

Writing in the Necropolis: Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

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'To live in Petersburg is to sleep in the grave'. Osip Mandelstam¹

With *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) Arundhati Roy returns to fiction after twenty years of non-fiction and political journalism. Or rather, as she states, fiction returned to her, as another formal possibility of writing: 'Non-fiction is an ... argument; fiction is an offering ... a universe ... an invitation'.² With her long-awaited second novel, Roy also leaves behind the ambiguous status (and considerable promotional mythology) of the single-novel author. As I have argued elsewhere, with *The Ministry* it becomes possible to plot continuities and themes across Roy's writings, and we are also able to start to compare her earliest fictional work, the screenplay for *In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones* (1988), and her narrative fiction. In short, with the second novel, the apparent singularity of her first work disappears, and Roy's literary preoccupations come to the fore.

In *The Ministry* Roy exchanges the rural Kerala of *The God of Small Things* (1997) for the largely urban settings of Delhi and Srinagar. If her debut novel can be described as a dark childhood pastoral in which nature and trauma merge in the Kerala backwaters, *The Ministry* can be read as both the first novel's development and its opposite: a fiction that weaves its narrative into the urban carnival of India's capital. As Raymond Williams notes of the binary of country and city in English literature, the tension between the two locations reflects social experience, but it is also prone to simplification and symbolic reduction:

clearly the contrast of country and city is one of the major forms in which we become conscious of a central part of our experience and of the crises of our society. But when this is so, the temptation is to reduce the historical variety of the forms of interpretation to what are loosely called symbols or archetypes.³

Roy's imaginative move to the city in *The Ministry*, which draws on her own residency in Delhi since the late 1970s, is careful to avoid such reductive archetypal mapping. Indeed just as the 'deep' southern Indian setting of *The God of Small Things* worked as a refusal of the innocence or bucolic aspects of the pastoral, and ruthlessly exposed the worldliness of Kerala's provincial politics, the urban setting of *The Ministry* involves components of the pastoral: the urban in Roy's second novel is a kind of urban jungle, populated as much by a cast of dogs, birds, horses, cows and numerous other species as it is a setting for human action. Similarly the pastoral conventions of writing on Kashmir cannot but be registered in the later sections of the novel, even as the narrative centres on Srinagar as a terrorised, occupied city.

Delhi was where Roy trained to become an architect, and in authorial comments and reflections on *The God of Small Things* she has frequently used architectural metaphors to describe her sense of literary form. Keeping this sense of 'architectural' style in mind, it is notable that Roy reverts to the built environment and the organisational logic of the city as a way of conceptualising the form of *The Ministry*.

[My second novel] is like a city – it has form and then that form is ambushed, and yet it still has form ... it's not an accretion but it circles around itself, it has a structure ... It is an Indian city, it has unauthorised colonies, it has illegal immigrants, it has dogs and cows and creatures and bats ... it is a porous Indian city with its own plans.⁴

So as well as being set in urban space, Roy's narrative aspires to the complexity and unexpected juxtapositions and admixture of the Indian city. In other words the novel could be said to generate an urban-literary aesthetic. This includes the incorporative aspects of the novel, which attempt to embrace all possible aspects of the form: 'how do you look at the form of a novel and use every possibility it offers you?'⁵

This article will explore the distinctive construal of urban space in Roy's *The Ministry*, which, I will argue, is structured as a series of sometimes overlapping representational 'framings' of two specific cities, Delhi and Srinagar. My aim is to show that the politics of Roy's second novel is intrinsic to its imaginary topography: the urban setting in *The Ministry* is not just a multifarious changing stage for Roy's characters but the basis for an extended, historically-embedded commentary on citizenship, dissent and conflict in contemporary India. This extended commentary or critical theme finds a presiding motif in the graveyard or necropolis, which runs through the novel, linking both its city-settings, and takes in wider issues of community and memory. If Roy's second novel can be categorised as a work of the living city then, it is also a work of death, one that stages the metropolis as a necropolis, and as a place of death-in-life, as much as it also explores the subjective accommodation of death and loss by the living.

