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6 *Lahore, Lahore Aye*

Bapsi Sidhwa and Mohsin Hamid's City Fictions

Claire Chambers

Introduction

In November 2013 an Indian television advertisement for Google entitled “The Reunion” went viral on YouTube, garnering over four million hits from India, Pakistan, and the wider world in just five days (Associated Press; Google India). The advert pivots on the friendship of two boys from different religious backgrounds who were separated due to the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Now an old man living in Delhi, the Hindu boy Baldev Mehra reminisces to granddaughter Saman about his younger years flying kites and stealing sweets in what is today’s Pakistan. He recalls his best friend Yusuf especially fondly, and so, aided by the Google search engine and associated apps, Saman traces this fellow septuagenarian and brings him to Delhi to be reunited with Baldev on the latter’s birthday. The ad generated largely positive reactions on both sides of the border, although Associated Press quotes one second-generation partition migrant’s observation that it is not so easy for ordinary people to travel between India and Pakistan in the ongoing climate of hostility between the two countries.

For the purposes of this chapter about the city as a simultaneously material and textualized space, what is most noteworthy about “The Reunion” is that Yusuf lives in Lahore, the antique city from which Baldev and his family fled, never to return. Indeed, the way in which Lahore is represented in this tear-jerking commercial is suggestive of the nostalgic diasporic lens through which the city is often depicted. Its opening scene features the call to prayer from a red-brick, white-domed mosque, which is presumably intended to be the city’s most famous monument, the Badshahi Mosque, commissioned in the late seventeenth century by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1618–707). In the course of her research Saman googles Lahore’s ancient history, parks, city gates, and sweet shops—rich, culturally loaded, and recollective images of the city. In this short film as in much other cultural production, Lahore is made emblematic of partition and the shared history of these two hostile subcontinental neighbors. As Gyanendra Pandey puts it, partition’s legacy is “an extraordinary love-hate relationship.” This relationship is split between anger, hatred, and nationalism, and on the other ~~hand~~ “a considerable sense of nostalgia, frequently articulated in the view that this was a partition of siblings that should never have occurred” (Pandey 2). The viral video tacitly supports and helps to answer this chapter’s central research questions: how

are South Asian cities and regions imagined by their inhabitants—both elites and the poor—their diasporic communities, and their artists? How does partition and its aftermath continue to impinge upon such imaginings of the Punjab, the province that was most affected by the violence and population exchange that occurred after partition? In the context of this collection's concern with urban outcasts, the emphasis in the chapter is on redressing imaginings that are shaped by what Salman Rushdie terms "city eyes" (81): in other words, an inattention to the marginalized denizens of urban spaces.

This chapter also stems from awareness that the Punjab has long been an area of key importance to pre-colonial India and to postcolonial India and Pakistan. The two Punjabs experienced overlapping but distinct ~~residues of~~ British imperialism, great trauma in partition, relative economic vitality and hegemony within their nations, and centrality in the reinventions and imaginings of the postcolonial Indian and Pakistani nation-states. In an effort to enhance understandings of Punjabi literature, history, and anthropology, I examine depictions of the Pakistani Punjab, and particularly its ancient capital of Lahore, in texts by Bapsi Sidhwa and Mohsin Hamid, two important writers who are from that city and are among its most observant chroniclers. However, these writers have also spent significant proportions of their lives in the diaspora, specifically the United States. Their perspectives on the city are therefore to some extent molded by what Dennis Walder terms "post-colonial nostalgia."¹ Sidhwa, born in 1938, is from the generation affected by India's partition and the creation of Pakistan, whereas Hamid was born in 1971, the year of a second partition after a bloody war of independence, which resulted in Bangladesh seceding from Pakistan.

As well as exploring ~~their~~ representations of the city's topographical, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, the essay also examines a central but taboo locus of Lahore as depicted in the novels. The iconic red light district, Heera Mandi, stands incongruously close to ~~the~~ religious site, the Badshahi Mosque. Heera Mandi is often frequented by powerful, wealthy, and religiously orthodox clientele, but the people who depend on it for their livelihood are the kind of urban outcasts with which this chapter and the broader collection are concerned. Notwithstanding the whiff of scandal surrounding it, Heera Mandi is increasingly becoming the trendy playground of the rich, liberal and not so liberal classes who are happy to pay European prices for cappuccinos and curries overlooking the Badshahi Mosque. As Louise Brown remarks, "There's something exciting and illicit about coming here, something that makes respectable Pakistani pulses race" (8). There is a marked contrast between ~~the~~ urban, urbane upper-middle-class ~~flâneur and~~ the vulnerable ~~streetwalker, between the arts and sexuality on the one hand, and austere Deobandi Muslim conservatism on the other.~~ In her book *Heera Mandi*, Claudine Le Tournier d'Ison and her translator express this diversity in non-politically correct language:

