.

[70] Whether we should consider Cantonese (or known by its equivalent term, Yue Chinese) a dialect of Chinese or a language in the family of Chinese languages is debatable.

[71] The original proverb quoted in XiXi's novel is [夏蟲不可以語冰] (XiXi 1996b, 128). It comes from Zhuang-zi's [莊子] "Autumn Flood" [秋水].

[72] Original passage: [古希臘那位哲人赫拉克利特怎麼說？人不能兩次踏進同一條河流。那麼，畫幅裡凝定了的河流呢？
柏洛瑪先生卡爾維諾曾說：步進美術館看畫，從一幅畫到另一幅畫，每個人可依自己的想像編述故事。] (XiXi 1992 [1986], 325).
Here, XiXi nicknames Calvino as "Mr. Palomar Calvino" which gives an impression that this idea comes from the character Mr. Palomar in the Italian novelist's eponymous novel (1985 [1983]). Although this idea – that "entering an art gallery, from one painting to another, any viewer can create his own story basing on his imagination" – sounds very much like what Mr. Palomar would have said, no relevant passage could be found in that novel. Indeed, it alludes to Calvino's earlier novel The Castle of Crossed Destinies [Il castello dei destini incrociati] (1979 [1973]), in which, as Calvino explains in the lecture "Visibility" from Six Memos for the Next Millennium (1988), he tried to perform what he calls "a kind of 'fantastic iconology,' not only with the tarot but also with great paintings" (1988, 94). He further elaborates:
> In fact I attempted to interpret the paintings of Carpaccio in San Giorgio degli Schiavoni in Venice, following the cycles of St. George and St. Jerome as if they were one story, the life of a single person, and to identify my own life with that of this George-Jerome. This fantastic iconology has become my habitual way of expressing my love of painting. I have adopted the method of telling my own stories, starting from pictures famous in the history of art or at any rate pictures that have made an impact on me. (94)

And, what follows immediately this passage is a suggestion that seems to be the idea that XiXi references in her Preface to Huzi You Lian (1992 [1986]):
> Let us say that various elements concur in forming the visual part of the literary imagination: direct observation of the real world, phantasmic and oneiric transfiguration, the figurative world as it is transmitted by culture at its various levels, and a process of abstraction, condensation, and interiorization of sense experience, a mater of prime importance to both the visualization and the verbalization of thought. (Calvino 1988, 94)

[73] At this point, XiXi recalls Cratylus's reinterpretation of his teacher Heraclitus's idea: "One cannot even step into the same river once." She is, however, dissatisfied with Cratylus's vision, as any possibility of stepping into a river is disavowed.

[74] Eva Hung first brought XiXi's work into the English language in a similar project in which she gathered different Chinese-to-English translators for translating a handful of XiXi's short stories into an anthology – A Girl Like Me and Other Stories – which was published by Renditions in 1986 and was then expanded as a different edition in 1996.
In 1993, Renditions also published Hung's English translation of XiXi's earlier novel Wocheng [我城] as My City: A Hongkong Story.

[75] I deliberately exclude this short story from the corpus of primary texts which I discuss in this chapter, mainly because the story stages a scene that should be read in relation to Hong Kong less as a city than a political entity. It may be a good idea to offer a brief analysis here in the endnote space, nonetheless: The story is an implicit response to the Sino-British Negotiations during the 1980s concerning what the United Kingdom by then called the "Future of Hong Kong," and the People's Republic of China considered the historical "Question" of sovereignty over the region. Notably, as we know, the voice of Hong Kong, or a representative from the communities of local inhabitants or permanent residents of the city, was strategically excluded from participation in the negotiations. What XiXi performs is to restage Li Xingdao's [李行道] play Huilanji [灰闌記] (originally written in Chinese, translated into English by James Laver as The Circle of Chalk, 1929) from the Yuan Dynasty in her allegorical city, Fertillia or Fertile Town, in her short story "Feituzhen Huilanji" [肥土鎮灰闌記] (1992 [1986], 147-71, translated by John and Esther Dent-Yong as "The Fertile Town Chalk Circle" 1997a, 65-106).
The original story, which appears in different myths and fables in the Bible and many other literary traditions, involve two women who appear in the court, each declaring that she is the real mother of a child. The judge proposes a ridiculous solution to determine which one between the two women is genuine: the test of chalk circle. He draws a circle surrounding the spot where the child stands and asks the woman to stand by each side of the child. As he signals, they pull the child as hard as they could, the one who manages to get the child out of the circle should be deemed the real mother, as he announces in the court. The story ends with surprise, revealing the hidden wisdom of the judge. Indeed, the real mother would not succeed in this competition. She would rather surrender the child in order not to hurt him. In the 20th Century, Bertolt Brecht has notably adapted this story into his Caucasian Chalk Circle in 1949, basing on this Chinese play. However, he makes a little twist and asks an important question: what if the real mother does not love his child? Thus, Brecht develops a scenario in his play before we reach the final scene in the court, in which the child is raised and dearly loved by a foster mother. Brecht's play questions the bondage of blood. He does perform a step of concession: blood relation yields to class-consciousness, and the cold big house of aristocracy yields to the warm steps of the foster servant and her lover in their search for home. They are initially a servant and soldier serving the aristocratic family.
However, for XiXi, with Brecht's play and all other derivatives of this story, she is dissatisfied. Her main disappointment is similar to that shared by Hong Kong people, concerning their exclusion in the Negotiations, that is, analogically in this story, the voice of the child remains always silent. In her "Feituzhen" or "Fertile Town" version, she therefore makes a further concession than what Brecht has done, and endeavours to yield to the child's perspective, from which to tell the same story differently, as the first person narrator.
The narrator embodies at least three different roles at once: he is the child character in The Chalk Circle (the play), also an actor who plays this role on stage in a theatrical performance in Fertillia, and

a mature voice disguised as this five-year-old child, who maintains a distance from the story of the play and makes hypothetical dialogues with, and critical commentaries on, all the other adult characters, including the women and the judge. In theatrical language pertaining to the Chinese theatrical practice, he points out how this play is different from other classics, such as <u>The Unmanned Fortress</u>, in which the characters come on stage in this order: "first the footsoldiers, then the four generals, last of all the hero Zhuge Liang" (XiXi 1997a, 68). He notes, "In <u>The Chalk Circle</u> it's the other way round: the bit players come on last. I am the one who comes on last of all" (68).

The terms "footsoldiers" or "bit players" as in John and Esther Dent-Wong's translation correspond to this theatrical jargon used in the original Chinese text: *paolongtao* [跑龍套]. In Chinese theatre, *paolongtao* refer to the supporting group of actors who play the roles of an anonymous crowd and passers-by. At a glance, they function theatrically like the chorus in Greek tragedy. The difference is: *paolongtao* remains mostly voiceless; if they are ever given any dialogue, it is only very short and insignificant. By making this child character speak, XiXi turns the voiceless *paolongtao* into a choral narrator, who comments on the actions that take place on the stage. There is not much change made in terms of the main action of <u>The Chalk Circle</u>. XiXi takes a back step from the foreground of the stage, where the judge interrogates the suspect, the witnesses, and other related people, to the background where the child character insignificantly remains.

The narrator observes, "The trial has been running for a long time, but the judge still can't make head or tail of it" (XiXi 1997a, 90). Impatiently, he asks,

> Why don't they ask me a few questions? Who poisoned my father, who is my true mother, to whom were the second wife's clothes and hair ornaments given? – I known all the answers, I am an eye-witness. Just ask me and all will be made clear. But nobody does ask me. (90)

His words are persuasive and reasonable, but remain unheard. In the original play cathartic effect is said to emerge from the audience's sympathy with the child. Physically, one easily relates to his body, at the risk of being torn apart. However, here, the narrator prematurely draws the reader's attention to his enduring pain: "I've been standing here so long that my legs ache and my limbs are stiff" (90). Indeed, the story does not reach the anticipated last scene, but ends at an earlier point. When the judge proposes the test of chalk circle, the narrator delivers his lines in a tone like the choral voice of Chaucer's narrator in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>, he knows the tragic end would inevitably come without any power to prevent it from happening. But, one may wonder, what tragic end could it be for this story?

The narrator understands that there is a hidden agenda in the Judge's proposal, or a "cunning scheme," as he names it. But, from the point of view of the child in the story, he points out that the result will not turn out the way it would be. He says,

> My mother's just a simple woman, from an ordinary family. She's intimidated by this court, frightened out of her wits, utterly confused [...] In a moment's time she'll be the one who obeys the order without thinking and starts to pull me in two. While Aunt [the false mother], who's far more calculating, can't possibly fall for that old trick of yours. (XiXi 1997a, 104)

How the trial is going to resolve, as the narrator suggests, is unimportant. What is important is the fact that no one cares about the child's right to choose and to determine his own future. Through this narrator, XiXi poses these questions that are relevant to the political conditions of Hong Kong ever since the Sino-British Negotiations, "I stand inside [the] little circle of chalk, must I be entirely at the mercy of [the Judge's] wisdom and benevolence? What am I then but a sacrificial lamb?" (105)

[76] Original passage: [成書之後，<u>我城</u>有過三個版本。每個牌本都是不同的演出，而每次演出，也應該不一樣吧。這次的<u>我城</u>是第四個，比以前繁茂了些，看來是最完整的。] (XiXi 1999, i).

Notes to **Chapter Four**

---

[1] This interview is entitled "Implementing Disform" (Mirze 2008, 176-80). Mirze acknowledges that apart from one particular response to her questions, the entire interview, including this elaboration on the idea of home, was conducted in English (180 fn 1).

[2] Here and elsewhere in this dissertation, the 2008 publication of Pamuk refers to the collection of essays in English translation Other Colors: Essays and a Story (Trans. Maureen Freely). The book is originally published in Turkish under the title Öteki Renkler in 2007. The year in the square bracket indicates the date of its first and original publication.

[3] As I have been arguing throughout this dissertation, it is important to note that a mere outsider, as one who maintains his position as a spectator, a tourist or even Baudelaire's perfect flâneur, attempts to obscure, if not entirely obliterate, this ultimate distance in order to satisfy the pleasure of the eyes. Being either an insider or an outsider would be inadequate in the face of the doubleness of home in Pamuk's works particularly those relating to Istanbul.

[4] Indeed, Sessiz Ev is translated into English as The Silent House by Robert Finn in 2012.

[5] This is not the full list. Indeed, Freely first translated Pamuk's seventh novel, Snow, into English prior to her subsequent translation of Pamuk's works. Snow is not set in Istanbul. Some critics consider that Freely has become Pamuk's preferred English translator since Snow, which seems to be true excepting his Norton Lectures at Harvard University, complied in a single volume as The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist (2010). Their translator is Nazim Dikbaş.

[6] By the end of the previous chapter, I make a point on the advantage that XiXi may have gained by having her Feituzhen series translated by different translators. However, in the case of Pamuk's contemporary Istanbul, I would suggest that the consistency of the city's representation in these English versions would allow the imagination of a shared universe whereby the fictional world somehow leaks into the real world. As I note, the presence or omnipresence of Celâl Salik is a node that intersects The Black Book, The Museum of Innocence (which is written by a fictional novelist whose name is indeed Orhan Pamuk), and the short story "To Look Out the Window" (2008 [1999], 381-401) from Other Colors.

[7] I indeed came across Freely's translation first in approaching this novel. However, I would like to comment here that between Freely's and Gün's version, like many other critics, I prefer Gün's version. But, I will not elaborate further than this: it is mostly a matter of taste.

[8] See Naipaul's narrator in The Enigma of Arrival (1987) for an eloquent example.