The City and Community

In her extensive non-fiction writing as an activist and public intellectual since the late 1990s, Roy has returned repeatedly to the cause of social inclusivity and equality: both on a national level in issues such as caste, communal exclusion, land rights and the environment, and internationally in her writing on global politics post-9/11. These concerns, broadly construed in opposition to the 'algebra' of (in)justice, named after America's self-appointed global counter-terror mandate 'Operation Infinite Justice',⁶ also inform the city-settings of *The Ministry*, and shape Roy's dissident representation of urban space as a site of alternative community. As postcolonial critics have noted, while the city is often the historical site of the print-cultures and institutional structures that support a collective national imagining, the inhabitants of the city can be unruly representatives of a wider belonging, 'bear[ing] no "necessary" relation to the nation.'⁷ In India, for at least four decades after

independence, the city has occupied a highly ambivalent space in discourses of national identity.⁸ It is no coincidence then, that the version of Delhi that Roy chooses as the setting for her novel is a counter-discursive one: a space of syncretic north Indian Islamic community centred on the 'old' Mughal city of Shahjahanabad, a city-enclave that has been increasingly marginalised in the Hindutva-inspired national vision promoted by the present BJP government.

Nested, as it were, within the beleaguered urban community of Muslim Delhi, is another community on which Roy's novel focuses for its first six chapters: India's *hijras* – a name that refers to gay or transgender men, or eunuchs, who cross-dress and have surgery and/or hormone treatment to live as women, and which can also encompass a broader range of non hetero-normative markers including the male use of cosmetics and forms of camp behaviour. *Hijra* communities arguably have a long-established place in the cultural world of Mughal old Delhi, in which eunuchs were employed in the *zenanas* of the aristocracy and highly accomplished courtesans trained in dance and music were the nominally independent adjuncts to a male elite world of drinking parties and poetry gatherings. However, as part of a trans community they are still marginalised and subjected to forms of social injustice and ostracism in relation to wider Hindu-Muslim society;⁹ as fictional subjects in Roy's novel they reflect the author's long-standing interest in forms of hybridity and figure her ethical commitment to what we might call the radical postcolonial politics of 'unclassifiability'.

The *hijra* protagonist of *The Ministry's* Shahjahanabad sections, Anjum, is the vital, often desperate human signifier of the pressures of living against the grain of an assigned gender, but she is also a defiant figure, embodying the resistant, profane energies of the *hijra* communities who must use culturally sanctioned forms of blackmail and a kind of exaggerated burlesque sexuality as weapons against a male-oriented world in which gender ambiguity is heavily proscribed. A thematic echo between the *hijras* of Shahjahanabad, who defy the normative world of men and women but also counterfeit it in exaggerated ways, and the city in which they live can be found in Roy's personification of Delhi as an old woman, a 'thousand-year-old sorceress'¹⁰ struggling under the dual assault of Hindu nationalism, and the pressures of a neoliberalism which demands that 'she' be transformed, meretriciously and with considerable loss of dignity, into a 'World Class' city.

Roy's strategy, then, is to anchor her city fiction, initially, in a space of doubly marginalised, alternative community: not the more conventional family home or workplace but the ambiguous self-fashioning sisterhood of the *Khwabgah* (the ancient Mughal *haveli* in which Anjum's *hijra* group lives). In spite of the precariousness of their situation, the residents of the *Khwabgah*, who come from across north India, retain a fierce sense of their own identity. Not only is this an identity which draws on religious myth, as Loh's research on real-life Gujarat *hijra* communities shows;¹¹ in *The Ministry* it is also an identity that claims legitimacy in national mythologies, evidence of which is found at the sound and light show at the Red Fort where, on the soundtrack, in an episode detailing the mid-eighteenth-century reign of Mohammed Shah Rangeela, the laughter of a court eunuch can be heard. The leader of Anjum's *hijra* group takes this as immutable evidence of historical legitimacy:

'There!' Ustad Kulsoom Bi would say, like a triumphant lepidopterist who has just netted a rare moth. 'Did you hear that? That is *us*. That is our ancestry, our history, our story'. The moment passed in a heartbeat. But it did not matter. What mattered was that it existed. To be present in history, even as nothing more than a chuckle, was a universe away from being absent from it.¹²

Not only is this an act of self-inclusion in nationhood, it is also an imaginative, historicising claim to the city in the way that Thomas Bender describes such bonds: 'Affiliation with the city is in part, a significant part, an act of imagination. If that affiliation cannot be imagined, the city becomes in quite a fundamental way inaccessible, and urban citizenship is diminished.'¹³ The pressures on the city, and the horror of India's recent history in relation to its Muslim community and Muslim claims to citizenship, ultimately force Anjum to leave the *Khwabgah* and, as I will argue below, she subsequently presides over a reconstituted alternative community in the 'Jannat Guest House'.