The street resembled a court of miracles—handicapped beggars, cripples rolling in a ball on the ground, tramps in the last shreds of a shalwar

kameez, and emaciated drug addicts [...] within [the] misshapen walls looked like a junkyard for all of society's most depraved—dealers, prostitutes, pimps and of course, Shi'as, as rejected as the Christians. The only ones who dared enter here were the bourgeois in need of excitement, ready to mix with the riff-raff at the cost of their virtue, politicians who by day proudly brandished the Quran, and by night the bank notes that they showered on the dancers. (88–9)

Here Le Tournier d'Ison recognizes the almost carnivalesque intermixture in Heera Mandi of those usually considered society's dregs—sex workers and their keepers, drug users and their suppliers, many of them Shi'a (a sect increasingly despised in frantically Sunni-izing Pakistan)—alongside those at the top of the social pile: patriarchs, politicians, and the pious.

In Graham Huggan's and my essay "Reevaluating the Postcolonial City," we argue that the recent efflorescence of postcolonial urban studies research has tended to overlook rural experience and to neglect the structural asymmetries and social injustice found in what we term the "global city" (786–7). Moreover, and as the editors of this volume recognize, studies of South Asian cities have ~~particularly focused~~ on the urbanization of the city space but not necessarily on the urban poor. A great deal of research from various disciplines has been conducted in relation to Indian cities, ~~particularly~~ Bombay/Mumbai (see, ~~for example,~~ Hansen; Mehta; Prakash; and Patel and Thorner), Calcutta/Kolkata (Chaudhuri; Dutta; Gupta, Mukherjee, and Banerjee) and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Delhi (Kaul; Dalrymple; Hosagrahar). However, Pakistani urban environments have been strikingly underrepresented, with Karachi and especially Lahore receiving a small amount of scholarly attention in comparison with the vast archive on Bombay.² As such, Lahore is itself an outcast city compared to others in South Asia. ~~In an attempt,~~ as it were, to re-cast this metropole; I examine Sidhwa's work, ~~especially~~ her acclaimed partition novel *Cracking India* (1991), alongside Mohsin Hamid's three novels; for their textualized descriptions of Lahore as a postcolonial city and as the heart of the Punjab and of Pakistan more broadly. I then weave in the theoretical approaches of Fredric Jameson, Edward W. Soja, Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau and others, which allow the same geographical locations ~~to be framed~~ as a dynamic space of social and cultural contestations. My objective in doing this is ~~two-fold~~: to highlight the precariousness of the urban poor (~~particularly~~ working-class women, ~~who~~ occupy a doubly marginalized position) in the global city and its rural hinterland, ~~and~~ to draw Lahore into the twice-born fold of those highly scrutinized South Asian cities ~~such as~~ Bombay/Mumbai, Calcutta/Kolkata, and Delhi.

~~What is it about~~ Lahore ~~that~~ has ~~apparently made it~~ invisible to literary and other humanities scholars, whereas other South Asian cities, such as Delhi, Calcutta, and Mumbai, have been ~~vociferously~~ celebrated by critics? The first reason for this neglect is that Lahore is in Pakistan, a country with

a troubled and variable relationship with the West, and with its own internal problems apropos of scholarship. Ever since Zia-ul-Haq's regime, which was bankrolled by the US as part of its Cold War strategy, censorship has been at the heart of Pakistani governance. The media opened up dramatically and temporarily during Pervez Musharraf's military rule (1999–2008). But Pakistani higher education institutions, particularly their arts departments, still chafe under restrictions and a lack of funding which limit the research of the many brilliant scholars who work there. Secondly, Lahore used to be an important destination along the hippie trail (loosely mapped onto the old Silk Route). After the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and occupations of Afghanistan by the USSR and later the US, ordinary tourists could no longer enter or exit Pakistan's western gateways with ease. This means that fewer outsiders have had a chance to be inspired by the city's history and culture in the way that Indian cities have spawned their Mark Tullys, William Dalrymples, and Dominique Lapiettes. Finally, in relation to urban studies, it is Karachi that grabs the headlines, in part because its megacity status dwarfs Lahore's, with populations of approximately 9.4 and 5.2 million respectively. Karachi's higher profile is also due to its disproportionately larger population of *muhajirs* (the migrants and descendants of migrants who fled from India to Pakistan during and after partition) and attendant ethnic and political conflict, which attracts much scholarly attention (see, for example, Anjaria and McFarlane 298–337).