[9] This is the title of the book's first chapter.

[10] In Translator's Afterword to her English translation of The Black Book, Maureen Freely also offers a note on this verb tense, together with other features of the Turkish language that are difficult to translate:

> There is no verb *to be* in Turkish, nor is there a verb *to have*. It's an agglutinative language, which means that root nouns in even the simplest sentences can carry five or six suffixes. ("Apparently, they were inside their houses" is a single word.) There are many more tenses –

you use one mode for events you have witnessed with your own eyes, for example, and another for anything you know by hearsay. There is a special syllable you can add to a verb to emphasize the active role someone played in whatever you are describing. The passive voice is as graceful as the active voice and rather more popular, with the result that a fine Turkish sentence may choose to obscure exactly who did what. (463)

[11] This is reminiscent of the opening scene of Charles Dickens's <u>David Copperfield</u>.

[12] Freely's English translation of the equivalent phrase reads "I feel compelled to add or so I've been told" (Pamuk 2005, 8), while Savas Demirel, Valérie Gay-Aksoy and Jean-François Pérouse's French translation may sound closer to the original: "Ou plutôt, je devrais dire qu'elle « m'aurait trouvé » ainsi" (Pamuk 2007, 17), with a footnote explaining that "Le discours rapporté se forme en turc grâce au suffixe *-miş*" (2007, 442 fn 1).

[13] I also note that in another passage, this idea of fate is complicated with reference to Théophile Gautier's observation on the Turks: "if Gautier mentions that the Turks don't cry when a disastrous fire strikes – that, unlike the French, who cry a great deal, they face adversity with dignity because they believe in fate – I might disagree entirely with what he says, but I still don't feel badly wronged" (Pamuk 2005, 242).

[14] G. L. Lewis suggests that identifying Turkish as a language is problematic, as it has only existed since 1922, until then, "the language of Turkey was known as Osmanlıca or Ottoman Turkish" (xix). Historically, after the Turks began their conversion to Islam, their language also adopted the Arabo-Persian alphabet from the tenth century onward (xx). Importantly, as "Persian had [...] borrowed a great many words from Arabic," the modern Turkish language, as we understand it today, borrows a great deal of these borrowed words from Arabic. Lewis also remarks that there has been "a steady flow of English and French words" (xxi). He notes, "[t]he borrowing of French words began in the nineteenth century, and there seems to be still a preference for the French forms of words common to French and English; thus 'detergent' appears as *deterjan*, and *kilosikl* [that is, 'kilocycle'] is far commoner than *kilosaykl*" (xxii). See G. L. Lewis's Introduction to <u>Turkish Grammar</u> (1988, xix-xxii).

[15] Pamuk adds a very personal note on the year of Gautier's visit: "nine year after Nerval's trip and exactly a hundred years before my birth" (2005, 224). This is followed by a remark on historical context and the readership and reception of Gautier's book: "events that would later set Russia against England, bring France closer to the Ottoman Empire, and pave the way for the Crimean War once again made voyages to the East interesting to French readers" (224). Making these comments first justifies how the publication of Gautier's book was arguably intended to cater to the French readers of that time, and to provide some hints to a question he asks later, "why is it that I care so much [...] about what Gautier and other Westerners have to say about Istanbul?" (233)

[16] In <u>The Work of Théophile Gautier</u>, F. C. De Sumichrast notes that Gautier's accounts of his visit in Istanbul were first published in <u>La Presse</u> under the title "De Paris à Constantinople, promenades d'été" ("From Paris to Constantinople – Summer Jaunts") from October 1 1852 to December 3 1853. The publication of these journals as a book was announced right after the last batch arrived on press, first by Eugène Didier, and then by Michel Lévy (Sumichrast 10).

[17] Indeed, Pamuk repeats this idea several times on different occasions, particularly in reference to Edward Said's book <u>Orientalism</u>. Pamuk proposes that it is perhaps because "Istanbul was never a colony of the West and therefore not central to [Said's] concerns" (2005, 291).

[18] See Ruskin, <u>The Seven Lamps of Architecture</u> (1907).

[19] In Freely's English translation, we find this self-explanatory translator's note: "*Hüzün*, the Turkish word for melancholy" (Pamuk 2005, 90). With this, Freely occasionally blurs the usage of *hüzün* and melancholy in the translated text.

[20] Upon reading Jeremy Tambling's <u>Dante in Purgatory</u> (2010), I perceive that melancholy can be associated with moral decadence in Christian culture. According to Jeremy Tambling, melancholy has a complex relationship with acedia – a word of Greek roots that implies "lack of care, listlessness," as "the indolence of the heart which became one of the seven capital sins," while the word "'sloth' as a translation cannot represent the complexity within [it]" (56). In Chapter Two of this dissertation, I also use the word "acedia" in this sense with reference to my discussion of Maneck in Rohinton Mistry's <u>A Fine Balance</u>.

[21] Pamuk considers these fears more important issues to address in literature than "the greatest dilemmas facing humanity" such as "landlessness, homelessness, and hunger." He explains, "today our televisions and newspapers tell us about these fundamental problems more quickly and more simply than literature can ever do" (2008 [2006], 413).

[22] The chapter from which this phrase is quoted bears the title "The Novel as Beginning Intention" (Said 1975, 79-188).

[23] Particularly, I mean his recent novels starting from his third <u>The White Castle</u> (trans. Victoria Holbrook 1990a [1985]) onward, which is also the first to be translated into English.

[24] There are a number of ways to address the reasons behind his reluctance to begin. Two possibilities are offered here. First, Pamuk's understanding of the novel is different from Said's. I will discuss this difference in more detail in a later section foregrounding the perception of "center" that Said would have overlooked in the novel form. Second, it relates to the distinction between the naïve and the sentimental novelist as Pamuk discussed in his Norton Lectures (2010). To take a beginning for granted or to begin without reservation demands pure naïveté that Pamuk cannot afford – another point which I will elaborate in a later section.

[25] Jale Parla among others notes in her article "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel" <u>PMLA</u> 123.1 (2008) that one of the common features in Turkish novels is the blurry boundaries between "real authors and implied authors" (29).

[26] I am aware that this phrase may sound a bit complex and thus may require some justification: many of Pamuk's novels take the form of a narrative-within-a-narrative. Each time, Pamuk re-invents an implied author who is supposedly responsible for writing the main narrative. Such an implied author functions in a manner similar to Nathaniel Hawthorne's implied author who is said to find the story of Hester Prynne, that is, "The Scarlet Letter" in an archive. In <u>The White Castle</u>, the implied author is indeed the historian Faruk Darvinoglu, one of the protagonists from Pamuk's previous novel, <u>Silent House</u>. In <u>The White Castle</u>, Darvinoglu writes in the first person and tells the reader that "I found this

manuscript in 1982 in that forgotten 'archive' attached to the governor's office in Gebze that I used to rummage through for a week each summer, at the bottom of a dusty chest stuffed to overflowing with imperial decrees, title deeds, court registers and tax rolls" (1998, 9). The main narrative is a first-person account of the master-slave relationship between a Muslim Ottoman prince and a Christian Venetian captive in the seventeenth century. The prince and the captive looking very much alike, the question of who is actually the first person narrator – even Pamuk himself admits – remains obscure and open to multiple interpretations.

Pamuk's seventh novel <u>Snow</u> is largely framed by the invention of a fictive author. In this novel, the main narrative about the protagonist Kerim Alakusoglu, or Ka, is constructed from fragments of notes in Ka's personal journals. In his subsequent novel, <u>The Museum of Innocence</u>, the implied author is a fictional "Orhan Pamuk" who is hired to write a novel out of the objects collected in the eponymous museum that is to be set up in Istanbul. Relevantly, Pamuk established a museum of the same name in Istanbul during the time he wrote this novel. The novel <u>The Black Book</u>, the main focus in this chapter, is written by the implied author Galip from his intentionally alienated narratorial perspective. The narrative functions as a metafictional account of his own story in which Galip himself is the third-person protagonist.

[27] Ka is a self-adopted nickname of the protagonist, which combines the initials of his name and puns with the word "snow" in Turkish, which is "*ka*."

[28] In "A Selection from Interviews on <u>The New Life</u>" (2008), Pamuk recounts that he began this novel "in the midst of another novel, in a way [he] could never have predicted" (258). He also remarks that he "had long wanted to begin a novel with that sentence" (259).

[29] Very notably, in the essay "My First Passport and Other European Journeys" (2008 [1999], 197-203), Pamuk quotes the same opening sentence from Tolstoy's novel in suggesting that "[t]he same applies to nationalism and obsessions with identity" (202).

[30] According to the publication history listed in <u>Other Colors</u> (2008), the occasion is Pamuk's acceptance ceremony in receiving the German Book Trade Association Peace Prize in October 2005 in Frankfurt, Germany.

[31] He also acknowledges that it is "Tolstoy's most brilliant novel" (2008 [2005], 229).

[32] In this chapter, unless otherwise specified, all the quotations of this novel come from Maureen Freely's 2006 translation.

[33] At the time of the submission, I learnt that Pamuk has already published his nineth novel <u>Kafamda Bir Tuhaflık</u> in 2014. Its English version <u>A Strangeness in My Mind</u> is scheduled to release in October 2015. Based on summary information, I believe that it is also set in contemporary Istanbul. This time, the translator is not Maureen Freely, but Ekin Oklap.

[34] Indeed, I insist that the narrative structure is antagonistic to any attempt at synopsising the plot. The plot is only peripheral (or ornamental) to the novel's centre(s). That said, what I offer in this paragraph inevitably entails an inadequacy of reading. In his reading of this novel in his book length study on Pamuk's works <u>Autobiographies of Orhan Pamuk: The Writer in his Novels</u> (2008), Michael McGaha offers a four-page synopsis (102-6), which gives the impression of a reductive reading. I want to make a note here and insist that the synopsis can be a misleading map for us to understand the novel deeply.

But, I provide it here nonetheless in order to give the readers of this dissertation a general impression of the frame narrative's main action.

[35] Rüya's name produces a pun troubling to the readers after we learn that it means "dream" in Turkish. In the original Turkish, this pun is so obvious that it is impossible to miss. Based on this, Sevinç Türkkan proposes that first chapter's title "when Galip saw Rüya for the first time" (that is "The First Time Galip Saw Rüya" in both Gün's and Freely's translation) also reads "when Galip saw the dream for the first time" in Turkish. She goes on to suggest that "the question of whether [Rüya] belongs to the world of reality or that of illusion remains unclear throughout the novel" (Türkkan 162).
In Gün's English translation, she inserts a sentence early in the first chapter that explains the meaning behind Rüya's name in Turkish: "that Rüya meant 'dream' was so commonplace, it wasn't surprising in the least" (Pamuk 1994, 10). In Freely's translation, however, this explanation is not given until a later part of the novel when the words "Rüya" and "dream" are placed in a syntactical agreement. In Chapter Twenty-nine, in one of Celâl's articles "It Seems I was the Hero," the writing subject delivers this code: "Theater of the mind: Rüya. Rüya, my dream" (Pamuk 2006, 336); and again in another article of Celâl's, "In Which the Story Goes Through the Looking Glass," we read "my dream, my Rüya" (367).

[36] That Rüya's family is said to have "moved to Istanbul" hints at the fact that her father is indeed Galip's Uncle Melih, who leaves for Europe and returns many years afterward with his secon wife and family, a background detail later explains Celâl's alienation from the family, as he, Rüya's half brother, and his mother have to move out, so that Rüya's mother could settle in the family's apartments.

[37] Atwood, indeed, goes on to suggest that Snow (and possibly, we can associate The Black Book with this idea, too, for that matter) can be considered an example of "Male Labyrinth Novel" (2011, ix).