Across the first six chapters of *The Ministry* then, Roy presents Delhi as both a supremely alienating place – a predatory world reminiscent of Aravind Adiga's cruel, brutalising metropolis in *The White Tiger* – and a site of alternative or marginalised national community. Keeping in mind Roy's extensive political journalism and activism, perhaps the primary expression of the city as alternative community is presented in the 'Nativity' scene at the Jantar Mantar in chapter three, in which Miss Jebeen the second appears. The Jantar Mantar – the site of an ancient observatory – is a city space mandated by the police as a public protest zone (after the settlement of political protestors was banned on Rajpath),¹⁴ and is thus a place of pan-Indian dissent: gathered there are an assortment of protest groups and lobbyists, 'communists, secessionists, revolutionaries, dreamers, idlers, crackheads, crackpots, all manner of freelancers, and wise men who couldn't afford gifts for newborns'.¹⁵

Underpinning an ironically redemptive Christian imagery, this, then, is Roy's Indian national-democratic community of protest: a space that is representative of the nation, but made up of these whose citizenship rights have been forfeit: 'Manipuri Nationalists call[ing] for a revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, Tibetan Refugees calling for a free Tibet, a Kashmiri Association of the Mothers of the Disappeared'.¹⁶ The presiding figure of the Jantar Mantar, and in some ways a humorous cypher for Roy herself in her activist guise, is the eccentric Dr Azad Bhartiya (Dr Free India), who protests against all manner of inequities and represents a stubborn liberal-democratic conscience at the heart of the Capital. Tilo, Roy's other strongly autobiographical figure in the novel, acts as Dr Azad Bhartiya's amanuensis, writing his 'news and views', thus tying details of Roy's past, in this case her student experiences in Delhi and her faith in uncompromising self-determination, into the text.

The City at War

Across the two interconnected sections of *The Ministry*, set in Delhi and Srinagar respectively (with the latter part also ranging into the Kashmir

Valley), the city is also presented as a space of war, and as a grotesque reflection, in civic space, of the violence the Indian state exercises in its role as a repressive or counter-insurgent force.

There are at least three modes in which Roy conceptualises war in *The Ministry*, modes that have developed from tropes in her non-fiction writings, and which are organised around her second novel's doubled setting. The first of these is the literal violence of military occupation and has its focus in Indian army operations and in the resistance of separatists in the Kashmir sections of the novel. This involves a characteristic manipulation or warping of realist elements in the novel and is discussed further below.

The second war-mode involves a much broader spectrum of 'structural' violence conducted in the name of, or in collusion with, the Indian state. As Roy has often noted, in its preservation of inequity and its draconian response to various claims for social justice, India would seem to be 'at war with itself'. In Roy's earlier Delhi work, her screenplay for the film *In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones* (1988), the relation of urban citizens and non-citizens is similarly conflict ridden: 'Every Indian city consists of a "City" and a "Non-city". And they are at war with one another.'¹⁷ In Roy's city aesthetics, the expression of this wider conflict is dispersed so that the effects of policy decisions and political changes at the centre (in Delhi) have ramifying effects in marginal or border spaces (such as Srinagar), and, alternately, the effects of war and war-like conflict such as the Godhra massacre, or the counter-insurgency against Naxalite insurgents in Telangana, return to the national capital as physical and psychological consequences.