Yet Lahore could not matter more, given its history and hold on the South Asian imagination; its location and strategic importance as a hub connecting India and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province); and its economic productivity in the manufacturing and communications industries. As I show in this chapter, the city's close proximity to the almost impregnable Wagah border means that it is uniquely vulnerable when the two nations of India and Pakistan square up to each other. Hostility between these countries periodically combusts, for example in the nuclear standoff of the late 1990s and the crisis following the Indian parliament attacks of 2001.³ More positively, Lahore is the cultural capital of Pakistan, even if it has never been the political or administrative capital of anything larger than the Punjab province. In 1940, it was in the city's Iqbal Park that Jinnah issued the Lahore Resolution, advocating the creation of Pakistan through an inchoate plan for "autonomous national States" within independent India that would allegedly "allow the major nations separate homelands" (Jinnah 55).

Lahore has long been Pakistan's social and cultural heartland. Its landmarks provide architectural testament to the many pasts that have overlaid the city, making it a palimpsest and the space of intersecting identities, and pre-dating colonial India by centuries if not millennia. The metropolis has a vibrant arts scene that is diminished because of partition but is still clearly present. Lahore also matters because it acts as a barometer of the changes that are happening in Pakistan, many of them especially damaging to the

urban poor. Unlike Karachi with its high numbers of *muhajirs* and ethnic violence, Lahore has until recently been a relatively peaceful city. However, the last five years have witnessed a sea change in relation to terror, sectarian violence, and international machinations. I argue that Sidhwa and Hamid trace the genesis of this transformation back to the class, gender, and ethnic divisions that have always been present in the city and which were exacerbated by the creation of Pakistan.

To anyone who disagrees with the idea that Lahore is the city which acts as the most accurate microcosm of Pakistan more broadly, it is worth thinking of Anatol Lieven. In a section of his book *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, entitled “Lahore, the Historic Capital,” Lieven mistakenly writes: “Pakistan is the heart, stomach and backbone of Pakistan. Indeed, in the view of many of its inhabitants, it *is* Pakistan” (267). This tautological but revealing substitution of “Pakistan” for “Lahore” chimes with the saying Lahoris use, almost shruggingly, to emphasize their city’s distinctiveness: “*Lahore; Lahore aye*” (Lahore is Lahore). The northeastern city is the cultural heartland of the country, with a detailed recorded history going back to the tenth century CE, and a much longer oral, cultural, and communitarian presence. Its economic powerhouse status and the hold it has on the Pakistani imagination, particularly through the movies of Lollywood (the nation’s film industry, based in Lahore), have also meant large-scale migration, from the rural areas to Punjab’s capital, in order to find work.

From the dire situation of many women in Lahore (which I will explore in the later textual analysis), to the intelligence, independence, and creative power of the city’s women’s movement, the picture revealed is extremely complex. Lahore is often seen as a pleasure city,⁴ and Mohsin Hamid in particular is interested in millennial Pakistan’s voluptuary, ecstasy-taking social whirl, as well as more familiar scenes of violence and stark class divisions. His debut novel *Moth Smoke* (2000) was viewed by Anita Desai as a turning point for subcontinental literature, in that it was one of the earliest twenty-first-century novels to depart from the Indian magic realism fashionable in the 1980s and 1990s and venture into darker and generically indeterminate territory inspired by his hometown Lahore (Desai n.p.). Indeed, for many, the metropolis represents pain, exploitation, and danger. Or, as Bapsi Sidhwa puts it in her anthology, *City of Sin and Splendour: Writings on Lahore* (2005), this is at once a city of sin and splendor. Even the Lahore of the late 1970s and early 1980s, under the viciously Islamizing Zia ul-Haq regime, is portrayed in Sidhwa’s fourth novel *An American Brat* as a city of “paradoxes, where bold women of a certain class often wield as much clout as pistol-toting thugs” (192).

Tracery of Urbanization

Lahore is an unevenly developed, international urban center, which productively intersects with and is cross-fertilized by the well-irrigated rural

hinterland in this “Land of Five Rivers,” so that the city is not easily separable from its outlying countryside. On first glance, my last statement might seem to be contradicted by Hamid’s third and most recent novel *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*, in which the text’s protagonist, “you,” comes from an archetypal Punjabi village, ~~in which~~ workers genuflect to *zamindars* or feudal landlords, women carry pots on their heads, and water buffalo are milked while they chew on fodder (8–9). Yet this rural setting is not idealized. When the main character’s father surveys it, far from noticing the deliberately clichéd pastoral tropes, he instead sees “the labor by which a farmer exchanges his allocation of time in this world for an allocation of time in this world. Here, in the heady bouquet of nature’s pantry, your father sniffs mortality” (Hamid, *Filthy* 7–8). For these reasons of hardship and mortality, most of the novel’s rural dwellers long, in the words of the opening chapter’s title, to “Move to the City,” where they know wages to be high but do not realize that expenses are equally lofty. The protagonist migrates to a city which it becomes clear is Lahore (although places and people are unnamed in this novel, perhaps to lend it a universality that accords with its ironic structuring as a self-help book). During his relocation to the metropolis, the focalizer witnesses:

a passage of time that outstrips its chronological equivalent. Just as when headed into the mountains a quick shift in altitude can vault one from subtropical jungle to semi-arctic tundra, so too can a few hours on a bus from rural remoteness to urban centrality appear to span millennia. (14)