[38] With reference to One Thousand and One Nights, in his discussion on beginnings in fictional narratives, Said suggests that the intention of a beginning – that is, "the desire to create an alternative world, to modify or augment the real world through the act of writing" – is "inimical to the Islamic world-view" (1975, 81). Pamuk self-identifies as a cultural Muslim. However, I believe it is not the Islamic cultural background but his novelist sensitivity that makes him resist this desire in his novel writing. In an essay on One Thousand and One Nights – "To Read or Not to Read" (2008 [2002], 119-122), Pamuk suggests that the publication of Antoine Galland's translation of this collection in 1704 had made possible for the first time that "this endless chain of tales had appeared as a finite entity" (120). In other words, he implies that its recognised structure is an imposed one. He also figuratively describes this collection as "a dark and impenetrable forest," "a sea of stories," or "a sea with no end" that conceals a "secret internal geometry" (121-2). This literature, he points out, curiously exhibits its "modern outlook" but still carries from within "the arabesques, pleasantries, and random beauties" (121).

[39] In the foreword to the tenth anniversary special edition of Kara Kitap (The Black Book), "The Black Book: Ten Years On" (2008 [2000], 253-7), Pamuk mentions a fuller list of locations where the drafting of this novel took place: from his "little dorm room at the University of Iowa" in 1985, his wife's "student housing at Columbia University" to "the penthouse flat on Teşvikiye Caddesi," a summerhouse "on Heybeliada" and "the Erenköy apartment" back in Turkey" (257).

[40] The lectures were given at Harvard as a response to Homi Bhabba's invitation in Fall 2008. They were subsequently complied and published by Vintage in 2010. The title of this series of lectures is obviously an adaptation of, and tribute to, Schiller's essay.

[41] This can be understood in terms of what Said also calls "the novel's structure of balance between authority and molestation" (1975, 144) or "the traditional novel's radical dynamic of authority and molestation" (161).

[42] This reminds us of Hilary Mantel's complaint of Mistry's novel, as discussed in a footnote to Chapter Two.

[43] Here, it is important to delve into the link between "beginning" and "intention" that Said endeavours to forge in his entire book on beginnings (1975). This "intention" is metonymically understood as desire, appetite, and hunger. His distinction between transitive and intransitive modes of beginning points to the polarised connotations of hunger: that the transitive mode is "always hungering" in a progressive impression of unfulfilled anticipation and the intransitive one "can never have enough of itself" in perpetual disappointment or negative satisfaction (73). Hence, the novel, or, "the institution of narrative prose fiction" can be considered "a kind of appetite that writers develop for modifying reality," and metonymically, "a desire to create a new or beginning fictional entity while accepting the consequences of that desire" (82). A welcoming attitude in accepting any of that desire's consequences, as the rhetorical structure in this phrase suggests, appears as an afterthought – an afterthought of beginning intention. The consequences of what comes after as middles and ends can at best be tolerantly accepted, if not well accommodated. Elsewhere in the same book, we should note, Said makes a more elaborate association between "beginning" and "appetite": "Beginnings and continuities conceived in this spirit [in Mallarmé's Les Mots anglais] are an appetite and a courage capable of taking in much of what is ordinarily indigestible" (71).

[44] There is a mini-metanarrative moment when Galip is trying to describe the synopsis of a story to the shopkeeper of Alâadin's Shop: "the heroine, whom I loved dearly and for whom I had bought the book as a present, was condemned to do nothing in life but read these detective novels" (Pamuk 2006, 41).

[45] What follows in this passage is another metanarrative remark:
> Galip had once told Rüya that the only detective book he'd ever want to read would be the one in which not even the author knew the murderer's identity. Instead of decorating the story with clues and red herrings, the author would be forced to come to grips with his characters and his subject, and his characters would have a chance to become people in a book instead of just figments of their author's imagination. Rüya, who knew more about detective novels than Galip did, asked how the author was to manage all that extra detail. Because detail in a detective novel served purpose. (Pamuk 2006, 50)

This detective story that Galip mentions describes the troubling features of The Black Book's main narrative which the implied author attempts to write, or Pamuk's novel The Black Book itself.

[46] Here I am tempted to refer to the words of Paul Auster's narrator's in City of Glass, which apply to Galip's condition at this point: "Quinn was nowhere now. He had nothing, he knew nothing, he knew that he knew nothing. Not only had he been sent back to the beginning, he was now before the beginning, and so far before the beginning that it was worse than any end he could imagine" (1990 [1985], 124).

[47] Göknar is one of Pamuk's English translators. His English translation of Pamuk's sixth novel My Name is Red [Benim Adım Kırmızı] (2001 [1998]) won the prestigious International IMPAC Literary Award in Dublin 2003.

[48] Both English translations do not offer the source of these quotations. But, in the original Turkish version, Kara Kitap (1994 [1990], 443), the "book's" title is mentioned on the final page which offers a list of all the epigraph references in The Black Book.

[49] In the novel, Adli and Bahti later appear in one of Celâl's column articles "The Three Musketeers" (83-92) as Chapter Eight, wherein Celâl narrates and transcribes his conversation with three well-known Turkish newspaper columnists. The illusion that Adli and Bahti are as real as the literary writers such as Lewis Carroll, Dante, Maurice Proust, and Edgar Allan Poe whose lines are quoted as epigraphs to other chapters, serves the readers' interest as they approach the book with a naïve attitude – that is, like Galip-the-protagonist who tends to conflate the fictional world and the reality. The character Celâl Salik complicates this literary trick of Pamuk: not only does he also appear in other works, such as The Museum of Innocence and a short story "To Look Out the Window" (2008); but once, similar to his character Galip, Pamuk impersonated Celâl in writing a column article under his name, in Pamuk's edition of newspaper Radikal on 7 January 2007, as an invited one-day editor shortly after he won the Nobel Prize.

[50] In this article in the novel, this "den of iniquity" is said to open its doors in the early summer of 1952, by a playful note of humour, its exact date is said to be "the first Saturday in June," that is, Orhan Pamuk's birthday (397).

[51] This figure is still appropriately relevant four decades after Said's publication.

[52] Referring again to "The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist" lectures, we note that Pamuk admits his envy of American novelists "for their lack of constraint, for the confidence and ease with which they write," that is, in short, "for their naïveté" (2010, 146). What it means is that as a novelist from Turkey, he simply could not enjoy the luxury of naïveté or the "lack of constraint" therein as an American novelist would. Admitting what he calls his "personal prejudice," he suggests that this "naïveté" results from "the recognition shared by writers and readers that they belong to the same class and community" and the fact that "Western writers write not to represent anyone but simply for their own satisfaction" (146). This may sound oversimplified. Nevertheless, it points to a difficulty that Pamuk experiences in novel writing: when "the readership is relatively small," the novelists in "the poorer, non-Western parts of the world" (including Turkey, Pamuk remarks), there are always "the inevitable spiritual wounds" made by the distance between the writers (who "often come from the upper classes") and the readers (146).
Self-reflective on his role as a Turkish novelist and very conscious of the limitations of his narrative perspective, Pamuk spells out "the issue of whom and what to present" as the foremost question in his writing practice (146). The discrepancy between writer and reader gives rise to the dilemma "between the urge to write the truth and the desire to be loved" (149). Pamuk mentions that he "used to feel that the way out of dilemma was to cultivate the type of naïveté that Schiller had observed in Goethe" (149). He nevertheless takes into consideration "how difficult it was to maintain this naïveté while living among people drowning in a sea of troubles" and immersing in a city of discontents (149). However, I do not opine that Pamuk is a sentimental novelist. Similarly I want to clarify my reading of Galip: as Pamuk says in the Epilogue to The Naïve and Sentimental Novelist, whenever he is asked

whether he is a naïve or a sentimental novelist, he would emphasise that "the ideal state is one in which the novelist is naïve and sentimental at the same time" (189). While I consider that Galip-the-protagonist has a naïve attitude and that Galip-the-implied-author a sentimental one, I contend that this character shows both aspects, though not simultaneously. Indeed, to a certain extent, Pamuk's life before he was determined to become a novelist is a phase of naïveté during which he aspired to become a painter. Yet, I think the emergence of sentimentality does not necessarily annihilate naïveté, particularly since Pamuk always manages to imagine a believable and very convincing implied author for each of his novels.

[53] Parla remarks that the novelist Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar's critical and historical study of nineteenth-century Turkish literature has contributed to Turkish literary history and its study:

> Besides his fine novels and short stories, Tanpınar left us a comprehensive history of nineteenth-century Turkish literature, which remains unsurpassed in its analytic and evaluative representation of an important epoch in Turkey's cultural transformation In fact, Ondokuzuncu Asır Edebiyatı Tarihi ("History of Nineteenth-Century Turkish Literature") was the only work that could have started a canonistic discussion had it not been dismissed as the work of an odd scholar who did not embrace the republican reforms as wholeheartedly as he should have. (Parla 2008, 31)

Tanpınar's critical study was published in 1946. Parla tells us how it "went through only four editions in the forty years after its publication" (31). She references an interesting remark, delivered by Tanpınar's student and colleague, Mehmet Kaplan in the Preface to the book's fourth edition, discussing why those books are difficult for university students: because "the vocabulary they acquire in high school is poor" (Parla 2008, 31).

[54] Parla does not offer the bibliographical details concerning the author and the publication date of this article in Radikal. Though it would seem necessary to learn these details in order to understand the coinage and use of this phrase with reference to the date, her elaboration on this phrase points to some general background in Turkish. For example, this pun, which she takes time to explain to English readers:

> A column devoted to language issues in the Radikal, a highbrow daily newspaper, has the title "Dil Yäresi," a play on the word *dil*, which means "heart" in Ottoman Turkish and "tongue" in modern, purified Turkish. The expression *dil yâresi*, therefore, means both "the wounded heart" and "the wounded tongue," pointing to the ongoing controversy around an unsettled language still vulnerable to disputes regarding its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. The controversy is rooted in the linguistic schism between the new Turkish, which was implemented as one of the major reforms in the early years of the Turkish republic, and Ottoman Turkish, with its vocabulary of Arabic and Persian origins. (2008, 27)

[55] See Göknar's PhD Dissertation Between "Ottoman" and "Turk": Literary Narrative and the Transition from Empire to Republic (2004).

[56] Göknar's central thesis in his monograph on Pamuk's works, Orhan Pamuk, Secularism, and Blasphemy (2013) appears in an earlier and highly abridged version as an article "Secular Blasphemies: Orhan Pamuk and the Turkish Novel" in the journal Novel (2012, 301-26). Earlier in the chapter, he lists four promising manifestations of these "cultural productive relations between *din* and *devlet*" as follows:

(1) the political and cultural authority of temporal (secular) and spiritual (sacred) power; (2) redemptive secularism (as in certain narratives of Turkish modernity); (3) mystical materiality (what Tanpınar calls the "Exaltation of Eşya"); or (4) secularized religiosity (as in understandings of Muslim "Turkishness" recast as a civic site of identity). (2013, 211)

[57] Göknar further elaborates them in terms of "an inscription of contexts" as such: that of *din* "such as Sufism, Islam, the Ottoman past, conversion, or veiling" and that of *devlet* "such as revolution, empire-to-republic history, secularism, modernity, Kemalism, or coup" (2012, 308-9).