Roy's third conceptual presentation of war in *The Ministry* is largely subjective and has to do with characters who suffer forms of internal, subjective conflict. Where this is most evident is in Anjum's transgender 'war with herself': a form of subjective struggle that has all the ramifications of internecine civil violence and is a predicament she shares with the other *hijras* at the *Khwabgah*. This is the war, one character says, which is 'inside us. The riot is *inside* us. Indo-Pak is *inside* us. It will never settle down. It can't'.¹⁸ If one of the most characteristic effects of urban life, as the early sociologist of the city, Georg Simmel, suggests, is the fostering of new forms of individuation,¹⁹ in Roy's work it is a self-conflicted or post-traumatic individuation that is more often a focus. Indeed, if a central preoccupation emerges from Roy's fiction to date, it is an aesthetic of damage and a deep creative interest in the subjective effects of violence and dispossession.

The perceptual bridge between the city of war (Srinagar) and the city of peace (Delhi) is Tilo's old college-friend and landlord Biplab ('Revolution') Dasgupta, also known as 'Garson Hobart', who has worked in the diplomatic service in Kabul and been Deputy Station Head of intelligence in Srinagar. In a kind of perceptual litotes, Biplab, fresh from Afghanistan, sees the peaceful residential Delhi lane outside the apartment he rents to Tilo as distinctive for *not* being a space at war (emphasising in the process the ease with which peace becomes war).

Compared to Kabul ... this foggy little back lane ... is like a small corner of Paradise. The shops in the market sell food and flowers and clothes and mobile phones, not grenades

and machine guns. Children play at ringing doorbells, not at being suicide bombers.²⁰

War enters Delhi in other ways too: as the trace of trauma and psychic damage that Anjum carries back to the city after her experience of violence in Gujarat, and in the person of Miss Jebeen the second, who is the physical outcome of rape used as a weapon against Maoist women fighters in Telangana. As noted above, the motif of civil inequality is also construed as war-like in *The Ministry*, so that in the Delhi hospital in which Tilo has an abortion on her return from Kashmir, the authorial voice notes: 'it was like a wartime ward. Except that in Delhi there was no war other than the usual one – the war of the rich against the poor'.²¹

The neoliberal transformation of India's capital also involves war-like changes to the urban terrain motivated in part by a new bellicose commercial ethos that exploits the weak,²² and sequesters itself against perceived intrusions by the immigrant poor. As Stephen Graham notes, this 'securocratic' urban dispensation involves the 'reconfiguration of sprawling cities, as increasing numbers of spaces within them are turned into [bounded] camp-like environments supported by private security forces; hardened, impermeable or militarized boundaries'.²³ As a result, 'urban enclaves globally are becoming more "jittery" or "prickly"' (Ibid.). Yet this urban militarism is not just a product of neoliberal urban retrenchment, it also overlaps with the defensive logic of the so-called 9/11 wars – the US-led incursions into Iraq and Afghanistan in 2003 – and has an expression in the privatisation of 'security services' in Delhi, where Anjum's friend Saddam finds employment. As he tells Anjum: 'You got the feeling that there were only three kinds of people in the city – security guards, people who need security guards and thieves'.²⁴

The counterintuitive globalising expression of the '9/11 wars' also manifests itself in Dr Azad Bhartiya's conspiracy-theory paranoia about the US president and his visits to India. The ageing activist has a recurrent nightmare of being watched that personalises the real, all-encompassing reach of global surveillance: 'I am under twenty-four-hours remote control electronic surveillance by the American Government' he writes, 'They have their control room for their cameras in the meridian hotel'.²⁵ Once more, subtle connections can be found between Delhi as a space of metaphorical war and structural violence and Kashmir as an actual conflict zone. There too, the oppressive sense of surveillance by the Indian Border Security Force is constant: 'in every part of the legendary Valley of Kashmir, whatever people might be doing – walking, praying, bathing, cracking jokes, shelling walnuts ... they were in the rifle sights of a soldier [and became] a legitimate target'.²⁶

Yet war is not only registered as a kind of overlapping or imbrication of urban topographies in *The Ministry*; it is also a force that shapes the very way the city is represented. In fact Roy encodes a politics in the representational techniques of her writing, so that insignificant details become freighted and portentous. Critics have already started to evaluate Roy's use of realist and antirealist effect in *The Ministry*, and the full implications of these experiments cannot be fully elaborated here. Suffice to say, as in her debut novel, Roy's technique in *The Ministry* is to defamiliarise war as *status quo* so that the accepted nature of its strangeness or ugliness becomes newly apparent. As

noted above, also recognisable from her earlier work is a creative interest in exploded or 'shattered' structure as a response to violence and trauma.