This passage suggests that even though there is only a relatively short physical distance between the forelock-tugging, pitcher-carrying, buffalo-milking villagers and the city of pollution, dual carriageways, electricity, and advertising hoardings, culturally they are as dissimilar as jungle and tundra. Despite this first impression of the book, in an interview with me, Hamid complicates such a bifurcatory picture of urban and rural Punjab:

I think the rural/urban split is blurring, because all along Pakistan’s many major roads, there’s an urbanization taking place. If you drive around the GT Road, or any other large road in Punjab, little towns and shops have grown up around it. People live along those roads, have electricity, televisions, satellite dishes, and mobile phone coverage, and they watch the cars passing through. They are traders, selling things in their shops, and paying for services. They are not like the farmers. This network cuts across all of Punjab now, so it isn’t as though there’s an urban core and then periphery, but a tracery of urbanization that penetrates the periphery.

(Chambers 182–3)

Such a sketch is filled out in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* when “the region that forms the economic hinterland to your metropolis” is described:

The car approaches the outskirts of the city, passing the disinterred earth and linear mounds of vast middle-class housing developments. Rows of electricity poles rise in various stages of completion, some bare, some bridged by taut cables, occasionally one from which wires dangle to the ground. (88–9)

This portrayal of Lahore’s outskirts dramatizes the “tracery of urbanization” which Hamid outlined in the interview. His description of the exposed soil and incomplete electricity pylons suggests that here we see an unfinished, in-between space that is neither urban nor rural, but fuzzy. This interstitial area of the suburbs is seen as having neither the danger nor promise of the city, nor the bucolic idyll and grinding poverty of the country but, as rents and demand for urban space soar ever higher, urbanization is encroaching on the suburbs too. Cropland in the outer suburbs is increasingly being sold off to developers (*Filthy* 90, 165, 219) and the narrator acknowledges the porous nature of the city’s borderlines: “[y]our city is not laid out as a single-celled organism with a wealthy nucleus surrounded by an ooze of slums. [...] Accordingly, the poor live near the rich” (22). To some extent, then, Hamid recognizes with Ian Talbot that “Punjabi society [is] overwhelmingly rural” and that “[t]raditional rural customs and values lay just beneath the veneer of urban sophistication and culture” (Talbot 13, 15).

Similarly, in Hamid’s debut novel *Moth Smoke*, we are told that Dilaram, now the madam of a brothel in Heera Mandi, was propelled to the city after having been repeatedly raped by her landlord and his relatives as a young village girl from rural Punjab, who was later sent into bonded prostitution in Lahore (50–1). Some doubt is cast over this story, however, because the protagonist Daru thinks she seems “a little too well-spoken for an uneducated village girl, sounding more like a wayward Kinnaird alumna to me” (Hamid, *Moth* 51). Whether Dilaram really was an innocent peasant girl who got caught up in human trafficking and prostitution, or she is in fact a sophisticated urbanite who attended a prestigious school like Lahore’s Kinnaird College for Women, is never resolved in the narrative.

La Whore: Gendering the City

Nonetheless, this moment from *Moth Smoke* establishes Heera Mandi as a space in which young girls from the country and city put their bodies on display, evade the cops, and are exploited by predatory pimps. Even more extensively, in *Cracking India* Sidhwa paints a vivid picture of Heera Mandi as a place where poetry and music flourishes. The area was originally built as a sanctuary for the illegitimate sons of Moghul emperors and their *tawaiifs*,

also known as nautch-girls or courtesans, who during the Raj era at least were mostly Muslim women from North India. The exploitation of women, many of them from the countryside, went hand in hand with an attempt to dress this up in glamorous ways. ~~Although~~ *ghazals*, often composed, recited and sung in red light districts such as Heera Mandi, are also a typically Muslim poetic form; the association ~~with~~ courts, courtesans and dancing girls ~~to some extent caused them to contain recurring~~, apparently un-Islamic images such as the nightingale, wine, roses, and the beloved, although these metaphors also reflect the Sufi devotee's longing for God.⁵ Sidhwa's villain Ice-candy-man uses the elevated language of *ghazals* in order to shower the kidnapped Hindu Ayah with praise, ~~particularly ironically~~ in the following instance, ~~as~~ it is he ~~that~~ has forced her into the dancing-girl profession he extols here: "She lives to dance! And I to toast her dancer's grace! | Princes pledge their lives to celebrate her celebrated face!" (259). ~~However~~, despite his most poetic efforts, ~~his~~ exploitation of Ayah is evident in her diminished figure and downcast glance. As feminists often point out, the flip side of idealization is abuse.