For Göknar, the Turkish nationalism, or what he calls "the secularization thesis" is inadequately one-sided. This inadequacy is a single-minded institutionalisation of *devlet*, with the strategic omission or erasure of *din*: that of both its contents and its contexts. Commenting Pamuk's reception in Turkey, Göknar notes that "Pamuk has come to signify a contestation of secular nationalism and even anti-Turkishness" (2013, 18). On his attempt to address this phenomenon, he contends that

> Pamuk's "dissidence" is a symptom of the historical processes of secular modernity, the actual critique of which is located in the tropes, forms, and techniques of his novels. Pamuk's "literary politics" is not simply the political stance of the author situated outside his fiction, but the political implications of the form of his novels in the cultural logic of Turkish secular modernity. (18)

In short, for Göknar, "novels are unexplored repositories, mini-archives for contestations of the secularization thesis" (18). Regarding our enquiry here on the city's mystery, the consequence of this contestation is the reintroduction, or even the rediscovery, of mystery in Istanbul.

In his chapter "Novelizing Secular Sufism" (2013, 210-42), on Pamuk's books which feature contemporary Istanbul prominently, including The Black Book and The Museum of Innocence and the memoir Istanbul, Göknar again develops his reading based on the "relations between *din* and *devlet*" (211). For Göknar, these relations can be described in an array of slightly different wordings – "a secular-sacred narrative space," the anticipated "*terkip* [composition] between them [the rational and the mystical]," "[t]his dialectic" between Sufism and rationalism, the juxtaposition of "the mystical and the material" (214-16), and later in the book's conclusion "the unresolved and unresolvable tensions between the cultures of *din* and *devlet*" (251) – which all suggest the idea of coexistence (and the conflicts, contacts, and contradictions therein) between the poles of *din* and *devlet*.

[58] From "A Selection from Interviews on The New Life" in Maureen Freely's English version of Other Colors. This piece appears in the Turkish version Öteki Renkler and is originally published in various newspapers and magazines. Göknar quotes a passage from this piece which includes this sentence. He translates it in slightly different wordings as such: "Perhaps my books are formed in the struggle and conflicts between these two centers" (Pamuk 1999, 152 translated in Göknar 2013, 214).

[59] To a certain extent, I think these discontents are relevant to what Pamuk says in response to Mirze's question in the PMLA interview:

> Mirze: Does one need to be dissatisfied to be a writer, about life, about parents, about country, about neighbors, about money?
> Pamuk: Of course, no one is satisfied anyway, but then most of the time what is interesting is how we represent our dissatisfaction first to ourselves, then how we understand it, how we elaborate it, analyze it. I think everyone is dissatisfied, even the happiest person, but then thinking is explaining our dissatisfaction, first to ourselves, then to our culture, to the people who are with us. Of course, I am dissatisfied, but then I am happy with my dissatisfaction. (Mirze 2008, 180)

[60] In Freely's translation, the colonel says, "We never arrived but we never stopped moving" (Pamuk 2006, 389). However, in Gün's translation, the equivalent sentence is "We never reached the destination but kept moving" (Pamuk 1994, 338). Yet, readers should perceive the irony that even though this "destination" seems to be taken for granted by Galip and the retired colonel, it remains unclear what exactly it is. In other words, we can as well suggest that the "destination," albeit being articulated, is an empty signifier in this context.

It may be a good idea to take a look at Munevver Andac's French translation of the novel Le livre noir (Pamuk 1995) for a quick comparison. In the equivalent passage, the French version reads: "Nous n'arrivions nulle part et nous continuions à marcher" (1995, 605). The inference of nowhere ("nulle part") corresponds to the absence of any clear sense of destination.

[61] For Göknar, the juxtaposition of *din* and *devlet* in Pamuk's novel bears an intentionally symmetrical aesthetics:

> The Black Book plays with the familiar idea that sacred books, like the Qur'an [Koran] or the Bible, contain mysteries that must be interpreted. In provoking the need for interpretation, the novel suggests, they are not unlike detective fiction, or maps of cities. All provide clues that will bring the diligent reader closer to a desired goal – the presence of Allah, the solution to a mystery, the end of a journey. (2013, 221)

From this, Göknar concludes that this "parallel between religious and fictional stories" results in a double blasphemy in Pamuk's national readership: "both sites of secular authority (*devlet*) as well as sites of religious authority (*din*) would consider such a parallel blasphemous" (221). He insists that it is not so much the transgression of religion or secularism but the potential transformation of Turkishness via "the articulation of a secular-sacred space" that irritate both sites of authorities.

[62] This again points to the irony that one can only become himself after imitating the other.

[63] For comparison, I quote below the equivalent passage from both Gün's and Freely's versions of The Black Book. Gün's version:

> Galip had read Rüya's name for the first time on one of the postcards that Grandma stuck into the frame of the mirror on the buffet where the liqueur sets were kept. It hadn't surprised him that Rüya meant "dream"; but later, when they began figuring out the secondary meanings of names, they were astonished to find in a dictionary of Ottoman Turkish that Galip meant "victor" and Jelal "fury." But that Rüya meant "dream" was so commonplace, it wasn't surprising in the least. What was uncommon was the way Rüya's baby and childhood pictures were placed among the row of images which went around the large mirror like a second frame (and which angered Grandpa from time to time) of churches, oceans, towers, ships, mosques, deserts, pyramids, hotels, parts, and animals. (Pamuk 1994, 9-10)

Freely's version:

> Grandmother displayed Uncle Melih's postcards along the edges of the enormous mirror in the buffet where she kept the liqueurs; there were so many that they seemed to form a second frame. It was in one of these postcards that Galip first read Rüya's name. Among the views of churches, bridges, seascapes, towers, ships, mosques, deserts, pyramids, hotels, parks, and animals that Grandfather so resented were snapshots of Rüya as an infant and a young child. (Pamuk 2006, 11)

As Türkkan notes, "The announcement of the Swedish Academy cited Pamuk as a writer who in the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city has found symbols for the clash and interweaving of cultures" (168).

I decide to dedicate the last footnote to an instance dealing with the difference between the original and the English translation of Pamuk's memoir, Istanbul. In his essay "The Soul of a City: *Hüzün*, *Keyif*, Longing" (2010), Engin F. Işın proposes that the irresolvable dilemmas by which this *hüzün* is beset "also inhabit Pamuk's paradoxical approach to the word, if not Istanbul" (41). In his reading of Pamuk's memoir, Işın considers that Pamuk "introduced his non-Turkish readers to the Turkish word *hüzün*" (35). As a native Turkish reader, he offers a peculiar reading of the book, with reference to his inconsistent interpretations of the book in original Turkish and of Maureen Freely's translation: "What Istanbul: Memories and the City [the English translation] made me aware of to an extent that İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir [the Turkish original] did not was that the former was about reorienting Istanbul for outsiders" (36). According to Işın, the idea of "*hüzün*" is presented with European interpretations, whereas Pamuk contradictorily insists that it has Sufi and Islamic origins. He concludes, "Pamuk embodies these paradoxes himself by, on the one hand, being drawn to European melancholic literature and, on the other, desperately trying to discover an authentic or indigenous mood of the city" (41).
However, without dwelling upon this paradox, Işın moves on and offers an alternative mood – in a term in Turkish, with an Arabic root, similarly untranslatable – which, he suggests, better and more appropriately "defines Istanbul's soul": "*keyif*, or more precisely *şehrin keyfi* (enjoyment of the city)" (36). Noting the similarity between *keyif* and Lacanian *jouissance*, he briefly summarises his understanding of *keyif* as "a suspension in the present without the past and future or even despite them or perhaps even against them" (44). He claims that *keyif* is universal as "[a]nyone can experience that mood when one affirms with no past or future but only the present" (45). Işın, nevertheless, admits that *keyif* could originate in the Orientalist gaze. He quotes Richard Burton's elaboration on the notion of *Kayf* – "No wonder that '*Kayf*' is a word untranslatable in our mother tongue" (Işın 43) – which Edward Said remarks in Orientalism as an example of Orientalist viewpoint:

> generalizations about the Oriental [...] are the result of knowledge acquired about the Orient by living there, actually seeing it firsthand, truly trying to see Oriental life from the viewpoint of a person immersed in it. Yet what is never far from the surface of Burton's prose is another sense it radiates, a sense of assertion and domination over all the complexities of Oriental life. (Said 1979, 196 quoted in Işın 43)

Işın attempts to thicken and reorient the notion by noting its difference from bizarre *jouissance* as "a mood of defiance": "What it defies is the conditions that are supposed to determine one's fate. With *keyif* one plays with fate" (44). The problem in reading the city through Işın's model of *keyif* is, however, not that it is unable to escape the Orientalist gaze, but that it so conveniently provides a shortcut to escape any fixed viewpoint. Işın notes a particular moment in Pamuk's book when the mood *keyif* is indeed identified as an "Eastern fantasy" without being named as such (Işın 46). It is the moment when Pamuk mentions that Gérard de Nerval "spoke of being greatly refreshed by the city's colors, its street life, its violence, and its rituals; he reported hearing women laughing in its cemeteries" (Pamuk 2005, 103 quoted in Işın 46). Işın suggests that Pamuk is "surprised, if not perturbed, at the sight of *keyif*" in Nerval's description (Işın 46), as these lines follow in his memoir: "Perhaps it is because he visited Istanbul before the city went into mourning, when the Ottoman Empire was still in its glory, or perhaps it was his need to escape his own melancholy that inspired him to decorate the many pages of Voyage en Orient with bright fantasies" (Pamuk 2005, 103 quoted in Işın 46). Işın considers this "an astonishingly telling moment" which well illustrates how "[t]he secret of the creative energies of the city lies not only in its European outsiders [...] but also in its strangers" (46). However,

for Pamuk, Nerval's city view remains obscure and fantasised partly due to Nerval's insensitivity of the gradual decline of the city's glory and partly due to his deliberate detachment both from himself and from the world: Istanbul merely served as an escapist outlet. The mood of *keyif* in Istanbul functions in a very similar way as fascination for the perfect flâneur: it seduces the flâneur into escaping from the troubling paradox that has been rooted in the city, which Işın dismisses in favour of defiant civic enjoyment that he labeled as *keyif*.

Bibliography

2046. 2004. Dir. Wong Kar-wai. Perf. Tony Leung Chiu-wai, Ziyi Zhang, and Faye Wong. Paradis Film.

Abbas, Ackbar. 2004. "Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics." Between Home and World: a reader in Hong Kong cinema. Eds. Cheung, M. K. Esther and Chu Yiu-Wai. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China). 273-96.

--. 1997. Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Adak, Hülya. 2008. "Cluster on Turkey." PMLA 123.1: 20-6.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2003. Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Rodney Livingstone and others. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

--. 1987. Negative Dialectics. Trans. E.B. Ashton. New York: Continuum.

--. 1981. Prism. Trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber. Cambridge, MA: MIT.

--. 1978. Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life. Trans. E. F. N. Jephcott. London and New York: Verso.

--. 1951. Minima moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Adorno, Theodor W. and Walter Benjamin. 1999. The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940. Ed. Henri Lonitz. Trans. Nicholas Walker. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Afridi, Mehnaz M. and David M. Buyze, eds. 2012. Global Perspectives of Orhan Pamuk: Existentialism and Politics. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Agamben, Giorgio. 2005. State of Expectation. Trans. Kevin Attell. Chicago: U of Chicago Press.

--. 1999. Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. New York: Zone Books.

--. 1998. Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Trans. Daniel Heller Rozzen. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Aguo [阿果]. 1984. "Yuedu Biji Sanze" [閱讀筆記三則] ("Three Pieces of Reading Notes"). Suyeh Literatures [素葉文學] 24-25: 34-6.

Almond, Ian. 2008. "Terrible Turks, Bedouin Poets, and Prussian Prophets: The Shifting Place of Islam in Herder's Thought." PMLA 123.1: 57-75.