Both these formal techniques come into play and are amplified in Roy's response to the Kashmir conflict. Indeed, rather than presenting a unified response to Kashmir, Roy conveys the violence of resistance and India's counterinsurgency in the Kashmir valley largely through impressionistic means: snapshot-narratives, found objects and *disjecta membra*, and (through Tilo's notebooks) as isolated stories, press clippings, reports and diary entries. The latter are arranged as a 'Reader's Digest Book of English Grammar and Comprehension for Very Young Children', and employ Roy's established moral leveraging technique of exposing the adult world through a focalising emphasis on child-perceptions. (The short, isolated stories of this Kashmir war-primer perhaps also reveal a debt to the attenuated form of the short Partition narrative and the absurdities and incomprehensibility of civil conflict so keenly observed by writers like Saadat Hasan Manto.)

The formal effects of war, in which the literary text seems to fragment or 'swerve' in response to what it must struggle to represent, are well-known and are attributed by some critics to the inherently 'anxiogenic' problems of 'negotiating subject matter, representation, reader response'²⁷ in war-writing. Yet, for Roy, they might also be identified as a part of her sustained interest in post-traumatic aesthetics, and an aspect of this distinctively 'shattered' storytelling²⁸ is Roy's attention to a kind of grotesque displacement in which the conventional functioning of the city is transformed by the Indian occupation. (Initially it is not a human but a natural catastrophe, an inundation, which stands in for the political turmoil of the region, and anticipates the collating narrative technique described above: 'she dreamed of flood. Of rain and rushing water, dense with coils of razor wire masquerading as weeds ... soldiers and militants grappled with each other underwater ... sofas, bookshelves, tables and kitchen utensils spun through the water').²⁹

In Srinagar, presented as a war city, innocuous buildings are repurposed for the counter-insurgency: the city's Shiraz cinema is no longer a cinema but a terrifying interrogation centre in which militants and suspects are held and routinely tortured: the ticket office has been turned into a sentry-box, batches of 'bound beaten men'³⁰ cower in the shadow of film posters and Kwality Ice cream advertisements, and the auditorium has been changed into a holding space: 'the faint sounds that came through the grand wooden doors could have been the soundtrack of a violent film'.³¹ Kashmir has a long-standing connection with the Indian film industry, as a favoured 'alpine' location, and Roy mines a deep seam of irony in the dual facts of the emptied holiday cottages (which once housed film stars)³² and the new location of Indian counter-insurgency, detention, interrogation and torture.

Other urban spaces in the occupied city change utterly, and a pervading ugliness is born: at one point the Indian army gets rid of a suspect they have interrogated and tortured by forcing him into the drain underneath a public toilet and then 'staging' the scene and 'making a film' so that they can report him as a militant who has been hiding in the building.

In the context of Kashmir, and Srinagar as a war-city, references to cinema return us to the difficult 'spectacular' nature of war or violence as an aesthetic project. Roy's attention to this aspect of representing conflict is apparent in

details such as the currency of the photograph of the dead Miss Jebeen, accidentally killed by a stray bullet while she is watching a funeral procession, who comes to 'represent' the tragedy of Kashmir, but has no choice in the co-option of her own image for these political ends. Here, it becomes apparent that even though Roy's project is to foreground how '[t]he pain and terror of war and social violence often overwhelm and sometimes destroy our very apparatus for perception and its [literary] representations',³³ a related concern in *The Ministry* is the ethical bind of how to represent the 'violating' nature of violence without playing to its sensational or voyeuristic possibilities as a kind of 'force'.