Heera Mandi is a central locus of Lahore's Walled City. The red light district is very near the Minar-e-Pakistan, a tower built in the 1960s to commemorate the 1940 Lahore Resolution. As mentioned, it is also adjacent to Lahore's most famous landmark, the enormous Mughal mosque, Badshahi Masjid. Other nearby Mughal sites include Anarkali Bazaar, Shalimar Gardens, and Jehangir's Mausoleum. By highlighting the diversity and history of this district, I want to suggest that Heera Mandi can be read as a microcosm of the city as a whole, and therefore of the Punjab more broadly, just as Lahore may in some ways be read as the nation in miniature. Unsurprisingly, few in Pakistan are willing to recognize the "female street" (Sidhwa, *Bride* 60) of Heera Mandi as a touchstone for the Fatherland, ~~as~~ Fouzia Saeed indicates:

Identified by various names, it represents one of the oldest flesh markets in the land, where prostitution and the performing arts are linked in a complex web of human relations. Hardly any informed citizen can plead ignorance of the residents of this area, but they are considered the least entitled to be understood by their fellow beings. (vii)

In the red light district binaries are broken down, given the contiguity of the nearby Badshahi Mosque and also given the professed religiosity of many of the area's Shi'a sex workers. Naheem Jabbar observes that "[t]he self-conscious piety of the women [in the red light district Heera Mandi] contradicts the ideas that they are so generically typical of profanity (woman *qua* profanity)" (109). The authors' representations of the heterogeneous nature of the people who congregate in the two very different areas of red light district and mosque allow them to explore the metropole/hinterland dynamic.

References to the mosque also necessitate discussion of the important and changing role of religion—the majority faith Islam and, to a lesser extent, the minority creed of Zoroastrianism to which Sidhwa and the Parsi community belong—in contributing towards post-partition Lahori identity. In an elegiac section of *An American Brat*, Sidhwa reflects on the increasing religification not only of Muslims in Pakistan, but also of the formerly tolerant Parsi community:

~~These~~ established custodians of the Zoroastrian doctrine were no less rigid and ignorant than the *fundos* in Pakistan. This mindless current of fundamentalism sweeping the world like a plague had spared no religion, not even their microscopic community of 120 thousand. (305–6)

It is useful to keep this even-handed reminder in mind, rather than accepting the widespread contemporary assumption that the rise of religious sentiment is limited to Muslims and mosques.

A sexualization of the city (La Whore) is perhaps best articulated in *The Pakistani Bride* (1983):

Lahore—the ancient whore, the handmaiden of dimly remembered Hindu kings, the courtesan of Moghul Emperors, bedecked and jeweled, savaged by marauding hordes. Healed by the caressing hands of successive lovers. A little shoddy — like an attractive but ageing concubine, ready to bestow surprising delights on those who cared to court her—proudly displaying Royal gifts. (43)

Here Sidhwa alludes to the “succeeding lovers” who have conquered Lahore, from the pre-Mughal “Hindu kings” to the “Mughal Emperors,” and implicitly from the Shivaji and Durrani Empires, the Sikh leader Ranjit Singh, and the British colonizers to the postcolonial Pakistani politicians who have ruled Lahore and West Punjab. Personifying the city as a fading but still attractive, somewhat tawdry figure, Sidhwa evokes Lahore’s loss of its multicultural identity after partition. This is also reflected in *Cracking India*: “The garden scene has depressingly altered. Muslim families who added color when scattered among the Hindus and Sikhs, now monopolize the garden, depriving it of color” (249). Elsewhere in *The Pakistani Bride*, there is a sustained passage about Heera Mandi (57–65), which contains strikingly similar motifs to those found in Sidhwa’s first novel, *The Crow Eaters* (130–8). Both depict men chewing betel leaves and proffering money; women in gaudy dress (*churidar* pyjamas, ankle-bells, and heavy makeup) going through the movements of dance in a “mechanical” fashion while accompanied by harmonium, sitar, and tabla; and Heera Mandi’s narrow streets, decrepit wooden buildings, trellises, and balconies. The recurring

characters of a middle-aged madam, young girls of varying degrees of fairness, plumpness, and innocence, and sinister pimps in each text suggest that many features of Heera Mandi *qua* space have changed little in the last hundred years.

Space in Theory and the Imagination


To discover ~~what constitutes~~ space I concentrate on one theoretical text in particular, Edward W. Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989). His claim that space has three manifestations is helpful in thinking about Lahore, and I would argue that it is borne out in the novels. Soja makes a tripartite distinction between "space *per se*, space as a contextual given, and socially-based spatiality" (79). He is interested in the way in which space is primordially given, yet is also an effect of social production and imaginative construction. Soja's ideas come out of a theoretical perspective starting from the mid-seventies onwards to aver that Western accounts of history are incomplete, due to an excessive concentration on the temporal perspective, at the expense of the spatial dimension. Michel Foucault famously indicts Western thought as a whole for its inattention to geography: "Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic" (70). He identifies a dichotomy of thinking about time and space, suggesting that since the ~~nineteenth-century~~ space has largely been ignored by philosophers, whereas time and history have been ~~accorded great attention~~. Foucault's call for greater attention to space led to what many have summarized as the "spatial turn" in the social sciences and humanities (Raju 1; Teverson and Upstone ix).