--. 2007. The New Orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard. London and New York: I. B. Tauris.

--. 2003. "Islam, Melancholy, and Sad, Concrete Minarets: The Futility of Narratives in Orhan Pamuk's The Black Book." New Literary History 34.1: 75-90.

Amster, Randall. 2004. Street People and the Contested Realms of Public Space. New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing.

Andrews, Walter G. 2000. "The Black Book and Black Boxes: Orhan Pamuk's Kara Kitap." Edebiyât 11: 105-29.

Arendt, Hannah. 1990. (1963). On Revolution. London: Penguin.

--. 1978. Introduction. Illuminations. By Walter Benjamin. New York: Schocken Books. 1-55.

Arrighi, Giovanni. 1994. The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Originals of our Times. London: Verso.

Atwood, Margaret. 2011. Introduction. Snow. By Orhan Pamuk. New York, London, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf. vii-xi.

--. 1985. The Handmaid's Tale. Toronto: McClelland-Bantam.

Auster, Paul. 1990. The New York Trilogy. New York and London, Penguin.

Balzac, Honoré. 1991. Père Goriot. Trans. A.J. Krailsheimer. Oxford: Oxford Univresity Press.

--. 1837. Œuvres de H. de Balzac. Bruxelles: Meline, Cans et compagnie.

Barthes, Roland. 1978. Image, Music Text. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Baudelaire, Charles. 1996. (1857). Les Fleurs du Mal. Paris: Gallimard.

--. 1995. The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays. Trans. Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon Press.

--. 1971. "Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Works (1852)." Seven Tales. Trans. W. T. Bandy. New York: Schocken Books. 11-51.

--. 1970. (1869). Paris Spleen. Trans. Louise Varèse. New York: New Directions.

--. 1956. The Mirror of Art. Trans. Jonathan Mayne. New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

--. 1943. (1863). <u>Constantin Guys: Le peintre de la vie moderne</u>. Laupen Berne, Switzerland: Le Société Polygraphique.

Beckett, Samuel. 1958. <u>Endgame, a play in one act, followed by Act without words, a mime for one player</u>. New York: Grove Press.

--. 1954. <u>Waiting for Godot: tradicomedy in 2 acts.</u> New York: Grove Press.

Beneventi, Domenic. 2005. "Lost in the City: The Montreal Novels of Régine Robin and Robert Majzels." <u>Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities</u>. Eds. Justin D. Edwards and Douglas Ivison. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press. 104-21.

Benjamin, Walter. 2009. <u>One-way Street and Other Writings</u>. Trans. J.A. Underwood. London, New York, Toronto: Penguin Books.

--. 2006. <u>The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire</u>. Trans. Howard Eiland, Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingston, and Harry Zohn. Ed. Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

--. 2003. <u>Selected Writings Volume 4 1939-1940</u>. Trans. Edmund Jephcott and Others. Eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

--. 2002. <u>Selected Writings Volume 3 1935-1938</u>. Trans. Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and Others. Eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

--. 1999a. <u>The Arcades Project</u>. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

--. 1999b. <u>Selected Writings Volume 2 1927-1934</u>. Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Others. Eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

--. 1998. <u>The Origin of German Tragic Drama</u>. Trans. John Osborne. London and New York, Verso.

--. 1996. <u>Selected Writings Volume 1 1913-1926</u>. Eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

--. 1983. "N [Re the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]." Trans. Leigh Hafrey and Richard Sieburth. <u>Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History</u>. Ed. Gary Smith. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 43-83.

--. 1978. <u>Illuminations</u>. Trans. Harry Zohn. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books.

--. 1973. <u>Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism</u>. Trans. Harry Zohn. London: Verso.

Berman, Marshall. 1988. <u>All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity</u>. New York: Penguin.

Bernstein, Charles. 1992. "Optimism and Critical Excess (Process)." <u>A Poetics</u>. Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press. 150-78.

Blanchard, Marc Eli. 1985. <u>In Search of the City: Engels, Baudelaire, Rimbaud</u>. Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri & Co.

Blanchot, Maurice. 1999. <u>The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction & Literary Essays</u>. Trans. Lydia Davis, Paul Auster, Robert Lamberton. Eds. Maurice Blanchot and George Quasha. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill/Barrytown.

--. 1992. <u>The Step Not Beyond</u>. Trans. Lycette Nelson. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

--. 1978. <u>Death Sentence</u>. Trans. Lydia Davis. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press.

Booth, Stephen. 1983. <u>King Lear, Macbeth, Indefinition, and Tragedy</u>. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Borges, Jorge Luis. 1999. <u>The Total Library: Non Fiction 1922-1986</u>. Trans. Esther Allan, Suzanne Jill Levine and Eliot Weinberger. Ed. Eliot Weinberger. London, New York, Toronto: Penguin Books.

--. 1964. <u>Other Inquisitions 1937-1952</u>. Trans. Ruth L.C. Simms. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

--. 1962. <u>Labyrinths: Selected Stories & Other Writings</u>. Trans. and Ed. Donald A. Yates. James E. Irby. New York: New Directions.

Brecht, Bertolt. 2000. (1976). <u>The Caucasian Chalk Circle</u>. Trans. James and Tania Stern with W. H. Auden. London: Methuen Publishing Ltd.

--. 1995. (1988). <u>Mother Courage and her Children</u>. Trans. John Willett. London: Methuen Publishing Ltd.

Buck-Morss, Susan. 2006. "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering." <u>Walter Benjamin and *The Arcades Project*</u>. Ed. Beatrice Hanssen. London and New York: Continuum. 33-65.

Butler, Samuel. 1970. <u>Erewhon</u>. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Byer, Robert H. 1986. "Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd.'" Ideology and Classic American Literature. Eds. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 221-46.

Calvino, Italo. 2009. The Complete Cosmicomics. Trans. Martin McLaughlin, Tim Parks, and William Weaver. London and New York: Penguin Books.

--. 1988. Six Memos for the Next Millennium. Trans. Patrick Creagh. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

--. 1986. The Uses of Literature. Trans. William Weaver. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Company.

--. 1985. Mr. Palomar. Trans. William Weaver. Orlando, Austin, New York, San Diego, Toronto, London: Harcourt Inc.

--. 1981. If on a Winter's Night a Traveler. Trans. William Weaver. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

--. 1980. Italian Folktales. Trans .George Martin. New York: Pantheon Books.

--. 1979. The Castle of Crossed Destinies. Trans. William Weaver. New York and Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

--. 1974. Invisible Cities. Trans. William Weaver. San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

--. 1972. Le città invisibili. Torino: Einaudi.

Cameron, Sharon. 2007. Impersonality: 7 essays. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Camus, Albert. 1975. The Myth of Sisyphus. London: Penguin Books.

Carroll, Lewis. 1998. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Through the Looking-Glass. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

--. 1895. "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles." Mind 4.14: 278-80.

Chan, Kit-yee [陳潔儀]. 1998. Yuedu "Feituzhen": Lun XiXi de Xiaoshuo Xushi [閱讀「肥土鎮」—論西西的小說敘事]. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China).

Chan, Natalia Sui-hung [洛楓]. 2001. City on the Edge of Time: Hong Kong Culture and the 1997 Issue. PhD Dissertation. San Diego, CA: University of California in San Diego.

Chan, Po Chun [陳寶珍]. 1999. "Addendum to a Conversation." Trans. Janice Wickeri. Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices. Ed. Eva Hung. Hong Kong: Renditions. 64-91.

Chan Yin-ha [Chen, Yenxia 陳燕遐]. 2000. <u>Fanpan yu Duihua: Lun XiXi de Xiaoshuo</u> [反叛與對話：論西西的小說]. Hong Kong: South China Research Press [華南研究出版社].

Chaudhuri, Amit. 2009. Introduction. <u>One-way Street and Other Writings</u>. By Walter Benjamin. London, New York, Toronto: Penguin Books. vii-xv.

--. 2001. "The Construction of the Indian Novel in English." <u>The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature</u>. Ed. Amit Chaudhuri. London: Picador. xxiii-xxxi.

Chaudhuri, Amit, ed. 2001. <u>The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature</u>. London: Picador.

Cheung, M. K. Esther and Chu Yiu-Wai, eds. 2004. <u>Between Home and World: A Reader in Hong Kong Cinema</u>. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (China).

Chisholm, Dianne. 2005. <u>Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City</u>. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Churchill, Caryl. 1984. <u>Top Girls</u>. London: Methuen.

Collodi, Carlo. 1986. (1883). <u>The Adventures of Pinocchio: Story of a Puppet</u>. Trans. Nicolas J. Perella. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

"Concede." OED. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38071?redirectedFrom=concede#eid> (Accessed 24 June 2015).

"Concede" 1987. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Second Edition. London: Pearson.

"Concessive." 1987. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Second Edition. London: Pearson.

Conrad, Joseph. 2002. <u>Heart of Darkness and Other Tales</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Critchley, Simon. 2007. <u>Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance</u>. London and New York: Verso.

--. 2004. (1997). <u>Very Little… Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature</u>. Revised Edition. London and New York: Routledge.

Crowell, Todd. 1997, 20 June. "The Handover Dictionary: A to Z." Asiaweek. <http://www.cnn.com/ASIANOW/asiaweek/97/0620/hkdictionary.html> (Accessed 24 June 2015).

Danto, Arthur C. 1997. <u>After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History</u>. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

--. 1998. <u>The Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy and the Ends of Taste</u>. Eds. Gregg Horowitz and Tom Huhn. Amsterdam: G+B Arts International.

Davis, Mike. 2006. <u>Planet of Slums</u>. London, New York: Verso.

<u>Days of Being Wild</u> [<u>A Fei zheng chuan 阿飛正傳</u>]. 1990. Dir. Wong Kar-wai. Perf. Lesline Cheung Kwok-wing, Maggie Cheung Man-yuk, and Carina Lau Kar-ling. In-Gear Film.

De Certeau, Michel. 1984. <u>The Practice of Everyday Life</u>. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

De Saint-Exupéry, Antoine. 2000. <u>Wind, Sand and Stars</u>. Trans. William Rees. London and New York: Penguin.

--. 1959. <u>Oeuvres</u>. Paris: Gallimard.

De Sumichrast, F. C. 1901. Introduction. <u>The Works of Théophile Gautier. Volume 10</u>. By Théophile Gautier. Cambridge, MA: George D. Sproul. 4-10.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1986a. "What is a Minor Literature?" <u>Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature</u>. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 16-27.

--. 1986b. <u>Nomadology</u>. Trans. Brian Massumi. New York: Semiotext(e).

--. 1980. <u>Mille Plateaux: capitalisme et schizophrénie II</u>. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Derrida, Jacques. 2000a. <u>Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to respond</u>. Trans. Rachel Bowlby. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

--. 2000b. "Hostipitality." Trans. Barry Stocker and Forbes Morlock. <u>Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities</u> 5.3: 3-18.

--. 1999. "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida." <u>Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Continental Philosophy</u>. Eds. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley. London and New York: Routledge. 65-83.

--. 1997. <u>De l'hospitalité: Anne Dufourmantelle invite Jacques Derrida à repondre</u>. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

--. 1984. "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy." Trans. John P. Leavcy, Jr. <u>Oxford Literary Review</u> 6: 3-37.

--. 1979. "Living On." Trans. James Hulbert. <u>Deconstruction and Criticism</u>. New York: The Seabury Press. 75-176.

Desai, Anita. 1988. <u>Baumgartner in Bombay</u>. London: Heinemann.

Dickens, Charles. 1865. <u>Sketches By Boz: Illustrative of Every-Day Life and Every-Day People</u>. New ed. London.