Cities of the Dead

The monumental interconnection of city and funerary architecture that developed in Mughal-era South Asia is evident in the tombs and shrines that dominate the built environment of cities like Delhi and Lahore. The latter's palimpsest-topography of multiple historical city-sites layered in the same metropolitan area also means that even at the height of the Mughal period, tombs and ruins surrounded the walled city of Shahjahanabad. In times of conflict or civil upheaval, it was common practice for residents to find refuge in outlying tombs and these spaces also often provided some shelter for inward-bound refugees displaced by war or famine.³⁴

In *The Ministry*, the violence that Anjum experiences in Godhra, where she is nearly murdered by a mob of Hindu nationalists, traumatises her to the extent that she is unable to stay in the *Khwabgah*, and she moves to a small 'unprepossessing' graveyard adjoining the government hospital and the morgue,³⁵ and makes a new home – the Jannat (Paradise) Guest House – among the tombs there. Read against the urban history of refuge and sanctuary provided by the city's funerary monuments, the move is a familiar one but Anjum's decision to find a new home among the dead also literalises the deadly communal impulse at the heart of militant Hindu nationalism and is a response to the calls of the Hindu mob at Godhra that the only place for India's Muslims is Pakistan or the graveyard.³⁶ In this sense, the cemetery of the Jannat Guest House is a space of both literal and figurative exclusion: a zone where those who are not accepted or welcomed in wider society can find a kind of sanctuary.

Anjum's proprietorship of the Jannat Guest House, accommodating both the living and the dead, also becomes a complex urban topographical figure for a form of biopolitics. As Roberto Esposito notes, the well-known Foucauldian formulation of *biopolitics* as a paradigm in which government functions as a series of orders that fosters life or '*disallows* it to the point of death'³⁷ is also imbricated in a 'reversal' into a more programmatic '*thanatopolitics*'.³⁸ There is insufficient space here either to elaborate fully on the theoretical extension of biopolitics in Esposito's work or to flag the wider colonial and postcolonial applications of these ideas in forms of necropolitics,³⁹ even though it should be noted that Roy consistently underlines the genocidal impulses of contemporary politics in her writing. Yet the wider biopolitical implications of social inequality are something Roy's writing emphasises in its representation of the fragility (and precariousness) of the lives of those drawn to the city in search of work. Across Delhi, life is routinely 'abandoned', not just as a product

of communal or caste-based discrimination ('surplus people were banned')⁴⁰ but also through the city's voracious appetite for casual labour to fuel its neoliberal self-transformation.

Yet even as death is a sign of merged bio/thanatopolitics, it is also a presented in more positive forms in Roy's writing. At the Jannat Guest House (as necropolis), a kind of therapeutic post-traumatic blurring of boundaries occurs. Anjum's friend Saddam, whose name commemorates the death rather than life of his despotic Iraqi namesake, finds some succour from the grief of his father's death (as a low-caste tanner, he has been murdered by a Hindu cow-protection mob) at the Guest House. Similarly, when Tilo receives news of her former lover, Musa's death, the graveyard location affords her something like the chance for reconciliation: 'the battered angels in the graveyard that kept watch over their battered charges held open the doors between worlds (illegally, just a crack), so that the souls of the present and the departed could mingle, like guests at the same party. It made life less determinate and death less conclusive'.⁴¹ Anjum's graveyard guest house, which even includes a swimming pool without water, is a community space, and represents a rejoinder to the kind of architecture dismissed by the character played by Roy, Radha, in *In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones*, who asserts that architects rarely have a commitment to urban community.⁴²

Whereas the necropolis at the centre of the Delhi sections of *The Ministry* provides a space that is both a different world from the 'Duniya' (world) of the wider capital city, and the inverse expression of its murderous or genocidal impulses, the corresponding necropolis in the Kashmir sections of the novel, the Srinagar Mazar-e-Shohadda or 'Martyrs' graveyard', is an actual space in which the wider necropolitical orders of the occupation are simply extended and formalised. Here again it becomes difficult to talk about a specifically urban topography of death, since as an aspect of the conflict death has come to saturate the whole region: 'In this way the insurrection began. Death was everywhere. Death was everything. Career. Desire. Dream. Poetry. Love. Youth itself. Dying became just another way of living'.⁴³ Yet as the focus of memorialising protest, and the resting place of the first Miss Jebeen, the Martyrs' graveyard is also a persistent emblem of the political currency of death in Kashmir, and the merging, apparent in the Arabic root word *shahid*, of the acts of martyrdom and 'bearing witness'.