Returning to Soja, he argues that in commonsense perspective space is a given, relatively unchanging physical reality that has a profound effect on its inhabitants. This is demonstrated in Lahore's status as a frontier city, just thirty miles away from hostile Indian territory, which means it would likely be the first place of attack in any nuclear war between the two countries. Hamid is ~~especially~~ alert to the impact this has on the city's residents, and in *Moth Smoke* "if they nuke Lahore" is a frequent refrain (88, 91–2). Other sorts of violence in the city also have a leveling effect on Lahore's residents, both rich and poor, shaping their behavior and fears and limiting their movements. After his mother is killed by a stray bullet while asleep on a charpoy on the roof during a baking Punjabi summer, Daru has a recurring dream in which he "imagine[s] Lahore as a city with bullets streaking into the air" (Hamid 108). This prefigures the later standoff between Pakistan and India over nuclear tests, which is ~~especially~~ tensely felt in Lahore as the municipality on the frontline between the two:

The entire city is uneasy. Sometimes, when monsoon lightning slips a bright explosion under the clouds, there is a pause in conversations. Teacups halt, steaming, in front of extended lips. Lightning's echo

comes as thunder. And the city waits for thunder's echo, for a wall of heat that burns Lahore with the energy of a thousand summers, a million partitions, a billion atomic souls split in half.

(Hamid 211)

~~An examination of the language usage here reveals the exaggeration of "entire city" and the sense of tension and waiting followed by the nuclear sunburst of fire and light. This is reminiscent, one notices, not just of the nuclear holocausts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but of Lahore's own holocaust of partition, which is explicitly referenced in the passage.~~ Clearly even space that appears to be a stable,  entity is actually socially constructed. Although space is more likely to be a problem for urban outcasts, it can also turn against the tea-sipping middle classes, engulfing them in violence and terror.

Therefore, according to Soja, the second understanding of urban space is as a socially manipulated, changeable material that is produced as much as it produces and involves "social translation, transformation, and experience" (79–80). Both Soja and his theoretical forerunner Henri Lefebvre write compelling accounts of the ways in which city planning is intimately related to ideology and methods of social control. They also recognize that the attempts of the powerful to monopolize the social production of space are never entirely successful. The intentions of town planners are modified or subverted by the uses locals make of their space "on the ground" and city dwellers have varying degrees of agency to transform their surroundings.

We need only look at the depiction of Lahore's Lawrence Gardens (now the Bagh-e-Jinnah) and other locations in Sidhwa's *Cracking India* to see that space can be radically re-constructed by its residents. The nanny character, Ayah, who is in many ways a gendered personification of independent India (*Bharat Mata* or Mother India), meets her admirers in Lawrence Gardens on the Upper Mall near Charing Cross. Her beauty at first unites members of many different religious groups, so that they sit together in relative harmony, discussing current events and gossip under a Raj-era monument. In contrast to this statue of Queen Victoria, which is "cast in gunmetal, [...] majestic, overpowering, ugly," Ayah is described as resembling "the Hindu goddess she worships" (Sidhwa 28, 12). Everything about her is depicted as soft, attractive, and fertile. Ayah is an allegorical representation of the youthful promise of Indian Independence in comparison with the austere decay of the old British order, and in the park she subverts the colonial space around her. But later, when the group stops meeting under the symbol of the British Raj and instead starts to meet at an Indian restaurant, the group's unity disintegrates, suggesting that existing tensions between different groups are exacerbated once the common enemy has departed. As the accord between Ayah's courtiers breaks down and a more vicious struggle begins for her approval (and, by implication, for control over her body), it becomes evident that the city is splintering along ethnic lines. The different

religious groups now make it impossible for each other to meet within the same spaces.

The third way in which Soja argues that we experience space is through its construction in the imagination. This is what Fredric Jameson terms “cognitive mapping” (89), through which he shows that we all have our own mental maps of the cities in which we live. Jameson emphasizes the social, collective nature of this mental cartography, suggesting that each of us positions our subjective consciousness within “unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality” (90). These conceptions may however be “garbled” or distorted reflections of cultural biases (353). Jameson’s cognitive mapping serves as a reminder that space is as much created by the imagination as by civic leaders and planners. William Glover, the preeminent scholar of Lahore as urban space, concurs, writing, “Any city is created as much imaginatively as it is physically of bricks and mortar” (xv). Anatol Lieven dramatizes this in relation to Lahore when he writes that it “is a city of the imagination, in a way that bureaucratic Islamabad and dour, impoverished Peshawar cannot be” (268).