--. 1996. <u>David Copperfield</u>. Ed. Jeremy Tambling. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Drutton, D. and M. Krausz, eds. 1981. <u>The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art</u>. Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff.

Dung Kai-cheung [董啟章]. 2012. <u>Atlas: The Archaeology of an Imaginary City</u>. New York: Columbia University Press.

--. 1997. <u>Ditu ji: Yige Xiangxiang de Chengshi de Kaoguxue</u>. [地圖集：一個想像的城市的考古學]. Taipei: Lianhe Wenxue Chubanshe Youxiangongsi [聯合文學出版社有限公司].

DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. 1985. <u>Writing Beyond the Ending</u>. Bloomington: Indian University Press.

Eagleton, Terry. 2003. <u>After Theory</u>. New York: Basic Books.

Edwards, Justin D. and Douglas Ivison, eds. 2005. <u>Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities</u>. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Erdim, Esim. 1999. <u>The "Survival" of a Literary Text: The Transformation of Images from the Sublime to the Picturesque in Güneli Gün's Translation of Orhan Pamuk's *Kara Kitap*</u>. PhD Dissertation. Kent, OH: Kent State University.

Ertürk, Nergis. 2008. "Modernity and Its Fallen Languages: Tanpınar's *Hasret*, Benjamin's Melancholy." <u>PMLA</u> 123.1: 41-56.

Feldman, Leonard C. 2004. <u>Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion</u>. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Ferguson, Priscilla Parkhurst. 1997. <u>Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City</u>. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press.

Fisher, Philip. 1999. <u>Still the New World: American Literature in a Culture of Creative Destruction</u>. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

--. 1998. <u>Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences</u>. Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press.

Frost, Corey. 1999. "Cusps: An Interview with Gail Scott." <u>Matrix</u> 54: 58-67.

Freely, Maureen. 2006. "Translator's Afterword." <u>The Black Book</u>. By Orhan Pamuk. New York: Vintage Books. 463-466.

García Márquez, Gabriel. 1970. <u>One Hundred Years of Solitude</u>. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. New York: HarperCollins.

Gautier, Théophile. 2008. <u>Constantinople</u>. Paris: Bartillat.

--. 1901. <u>The Works of Théophile Gautier. Volume 10</u>. Trans. and Ed. F. C. De Sumichrast. Cambridge, MA: George D. Sproul.

Godard, Barbara. 1990. "Becoming My Hero, Becoming Myself: Notes Towards a Feminist Theory of Reading." <u>Language in her Eye: Writing and Gender</u>. Eds. Libby Scheier, Sarah Sheard & Eleanor Wachtel. Toronto: Coach House Press. 112-122.

Godard, Barbara, ed. 1994. <u>Collaboration in the Feminine: Writings on Women and Culture from Tessera</u>. Toronto: Second Story Press.

Godard, Barbara and Pamela Callum, eds. 1997. "Passionate Ethics." <u>Resources for Feminist Research</u> 25.3/4: 1-8.

Godfrey, Lisa. 1998. "City of Forgetting by Robert Majzels." Quill and Quire. <http://www.quillandquire.com/review/city-of-forgetting/> (Accessed 24 June 2015).

Goh, Robbie B. H. and Brenda S.A. Yeoh, eds. 2003. <u>Theorising the Southeast Asian City as Text: Urban Landscapes, Cultural Documents, and Interpretative Experiences</u>. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Göknar, Erdağ. 2013. <u>Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy: The Politics of the Turkish Novel</u>. London and New York: Routledge.

--. 2012. "Secular Blasphemies: Orhan Pamuk and the Turkish Novel. <u>Novel: A Forum on Fiction</u> 45.2: 301-26.

--. 2004. <u>Between "Ottoman" and "Turk": Literary Narrative and the Transition from Empire to Republic</u>. PhD Dissertation. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Graduate School.

Göksel Aslı and Celia Kerslake. 2005. <u>Turkish: A Comprehensive Grammar</u>. London and New York: Routledge.

Göktürk, Deniz, Levent Soysal and İpek Türeli, eds. 2010. <u>Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?</u> New York: Routledge.

Goodkin, Richard E. 1984. <u>The Symbolist Home and the Tragic Home: Mallarmé and Oedipus</u>. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Gourgouris, Stathis. 2003. <u>Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era</u>. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

--. 1996. <u>Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece</u>. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Greenstein, Michael. 1989. <u>Third Solitudes: Tradition and Discontinuity in Jewish-Canadian Literature</u>. Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Hanssen, Beatrice, ed. 2006. <u>Walter Benjamin and *The Arcades Project*</u>. London and New York: Continuum.

Harel, Simon. 2013. <u>Méditations urbaines: autour de la place Émilie-Gamelin</u>. Québec: Presse de l'Université Laval.

--. 2006. <u>Braconnages identitaires: un Québec palimpseste</u>. Montréal: VLB éditeur.

Hardy, Thomas. 2006. (1895). <u>Jude the Obscure</u>. London: Penguin Classics.

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. 2003. (1850). <u>The Scarlet Letter</u>. New York and London: Penguin.

He, Furen [何福仁]. 2007. (1984). "Tonghua Xiaoshuo: Yu XiXi Tan Tonghua, 'Wan,' 'Jianguo' ji Qita" [童話小說—與西西談童話、碗、<u>煎鍋</u>及其他] ("Fairy-tale Novels: An Conversation with XiXi on Fairy Tales, 'Bowl,' 'Frying Pan' and others"). <u>Xiang Wo zheyangde yige Nüzi</u> [像我這樣的一個女子]. By XiXi. Second Edition. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店]. 189-207.

--. 1999. (1988). "<u>Wocheng</u> de yizhong Dufa" [我城的一種讀法] ("A reading of <u>My City</u>"). <u>Wocheng</u> [我城]. By XiXi [西西]. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店]. 237-59.

--. 1996. "Xiaobaixing de Gushi – Dou <u>Feizhan</u>" [小百姓的故事—讀<u>飛氈</u>] ("Little People's Story – Reading <u>Flying Carpet</u>"). <u>Reader's Choice Monthly</u> [讀書人] 17/18: 29-31.

--. 1994. "Zenyang Kaishi yige 'Shijian' Wenti: Yu XiXi Duitan" [怎樣開始一個「時間」問題—與西西對談] ("How to Start a Topic of 'Time': He Furen in conversation with XiXi"). <u>Suyeh Literatures</u> [素葉文學] 55: 24-6.

--. 1993. "Yu XiXi Tan Feixing" [與西西談飛行] ("A Conversation with XiXi on Flying"). <u>Suyeh Literatures</u> [素葉文學] 44: 17-9.

--. 1992. (1983). "Lianer zenme Shui: He XiXi Tan <u>Tutebeji</u> ji Qita" [臉兒怎麼說—和西西談圖特碑記及其他] ("How to Say One's Face"). <u>Selections</u> [西西卷]. Ed. He Furen [何福仁]. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing. 354-63.

--. 1992. (1983). "Tonghua Xiaoshuo: Yu XiXi Tan tade Zuopin ji Qita" [童話小說—與西西談她的作品及其他] ("Fairy-tale Novels: An Conversation with XiXi on her works and

others"). <u>Selections</u> [西西卷]. Ed. He Furen [何福仁]. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing. 341-53.

Hedetoft, Ulf and Mette Hjort. 2002. Introduction. <u>The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity</u>. Eds. Ulf Hedetoft and Mette Hjort. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press. vii-xxxii.

Hedetoft, Ulf and Mette Hjort, eds. 2002. <u>The Postnational Self: Belonging and Identity</u>. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Henzi, Sarah. 2011. <u>Inventing Interventions: Strategies of Reappropriation in Native American and First Nations Literatures</u>. PhD Dissertation. Montreal: Université de Montréal.

Highmore, Ben. 2005. <u>Cityscapes: Cultural Readings in the Material and Symbolic City</u>. Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hong Kong Basic Law, Article 5.

Huang Ziping [黃子平]. 1996, 22 July. "'Baike' Xianggang, 'Tonghua' Xianggang: Dou XiXi de Changpian Xiaoshuo <u>Feizhan</u>." [「百科」香港・「童話」香港—讀西西的長篇小說飛氈] ("'Encyclopaedic' Hong Kong and 'Fairy-tale' Hong Kong: Reading XiXi's Novel <u>Flying Carpet</u>"). Hong Kong: Singtao Daily [星島日報].

Hung, Eva. 1997. Introduction. <u>Marvels of a Floating City</u>. By XiXi. Hong Kong: Renditions. ix-xix.

--. 1993. "Translator's Introduction." <u>My City: A Hongkong Story</u>. By XiXi. Hong Kong: Renditions. vii-xvii.

Hung, Eva, ed. 1999. <u>Hong Kong Stories: Old Themes New Voices</u>. Hong Kong: Renditions.

Huyssen, Andreas, ed. 2008. <u>Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age</u>. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ingham, Michael. 2007. <u>Hong Kong: A Cultural and Literary History</u>. Oxford: Signal Books; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Işın, Engin F. 2010. "The Soul of a City: Hüzün, Keyif, Longing." <u>Orienting Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe?</u> Eds. Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal and İpek Türeli. New York: Routledge. 35-47.

Iyer, Pico. 2002. Afterword. <u>A Fine Balance</u>. By Rohinton Mistry. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. 805-9.

Jacobs, Jane. 1964. <u>The Death and Life of Great American Cities</u>. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.

Jameson, Fredric. 1986. "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." <u>Social Text</u> 15: 65-88.

Jennings, Michael W. 2006. Introduction. <u>The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire</u>. By Walter Benjamin. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 1-25.

Kafka, Franz. 2002. <u>Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Other Writings</u>. Ed. Helmuth Kiesel. New York and London: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Kamboureli, Smaro and Roy Miki, eds. 2007. <u>Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature</u>. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Kearney, Richard. 2003. <u>Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness</u>. London and New York: Routledge.

--. <u>On Stories</u>. 2002. London and New York: Routledge.

Kearney, Richard and Mark Dooley, eds. 1999. <u>Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Continental Philosophy</u>. London and New York: Routledge.

Kelman, David. 2005. "The Inactuality of Aura: Figural Relations in Walter Benjamin's 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire.'" <u>Actualities of Aura: Twelve Studies of Walter Benjamin</u>. Eds. Dag Petersson and Erik Steinskog. Svanesund, Sweden: NSU Press. 123-51.

Keyder, Çağlar. 1999. <u>Istanbul: Between the Global and the Local</u>. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Kleist, Heinrich von. 2010. <u>Selected Prose of Heinrich von Kleist</u>. Trans. Peter Wortsman. New York: Archipelago Books.

Koestler, Arthur. 1981. "The Three Domains of Creativity." <u>The Concept of Creativity in Science and Art</u>. Eds. D. Drutton and M. Krausz. Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff. 1-17.

Krois, John Michael, Mats Rosengren, Angela Steidele and Dirk Westerkamp, eds. 2007. <u>Embodiment in Cognition and Culture</u>. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Kukla, André. 2005. <u>Ineffability and Philosophy</u>. London: Routledge.

Kundera, Milan. 2008. (1984). <u>The Unbearable Lightness of Being</u>. Trans. Michael Henry Heim. New York: Harper Collins.

--. 2006. <u>The Curtain: An Essay in Seven Parts</u>. Trans. Linda Asher. New York, London, Toronto and Sydney: Harper Perennial.

Lang-Tian [朗天]. 2003. <u>Hou jiuqi yu Xianggang dianying</u> [後九七與香港電影] (<u>Post-1997</u> <u>and Hong Kong Cinema</u>). Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Critics Society.