Roy's most telling representational incorporation of the necropolis in her city fiction, and one that serves as a conclusion here, is reserved for the eponymous closing section of *The Ministry*, in which Saddam, Tilo, Anjum and Miss Jebeen the Second and other residents of the Jannat Guest House visit a Delhi shopping mall, located on the outskirts, on 'the Edge. Where the countryside was trying, quickly, clumsily and tragically, to turn itself into the city'.⁴⁴ As the representative space of the new globalised, middle-class India the mall is conspicuous in its absence from the urban topographies of the novel's earlier sections, but in this part of the narrative it is finally mapped as part of the city, albeit one in which older disenfranchised characters such as Anjum look as though they have 'stepped through a portal into another cosmos'.⁴⁵ The purpose of the visit is only revealed gradually: to commemorate the location of the village in which Saddam's untouchable caste leather-worker father was killed – a village now swallowed up by the mall. Once more complicating the

binary organisation of the worlds of the living and the dead, Roy suggests that the mall, which ushers its visitors into an undifferentiated environment of corpse-like mannequins and selfie-snapping shoppers, is a kind of death in life. More importantly it is a generic space that overlies the violence of its own formation – a space that, unlike the graveyard, *forgets* those who constitute its own history.

NOTES

¹ Osip Mandelstam, *Selected Poems*, trans. Clarence Brown and W. S. Merwin (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 59.

² 'Arundhati Roy in conversation with Sirish Rao'.
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cw6VEC6vP1c>>.

³ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: The Hogarth Press 1993), p. 289.

⁴ 'Arundhati Roy in conversation with Sirish Rao'.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001).

⁷ Bill Ashcroft, 'Urbanism, Mobility and Bombay: Reading the Postcolonial City', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 47: 5 (2011), pp. 497–509, at p. 503.

⁸ Srirupa Roy, *Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁹ Jennifer Ung Loh, 'Narrating Identity: The Employment of Mythological and Literary Narratives in Identity Formation Among *Hijras* of India', *Religion & Gender*, 4: 1 (2014), pp. 21–39, at p. 22.

¹⁰ Arundhati Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2017), p. 96.

¹¹ Loh, 'Narrating Identity', p. 37.

¹² Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 51.

¹³ Thomas Bender, 'Reflections on the Culture of Urban Modernity', in *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City* ed. Alev Çinar and Thomas Bender (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2007), pp. 269–78, at pp. 269–70.

¹⁴ Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi* (London: Pan Macmillan 2007), p. xviii.

¹⁵ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 101.

¹⁶ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 101.

¹⁷ Arundhati Roy *In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones* (New Delhi: Penguin India, 2003), p. 91

¹⁸ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 23

¹⁹ Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

²⁰ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 147

²¹ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 392.

²² See Rana Dasgupta, *Capital* (2014).

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- ²³ Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 100.
- ²⁴ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 74.
- ²⁵ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 126.
- ²⁶ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 347.
- ²⁷ Kate McLoughlin, *Authoring War: The Literary Representation of War from the Iliad to Iraq* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 6.
- ²⁸ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 436.
- ²⁹ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 265.
- ³⁰ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 379.
- ³¹ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 331.
- ³² Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 372.
- ³³ Yolanda Gampel, 'Reflections on the Prevalence of the Uncanny in Social Violence', in *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma*, ed. A. M. Robben and M. Suarez-Orozco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000), p. 55.
- ³⁴ Swapna Liddle, *Chandni Chowk: The Mughal City of Old Delhi* (New Delhi: Speaking Tiger, 2017), p. 39.
- ³⁵ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 58.
- ³⁶ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 62.
- ³⁷ Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2008), p. 34.
- ³⁸ Esposito, *Bios*, p. 36.
- ³⁹ See Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', trans Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15: 1 (2003), pp. 11–40.
- ⁴⁰ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 98.
- ⁴¹ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 398.
- ⁴² Joel Kuortti, 'City and Non-City: Political and Gender Issues in *In Which Annie Gives it Those Ones*' in *Globalising Dissent: Essays on Arundhati Roy*, ed. Ranjan Ghosh and Antonia Navarro-Tejero (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), pp. 80–93, at p. 84.
- ⁴³ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 314.
- ⁴⁴ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 411.
- ⁴⁵ Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, p. 410.