A disjuncture between this city of the imagination and the metropolitan world of everyday lived materialism discussed earlier is illustrated in Hamid’s second novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). The text’s protagonist, Changez, muses on the city’s Mughal history and historic textures to a skeptical and materialist American businessman: “I said I was from Lahore, the second largest city of Pakistan, ancient capital of the Punjab, home to nearly as many people as New York, layered like a sedimentary plain with the accreted history of invaders from the Aryans to the Mongols to the British. He merely nodded. Then he said, “And are you on financial aid?” (Hamid 7) ~~It is worth noting that~~ William Glover’s research accords with Changez’s imaginative view, expressed here, that Lahore is a palimpsest in which British architecture is grafted onto layers of pre-Mughal, Mughal, and Sikh history. According to Glover, there is a surprising amount of interchange between Lahore’s bustling Old City and the ~~apparently spatially quarantined Raj-era civil station~~. For example, from the year of the Indian Uprising (1857) until 1891, St. James’s Church found itself formally consecrated and housed in Anarkali’s Tomb, the last resting place of a Muslim dancing girl (19). This woman, Anarkali, is said to have been the Mughal Emperor Akbar’s courtesan, but when his son Prince Salim fell in love with her too, Akbar was so enraged that he buried Anarkali alive in a wall located within the bazaar. However, Lahore’s supremely romantic and hybrid past constantly rubs against the bathos of financial realities. These are laconically introduced by the US official in the long quotation cited above when he barks, “And are you on financial aid?” Fiscal restraints are also apparent in Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*, in which the young migrant Feroza has all her pride in her education and background in aristocratic Lahore undercut when she tries to enter New York’s Kennedy Airport and finds a “sallow, unsmiling officer” who handles her Pakistani passport with contempt, quizzing her on

her financial means and the length of time she plans to stay in the United States (Sidhwa, *Brat* 54).

There are thus barriers to the movement of even the most Mughal-prince-or-princess-like upper-class Lahori. This suggests the relevance of Michel de Certeau's theorization of "walking in the city" to an understanding of contemporary Lahore. Writing in 1980, De Certeau lyrically describes the "ordinary practitioners of the city," who are said to live "down below," and whose main *raison d'être* is ~~said to be~~ *flânerie* or walking. Interestingly, he begins his account of the ordinary walkers in the city down below from a panoramic vantage point at the top of the World Trade Centre. The post-9/11 reader may find chilling presentiment in his description of New York as "a universe that is constantly exploding" (91) and the World Trade Centre occupant as anticipating "an Icarian fall" (92). How can this not resonate with the famous passage in Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* in which Changez admits that his first reaction to the twin towers' destruction was to smile, "caught up," as he was, "in the *symbolism* of it all, the fact that someone had so visibly brought America to her knees" (73)?

~~Once~~ De Certeau descends "down below" once more, he argues that walking is "an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it" (93). Hamid and Sidhwa unsettle these assumptions, showing that walking is not an "elementary form" ~~in~~ the experience of all cities. In *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Hamid writes,

the newer districts of Lahore are poorly suited to the needs of those who must walk. In their spaciousness—with their public parks and wide, tree-lined boulevards—they enforce an ancient hierarchy that comes to us from the countryside: the superiority of the mounted man over the man on foot. But [...] in the [...] congested, maze-like heart of this city—Lahore is more democratically *urban*. Indeed, in these places it is the man with four wheels who is forced to dismount and become part of the city. (33)

Some parts of Lahore are difficult to walk in because they are spread out and lack pavements, whereas in other places, especially the Walled City areas, the class hierarchy privilege is reversed and it becomes the ~~vehicled~~ person who is at a disadvantage. This is the only instance in Hamid's representations of the divided city where the poor are sometimes privileged over the rich. By contrast to this context-specific privileging, various binaries are set up in his other novels—between the classes who possess air conditioning and their own generators in *Moth Smoke* and those with access to bottled water and those without in *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*—which are unvaryingly weighted towards the rich, ~~so the~~ Old City has a leveling effect on class distinctions. De Certeau does mention barriers

to movement when he writes of “interdictions (e.g. [...] a wall that prevents one from going further)” (98). Such barriers are ~~particularly significant~~ in postcolonial cities such as Lahore, with the Wagah border a short car ride away but the partitioned country of India almost impossible to get to for Pakistanis.⁶