Leclerc, Catherine and Sherry Simon. 2005. "Zones de contact: Nouveaux regards sur la littérature anglo-québécoise." <u>Voix et images</u>. "La litterature anglo-quebecoise." Dossier. Eds. Catherine Leclerc et Sherry Simon. 30.3: 15-29.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1991. <u>The Production of Space</u>. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell.

Lévinas, Emmanuel. 2003. <u>Humanism of the Other</u>. Urbana, Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

--. 1998. <u>Of God who comes to mind</u>. Trans. Bettina Bergo. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

--. 1981. <u>Otherwise than Being: Or, Beyond Essence</u>. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Boston: Nijhoff.

Lewis, G. L. 1967. <u>Turkish Grammar</u>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Li, Xingdao [李行道]. 1929. <u>The Circle of Chalk</u>. Trans. James Laver. London: Heinemann.

Lorde, Audre. 1984. <u>Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches</u>. Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Point.

Löwy, Michael. 2005. <u>Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History"</u>. Trans. Chris Turner. New York, Verso.

--. 2001. <u>Walter Benjamin. Avertissement d'incendie, une lecture des theses «Sur le concept d'histoire»</u>. Paris: PUF.

Lu Hsun [Luxun 魯迅]. 2003. <u>Selected Stories</u>. Trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang. New York and London: W.W" Norton & Company.

Lynn, Jane de. 1990. <u>Don Juan in the Village</u>. New York: Pantheon Books.

Lyotard, Jean-François. 1988. <u>Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event</u>. New York: Columbia University Press.

MacLennan, Hugh. 1945. <u>Two Solitudes</u>. Toronto: Macmillan.

Majzels, Robert. 2007/08 "Despair as Oppositional Practice: Writing the Minority within Quebec's English Minority." <u>Quebec Studies</u> 44: 65-9.

--. 2004. <u>Apikoros Sleuth</u>. Toronto: The Mercury Press.

--. 2000. <u>Montréal barbare</u>. Trans. Claire Dé. Montreal: Les Intouchable.

--. 1998. "This Could be What a Conversation Is – Simply the Outline of a Becoming: Robert Majzels in Conversation with Lianne Moyes." <u>Matrix</u> 52: 16-25.

--. 1997a. <u>City of Forgetting</u>. Toronto: The Mercury Press.

--. 1997b. "Homeless in Tutonaguy." <u>Resources for Feminist Research</u> 25.3/4: 50-51.

--. 1996. "Anglophones, Francophones, Barbarophones: Writing in a Broken Language." <u>Matrix</u> 49: 58-9.

--. 1994. Introduction. <u>The Moosehead Anthology: Forbidden Fiction</u>. Ed. The Montreal Fiction Collective. Montreal: DC. 6-7.

--. 1994. "From the Play <u>Cross(ing) Tutonaguy</u>." <u>The Moosehead Anthology: Forbidden Fiction</u>. Ed. The Montreal Fiction Collective. Montreal: DC. 31-7.

--. 1992. <u>Hellman's Scrapbook</u>. Dunvegan, ON: Cormorant Books.

Mantel, Hilary. 1996. "States of Emergency." <u>The New York Review of Books</u> 43.8: 4-6.

Martindale, Kathleen. 1997. <u>Un/popular Culture: Lesbian Writing After the Sex Wars</u>. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

--. 1994. "Power, Ethics and Polyvocal Feminist Theory." <u>Collaboration in the Feminine: Writings on Women and Culture from Tessera</u>. Ed. Barbara Godard. Toronto: Second Story Press. 108-19.

--. 1993. "'The Unfeminist Figure of Melancholy': Gail Scott's Heroine." <u>Woman as Artist: Papers in Honour of Marsha Hanen</u>. Eds. Christine Mason Sutherland and Beverly Matson Rasporich. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. 71-88.

McCance, Dawne. 2003. "Crossings: An Interview with Erin Moure." <u>Mosaic</u> 36.4: 1-16.

McDonogh Gary and Cindy Wong. 2005. <u>Global Hong Kong</u>. New York and London: Routledge.

McGaha, Michael. 2008. <u>Autobiographies of Orhan Pamuk</u>. Salt Lake City, UT: The University of Utah Press.

McLay, Robert. 1996. "Interview: Rohinton Mistry Talks to Robert McLay." <u>Wasafiri</u> 11.23: 16-18.

Mehrotra, Rahul. 2008. "Negotiating the Static and Knetic Cities: The Emergent Urbanism of Mumbai." <u>Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age</u>. Ed. Andreas Huyssen. Durham: Duke University Press. 205-218.

Mirze, Z. Esra. 2008. "Implementing Disform: An Interview with Orhan Pamuk." <u>PMLA</u> 123.1: 176-80.

Mistry, Rohinton. 2002a. <u>Family Matters</u>. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

--. 2002b. <u>A Fine Balance</u>. (1995). Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

--. 2001. "A Fine Balance: Interview with the Author." <<u>http://www.oprah.com/oprahsbookclub/A-Fine-Balance</u>> (Accessed 24 June 2015).

--. 2000. (1987). <u>Tales from Firozsha Baag</u>. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

--. 1991. <u>Such a Long Journey</u>. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Modena, Letizia. 2011. <u>Italo Calvino's Architecture of Lightness: The Utopian Imagination in an Age of Urban Crisis</u>. New York, NY and Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Molloy, Sylvia. 1994. <u>Signs of Borges</u>. Trans. Oscar Montero. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Morey, Peter. 2004. <u>Rohinton Mistry</u>. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

--. 2000. <u>Fictions of India: Narrative and Power</u>. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press.

Moure, Erín. 2002. <u>O Cidadán</u>. Toronto: Anansi.

--. 1990. "Poetry, Memory and the Polis." <u>Language in her Eye: Writing and Gender</u>. Eds. Libby Scheier, Sarah Sheard & Eleanor Wachtel. Toronto: Coach House Press. 201-8.

Moyes, Lianne. 2008. "Homelessness, Cosmopolitanism and Citizenship: Robert Majzels' <u>City of Forgetting</u>." <u>Canadian Studies</u> 64: 123-38.

--. 2007. "Acts of Citizenship: Erin Mouré's <u>O Cidadán</u> and the Limits of Worldliness." <u>Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature</u>. Eds. Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 111-28.

--. 2004. "Unexpected Adjacencies: Robert Majzels's <u>City of Forgetting</u>." <u>Adjacencies: Minority Writing in Canada</u>. Eds. Lainne Moyes, Licia Canton and Domenic A. Beneventi. Toronto, Buffalo, Chicago, Lancaster: Guernica. 168-89.

Moyes, Lianne, ed. 2002. <u>Gail Scott: Essays on Her Works</u>. Toronto: Guernica.

Moyes, Lianne, Licia Canton and Domenic A. Beneventi, eds. 2004. <u>Adjacencies: Minority Writing in Canada</u>. Toronto, Buffalo, Chicago, Lancaster: Guernica.

Murakami, Haruki. 2003. <u>Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World</u>. Trans. Alfred Birnbaum. London: Vintage.

Munt, Sally R. 1998. <u>Heroic Desire: Lesbian Identity and Cultural Space</u>. New York: New York University Press.

--. 1995. "The Lesbian Flâneur." <u>Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities</u>. Eds. David Bell and Gill Valentine. New York: Rotledge.

--. 1988. "The Investigators: Lesbian Crime Fiction." <u>Sweet Dreams: Sexuality Gender and Popular Fiction</u>. Ed. Susannah Radstone. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Musil, Robert. 1954. <u>The Man Without Qualities</u>. Volume 1. Trans. E. Wilkins and E. Kaiser. London: Martin Secker & Warburg.

Naipaul, V. S. 1987. <u>The Enigma of Arrival: a Novel in Five Sections</u>. London: Penguin.

Nestle, Joan. 1988. <u>A Restricted Country</u>. London: Sheba Feminist Publishers.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 2003. <u>The Birth of Tragedy</u>. Trans. Shaun Whiteside. New York: Penguins.

--. 1993. <u>Thus Spake Zarathustra</u>. Trans. Thomas Common. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.

--. 1989. (1967). <u>On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo</u>. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintages.

--. 1983. <u>Untimely Meditations</u>. Trans. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

--. 1962. <u>Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks</u>. Trans. Marianne Cowan. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing.

Orwell, George. 1949. <u>Nineteen Eighty-four</u>. New York: Harcourt.

Pamuk, Orhan. 2011 (2004). <u>Snow</u>. Trans. Maureen Freely. New York, London, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf.

--. 2010. <u>The Naïve and the Sentimental Novelist: Understanding What Happens When We Write and Read Novels</u>. Trans. Nazim Dikbaş. New York: Vintage Books.

--. 2009. <u>The Museum of Innocence</u>. Trans. Maureen Freely. London: Faber and Faber.

--. 2008. <u>Other Colors: Essays and a Story</u>. Trans. Maureen Freely. Toronto: Vintage Canada.

--. 2007. <u>Istanbul: Souvenirs d'une ville</u>. Trans. Savas Demirel, Valérie Gay-Aksoy, and Jean-François Pérouse. Paris: Gallimard.

--. 2006. <u>The Black Book</u>. Trans. Maureen Freely. New York: Vintage Books.

--. 2005. <u>Istanbul: Memories and the City</u>. Trans. Maureen Freely. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

--. 2003. <u>İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir</u>. Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları.

--. 2001. <u>My Name is Red</u>. Trans. Erdağ M. Göknar. New York: Vintage Books.

--. 1995. <u>Le livre noir</u>. Trans. Munevver Andac. Paris: Gallimard.

--. 1994. <u>The Black Book</u>. Trans. Güneli Gün. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company.

--. 1990a. <u>The White Castle</u>. Trans. Victoria Victoria Holbrook. Manchester: Carcanet.

--. 1990b. <u>Kara Kitap</u>. Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

Parla, Jale. 2008. "The Wounded Tongue: Turkey's Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel." <u>PMLA</u> 123.1: 27-40.

--. 1979. "The Divided Self of the Eastern Quest." <u>Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Dergisi: Hümaniter Bilimler</u> 7: 201-13.

Patke, Rajeev S. 2003. "Benjamin in Bombay? An Asian Extrapolation." <u>Theorizing the Southeast Asian City as Text: Urban Landscapes, Cultural Documents, and Interpretative Experiences</u>. Eds. Robbie B. H. Goh and Brenda S.A. Yeoh. Singapore: Singapore University Press. 191-203.

--. 2000. "Benjamin's <u>Arcades Project</u> and the Postcolonial City." <u>Diacritics</u> 30.4: 3-14.

Plato. 1974. <u>Republic</u>. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Poe, Edgar Alan. 1975. <u>The Complete Tales and Poems</u>. New York and Toronto: Vintages.

--. 1971. <u>Seven Tales</u>. Ed. W. T. Bandy. Trans. Charles Baudelaire. New York: Schocken Books.

Pratt, Mary Louise. 1991. "Art of the Contact Zone." <u>Profession</u> 91: 33-40.

Quartermain, Meredith. 2012. "How Fiction Works: Gail Scott's <u>Heroine</u> and <u>The Obituary</u>." <u>Open Letter</u> 14.9: 112-27.

Rabkin, Eric S. 2009. "Reading Time in Graphic Narrative." <u>Teaching the Graphic Novel</u>. Ed. Stephen E. Tabachnick. New York: The Modern Language Association of America. 36-43.

--. 1981. "Spatial Form and Plot." <u>Spatial Form in Narrative</u>. Ed. Jeffrey R. Smitthen and Ann Daghistany. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 79-99.