From a gendered perspective, walking in the city is shown to be even more difficult in Sidhwa’s *An American Brat*, in which Feroza observes, “there were so few women, veiled or unveiled, on the streets of Lahore, that even women stared at other women, as she did, as if they were freaks” (127). This description of the self-alienation of woman indicates that going outside is a hazardous occupation for her even in one of Pakistan’s most sophisticated cities, as she encounters a cavernous gender gap on the streets. In *Cracking India*, Lenny is not only constrained in her walking in the city due to her gender, but also because of her disability. She has suffered polio and is lame, with a fallen arch in one of her feet. Ayah pushes her in a pram until well past the age for which this is seemly. Once she begins corrective surgery, Lenny worries that her foot will “emerge [...] immaculate, fault-free,” thus forcing her to compete with other children “for my share of love and other handouts” (12, 18). In the context of this story concerning Independence, and ~~especially~~ considering that the girl’s lameness is arguably an indirect legacy of British rule (16), it is hard not to read Lenny and her calipers as the infant Indian nation preparing for the difficulties (and rewards) of standing on its own two feet. As Clare Barker writes,

Echoing a problematic conflation of individual and national bodies that was apparent in nationalist discourses in this period, the text becomes a discomfiting oscillation between materialist constructions of disability as a social presence and the deployment of disability as a prosthesis standing in for colonial disablement and mutilated—partitioned—body politic. (95)

Pakistan as a whole is known to be a hard place for wheelchair users and other disabled people. As well as a lack of ramps and lifts to aid their movement (Farid n.p.), there is also a widely reported lack of cultural awareness about disability. Further impediments to De Certeau’s blithe Western analysis of “walking in the city” in Lahore include the threat of rape and kidnapping, which becomes a central issue for women during the partition so graphically depicted in *Cracking India*. Moreover, the workers of Heera Mandi are only allowed to move around in their area between 11pm and 1am because of draconian and extortive police tactics there.

Conclusion


Perhaps spatial theorists have had a tendency to overlook barriers to walking, particularly when these relate to various forms of oppression in previously

colonized countries. Just as ~~there has been a “spatial turn” in approximately the last three decades of social sciences and humanities research, especially since 9/11 there is~~ increasing interest in analyzing the postsecular city.⁷ The idea behind the postsecular turn is to take more account of religion, war, and terror’s impact on twenty-first-century cities. This is clearly very timely, especially in light of cities such as Cairo, Benghazi, Damascus, Homs, and Hama becoming sites for revolution—to varying degrees religiously inflected—in the Arab Spring/Winter of 2011 onwards. We wait eagerly to see what this new postsecular direction in scholarship will bring to the study of postcolonial, post-Arab Spring cities. In the meantime, it is hoped that this chapter has shed light on Sidhwa and Hamid’s depictions of Heera Mandi’s important place within Lahore, itself of inestimable significance to the Punjab and the Pakistani nation.

I have shown that Lahore is a highly multifaceted space, constituted by history, uneven capitalism, rural and urban continuities and discontinuities, and cultural nostalgia. Notwithstanding these noteworthy features, the city is underresearched compared with Indian conurbations (and, to a lesser degree, compared with research into Pakistan’s former capital and largest city, Karachi). As a palimpsest of various accreted histories and the nation’s artistic and cultural capital, Lahore is Pakistan’s heart (and stomach and spine, to recycle Lieven’s metaphor). However, these creative writers from the diaspora construct a complex picture of the city, ~~refuting~~ the binaries that are seductively omnipresent in representations of Lahore. Hamid is keen to dismantle conceptual borders between Lahore and its pastoral hinterland, showing how the city is invading the country in the guise of industrialization, ~~while~~ the country encroaches on the city via the figure of the erstwhile village dweller seeking a livelihood. Sidhwa adds a gendered dimension to the city in her preoccupation with sex workers in Heera Mandi across almost all of her novels to date. Turning to theory, the article suggested that social science, ~~literary~~, and postcolonial ~~theory~~ provides three broad understandings of space: as a physical reality, a socially constructed entity, and a place that is imagined through cognitive mapping and the textualizations of fiction, life-writing, and nonfiction. De Certeau’s walking in the city helps us to see ways in which the city is imagined, but also how its physical manifestations and social manipulations can thwart the imaginer’s assumptions and dreams.

Notes

1. ~~However~~, it should be noted that Hamid returned to live in Lahore in 2009, which may affect the future trajectory of his fiction.
2. The main scholarly monographs on Lahore are Glover 2007 and Suvorova 2012.
3. Both of these incidents, the nuclear race and the Indian parliament attacks, are foregrounded in Hamid’s fiction (*Moth* 88–92; *Reluctant* 121, 126–7, 143).

4. The term “pleasure city” comes from a neglected novel by Kamala Markandaya. Heera Mandi is also referred to as a “Pleasure District” in the subtitle to Louise Brown’s book *The Dancing Girls of Lahore* (2006).
5. For more on the  form, see Matthews, Shackle, and Husain 32–7.
6. This point could also be extended to Palestine and the notorious Separation Wall.
7. See, for example, Beaumont and Baker; Knott “Religion” and “Cutting.”

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