Rachman, Stephen. 1997. "Reading Cities: Devotional Seeing in the Nineteenth Century." American Literary History 9.4: 653-75.

Richards, Page. 2013. "Ambiguities of Biography: Introducing Rita Dove's Lyric Life Writing." Axon: Creative Explorations 3.1. <http://axonjournal.com.au/issue-4/ambiguities-biography> (Accessed 24 June 2015).

--. 2009. Distancing English: A Chapter in the History of the Inexpressible. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press.

Rifkin, Adrian. 1994. "Travel for Men: From Claude Lévi-Strauss to the Sailor Hans." Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement. Eds. George Robertson et al. London and New York: Routledge. 216-24.

--. 1993. Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure 1900-40. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Rilke, Rainer Maria. 2004. (1934). Letters to a Young Poet. Trans. M.D. Herter Norton. New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.

Roberts, Gillian. 2011. Prizing Literature: The Celebration and Circulation of National Culture. Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Rouge [Yanzhi Kou 胭脂扣]. 1988. Dir. Stanley Kwan. Perf. Anita Mui Yim-fong, Leslie Cheung Kwok-wing, Alex Man Chi-leung. Golden Harvest and Golden Way Films.

Ruskin, John. 1907. The Seven Lamps of Architecture. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

Said Edward W. 2000. Reflections on Exile and Other Essays. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

--. 1979. Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books.

Saramago, José. 1997. Blindness. Trans. Giovanni Pontiero. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1984. Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology. Trans. Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Washington Square Press.

Sassen, Saskia. 2006. Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages. Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press.

Scarry, Elaine. 1985. The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World. New York: Oxford University Press.

Scheier, Libby, Sarah Sheard & Eleanor Wachtel, eds. 1990. Language in her Eye: Writing and Gender. Toronto: Coach House Press.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. 1980. <u>The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the 19th Century</u>. Trans. A. Hollo. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Schulman, Sarah. 1986. <u>Girls, Visions and Everything</u>. Seattle: The Seal Press.

Schumpeter, J.A. 1943. <u>Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy</u>. London: Unwin University Books.

Schwartzwald, Robert. 2001. "Passages/Home: Paris as Crossroads." <u>L'esprit créateur</u> XLI.3: 172-90.

Scott, Gail. 2010. <u>The Obituary</u>. Toronto: Coach House Books.

--. 2002. <u>Spare Parts Plus Two</u>. Toronto: Coach House Books.

--. 1999. <u>My Paris</u>. Toronto: Mercury Press.

--. 1998/99. "Miroirs inconstants." <u>Quebec Studies</u> 26: 23-25.

--. 1998. "My Montréal: Notes of an Anglo-Québécois Writer." <u>Brick</u> 59: 4-9.

--. 1993. <u>Main Bride: Against Ochre Pediment and Aztec Sky</u>. Toronto: Coach House Books.

--. 1989. <u>Spaces Like Stairs: Essays</u>. Toronto: Women's Press.

--. 1987. <u>Heroine</u>. Toronto: Coach House Press.

Scott, Gail, Lianne Moyes and Corey Frost. 2002. "In Conversation." <u>Gail Scott: Essays on Her Work</u>. Ed. Lianne Moyes. Toronto: Guernica. 208-29.

Segel, Harold B. 1995. <u>Pinocchio's Progeny: Puppets, Marionettes, Automatons and Robots in Modernist and Avant-garde Drama</u>. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Shakespeare, William. 1998. <u>Macbeth</u>. Ed. Nicholas Brooke. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

--. 1997. <u>King Lear</u>. Ed. R.A. Foakes. London: Thomson Learning (The Arden Shakespeare).

Shklovsky, Victor. 1965. "Art as Technique." In <u>Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays</u>. Eds. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press. 3-24.

Simon, Sherry. 2013. Introduction. <u>In Translation: Honouring Sheila Fischman</u>. Ed. Sherry Simon. Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press. ix-xx.

--. 2012. <u>Cities of Translation: Intersections of Language and Memory</u>. London and New York: Routledge.

--. 2006. <u>Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City</u>. Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Simon, Sherry, ed. 2013. <u>In Translation: Honouring Seila Fischman</u>. Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Sino-British Joint Declaration. 1984.

Smitthen, Jeffrey R. and Ann Daghistany, eds. 1981. <u>Spatial Form in Narrative</u>. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Smith, Gary, ed. 1983. <u>Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History</u>. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Zadie. 2009. "Speaking in Tongues." <u>The New York Review of Books</u> 56.3: 41-44.

Soja, Edward. 1989. <u>Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory</u>. London: Verso.

Soong, Stephen C. [宋淇]. 1996. (1986). "Building a House: Introducing XiXi." <u>A Girl Like Me and Other Stories</u>. Enlarged Edition. Trans. Kwok-kan Tam. Hong Kong: Renditions. 127-34.

Sorensen, Eli Park. 2010. <u>Postcolonial Studies and the Literary: Theory, Interpretation, and the Novel</u>. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Stein, Gertrude. 1984. <u>Picasso</u>. Minelola, NY: Dover Publications.

Steiner, George. 1976. <u>Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution</u>. New York: Atheneum.

Strindberg, August. 1913. <u>The Inferno</u>. Trans. Claud Field. New York and London The Knickerbocker Press.

Suleiman, Susan Rubin. 1998. Introduction. <u>Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travellers, Outsiders, Backward Glances</u>. Ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 1-5.

Suleiman, Susan Rubin, ed. 1998. <u>Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travellers, Outsiders, Backward Glances</u>. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Sutherland, Christine Mason and Beverly Matson Rasporich, eds. 1993. <u>Woman as Artist: Papers in Honour of Marsha Hanen</u>. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

Swift, Jonathan. 1996. <u>Gulliver's Travels</u>. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.

Tambling, Jeremy. 2010. <u>Dante in Purgatory: States of Affect</u>. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols.

--. 2001. <u>Becoming Posthumous: Life and Death in Literary and Cultural Studies</u>. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1992. Multiculturalism and 'the Politics of Recognition': An essay by Charles Taylor. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

--. 1989. Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tester, Keith. 1994. Introduction. The Flâneur. Ed. Keith Tester. London and New York: Routledge. 1-21.

Tester, Keith, ed. 1994. The Flâneur. London and New York: Routledge.

Tiedemann, Rolf. 2003. "Introduction: 'Not the First Philosophy, but a Last One': Notes on Adorno's Thought." Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. xi-xxvii.

Tolstoy, Leo. 1998. Anna Karenina. Trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Türkkan, Sevinç. 2012. "Orhan Pamuk's Kara Kitap [The Black Book]: A Double Life in English." Global Perspectives of Orhan Pamuk: Existentialism and Politics. Eds. Mehnaz M. Afridi and David M. Buyze. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 159-76.

Underhill, Robert. 1976. Turkish Grammar. Cambridge, MA and London, England: The MIT Press.

Vargas Llosa, Mario. 1990. (1978). Captain Pantoja and the Special Service. Trans. Gregory Kolovakos and Ronald Christ. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

--. 1986. (1969). The Green House. Trans. Gregory Rabassa. London: Picador.

Virilio, Paul. 1991. The Aesthetics of Disappearance. New York: Semiotext(e).

Weber, Max. 1948. From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Eds. H. H. Gerth and G. Wright Mills. New York and London: Routledge.

Welsch, Roger L. 1993. "Of Light Bulbs and Shaggy Dogs." Natural History 102.2: 20-5.

Wenzel, Siegfried. 1967. The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Westerkamp, Dirk. 2007. "Laughter, Catharsis, and the Patristic Conception of Embodied Logos." Embodiment in Cognition and Culture. Eds. John Michael Krois, Mats Rosengren, Angela Steidele and Dirk Westerkamp. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 221-42.

White, Edmund. 2001. The Flâneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Whitman, Walt. 1982. <u>Walt Whitman Complete Poetry and Collected Prose</u>. New York: Library of America.

Williams, Raymond. 1973. <u>The Country and the City</u>. London: Chatto and Windus.

Wilson, Elizabeth. 1992. "The Invisible Flâneur." <u>New Left Review</u> 191: 90-110.

--. 1991. <u>The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women</u>. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press.

Wolff, Jane. 1990. "The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity." <u>Feminine Sentences: Essays on Women and Culture</u>. Barkeley, CA: University of California Press.

XiXi [西西]. 2007. (1984). <u>Xiang Wo zheyangde yige Nüzi</u> [像我這樣的一個女子]. Second Edition. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 2006. <u>Baifa E-E ji Qita</u> [白髮阿娥及其他] (<u>White-haired Old Ma and Others</u>). Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 2000. <u>Flying Carpet: A Tale of Fertillia</u>. Trans. Diana Yue. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

--. 1999. <u>Wocheng</u> [我城]. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 1997a. <u>Marvels of a Floating City</u>. Ed. Eva Hung. Hong Kong: Renditions.

--. 1997b. <u>Une fille comme moi</u>. Trans. Véronique Woillez. Saint-Étienne, France: Éditions de l'aube.

--. 1997c. "<u>Flying Carpet</u>: Excerpts." Trans. Lau Pui-ming. <u>Renditions</u> 47-8: 83-92.

--. 1996a. <u>A Girl Like Me and Other Stories</u>. Enlarged Edition. Ed. Eva Hung. Hong Kong: Renditions.

--. 1996b. <u>Feizhan</u> [飛氈]. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 1995. <u>Chuanshengtong: Yuedu Biji zhi er</u> [傳聲筒: 閱讀筆記之二]. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 1993. <u>My City: A Hongkong Story</u>. Trans. Eva Hung. Hong Kong: Renditions.

--. 1992. <u>Selections</u> [西西卷]. Ed. He Furen [何福仁]. Hong Kong: Joint Publishing.

--. 1991. "Gongshi—Dianshi pian" [共時—電視篇] ("Shared time: Television"). <u>Suyeh Literatures</u> [素葉文學] 28: 85.

--. 1988. Shoujuan [手卷]. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 1986a. <u>Huzi You Lian</u> [鬍子有臉]. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 1986b. <u>Xiang Wo zheyangde yige Duzhe</u> [像我這樣的一個讀者]. Taipei: Hong-fan Publishing Company [洪範書店].

--. 1986c. <u>A Girl Like Me and Other Stories</u>. First Edition. Ed. Eva Hung. Hong Kong: Renditions.

Yaeger, Patricia. 2008. "Editor's Column: My Name is Blue – a Map of Ottoman Baghdad." <u>PMLA</u> 123.1: 9-19.

--. 2007. "Introduction: Dreaming of Infrastructure." <u>PMLA</u> 122.1: 9-26.

Yaşin, Mehmet. 2000. "Introducing Step-Mothertongue." <u>Step-Mothertongue: From Nationalism to Multiculturalism, Literature of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey</u>. Ed. Mehmet Yaşin. London: Middlesex University Press. 1-24.

Yaşin, Mehmet, ed. 2000. <u>Step-Mothertongue: From Nationalism to Multiculturalism, Literature of Cyprus, Greece and Turkey</u>. London: Middlesex University Press.

Yue, Diana. 2000. "Translator's Introduction: Flying over Fertillia." <u>Flying Carpet: A Tale of Fertillia</u>. By XiXi. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press. vii-xii.

Zhang, Xiguo [張系國]. 1987. Preface [序]. <u>Qi shi wu nian ke huan xiao shuo xuan</u> [七十五年科幻小說選]. Ed. Zhang, Xiguo. Teipei: Zhi shi xi tong chu ban you xian gong si [知識系統出版有限公司].

Zhuang-zi [Chaung Tsu 莊子]. 1996. <u>Chuang Tsu: Basic Writings</u>. Trans. Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press.