Homebound: City and the Spectre of Accumulation in Tagore's '*Monihara*'

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Introduction: The City and its 'Other'

'Loneliness, I began to realise, was a populated place: a city in itself. And when one inhabits a city, even a city as rigorously and logically constructed as Manhattan, one starts by getting lost.'

Olivia Laing, 'The Lonely City' (2016)

The metaphor of geography as an emotional *topos* is not new. As the places we inhabit end up inhabiting us, people often unknowingly acquire characteristics akin to their habitats, becoming living, breathing semi-blueprints representative of cumulative geographies. Space permeates all, even the most atomized, molecular form of existence. Laing's reflection on the city is somewhat analogous to a maze: clear, clean, precise, yet ensnaring in its abundance of constant returns and dead-ends. Although her propositions were elementally inspired by personal and periodic confrontations with New York City, Laing's incredible reflections on loneliness as a modern malaise may hold the emotional blueprints to better navigate the interiorities of habitats. However, compared to the contemporary visual aesthetics of the ultra-urban city of neoliberal fantasies, nineteenth-century Calcutta – as the prototype where dreams and disillusionment walked hand in hand – is a gloomier venture haunted by the sensibilities of an 'unfulfilled modernity', a social imaginaire of 'dreadful delights' and 'dreadful nights' (Chattopadhyay 2005: 2).

The nineteenth-century Bengali cultural imagination has not been particularly kind to Calcutta, a city 'rarely privileged as the space of creativity and "originality"', '[predominantly] portrayed as an imposition, a constraint, the city seems to be made bearable by imagining a blissful countryside that performs as the ideal home. Such idyllic imaginings of the home-as-village life was a peculiarly urban discourse' (Chattopadhyay 2005: 5).

Following the European travelling 'gaze'[1], Calcutta's infamous colonial legacy boasted of an inhospitable environment, strengthening the racial idea that '[T]his region, crowded with tigers and crocodiles, infected with miasma and blood-stained idolatry' could only be a hovel of 'wicked deeds and violence – "the dark corners of the world" awaiting the redemptive touch of Christianity'[2] (Chattopadhyay 2005: 27). The valorised conceptualisation of an 'untainted countryside': an antithetical 'other' to the dreaded city, might have emerged as a redeeming response to such settler horror rhetoric. Yet popular and romantic musings aside, colonial spatial frameworks were rarely so neat in terms of boundaries and were constantly challenged by the fuzzy territorial limits of variegated governable units such as 'town', 'city', and 'country'. The 'in-between' nature of such designated spaces lent a fluidity crucial to their conceptualisations and the visual imagery of Bengal's colonial landscape. 'Fluid' spaces were shaped by the 'complex dependence–autonomy relationships and [ensued] flow of cultural practices, sometimes even between physically far-flung areas'[3] (Sengupta 2012: 58).

Raymond Williams argues that the 'town' and 'country' fiction each served its own set of cultural myths which heightened superficial comparisons at the cost of obscuring real ones (1973). A retreat into the relatively remote zones of existence brought forth as much a share of modern enchantments as seen operative within relatively impersonal domains of industry. Regular enchantments were determined by the fluidity of spaces, not by their distantiation from an unanimous 'core' of reason. Since the country and the city were both visualized through landscapes unique to their spatial patterns, the spectral and the supernatural too had to navigate those routes. Put otherwise, if the desolate moors of the countryside were thought to be 'fine-tuned' to otherworldly frequencies simply because they blocked out the static of the city, it must also be maintained that the country did not always adhere to the 'robust' or idyllic[4] discursive frameworks, and could equally be accountable for inspiring hellish narratives.

While geographical segregations proved necessary and were effected, the murky indistinctions and limits of definability additionally rendered 'the country and the city' as liminally fortuitous domains, etching out a complex literary atmosphere which could not owe narrative allegiance to just one – inventing a strange metaphysical by-world that kept trespassing (or intermingling) the laws and boundaries among the urban, the suburban and the rural. If 'home' is a primordial urge to return (to the womb, to the past, to the familiar) and every turn potentially disorientates, the feeling of uncanny develops as a natural cohabiting condition; in this case, by negotiating the cultural myths and fluid spatial tensions of the 'country-city' divide. For a writer whose audience and persona largely centered on 'the urban', Tagore's preoccupation with this dichotomy reflected in the mannerisms and choices of his protagonists who shared his ambivalence about the city, 'the theatre of the most immediate and intense experience of modernity' (Kaviraj 2014: 272). Like the spectral presence of infantile memory, the city kept reinventing itself in and through the enchanted materialisms of everyday desires.

Cities, in essence, are custodians of the modern unheimlich.[5] An initial brush with the concept steers us closer to a closed inspection of 'home' or the 'familiar' and its penchant for nurturing the 'uncanny' vis-a-vis the inhabiting conditions of geographical spaces. As a spatial metaphor, 'uncanny' underlines a perpetual state of disquiet, a 'fundamentally unlivable modern condition' (Vidler 1992: x), suggestive of yet unrestricted to the crowded anonymity of the city. For all its enlightened promises of material rewards and proximities to the global, the threat of inhospitality looms largest for the urban populace. 'Fear, revulsion, and horror were the emotions which the big city crowd aroused in those who first observed it' (Benjamin 1939: 190). Laing further connects this disquiet to the idea of an estranged being:

> ...there is a particular flavor to the loneliness that comes from living in the city, surrounded by millions of people. One might think this state was antithetical to urban living, to the massed presence of other human beings and yet mere physical proximity is not enough to dispel a sense of internal isolation. Cities can be lonely places, and in admitting this we see that loneliness doesn't necessarily require physical solitude, but rather an absence or paucity of connection, closeness, kinship: an inability, for one reason or another, to find as much intimacy as is desired... Hardly any wonder, then, that it can reach its apotheosis in a crowd. (Laing 2016: 3–4)

The mechanisms of claustrophobic horror and spatial estrangement thus emerge as troubled bedfellows of experiencing the uncanny within the social and the solitary body. Tagore might have chosen to situate his horror fantasies away from the impassioned pandemonium of a colonial city, struggling with the paradoxes of modernity where the self is thrust 'in the troubled relation between the city and country' (Chattopadhyay 2005: 6). But the city returns to haunt Tagore's serene pastoral idyll by reigniting the moral ambivalence at the heart and economics of the bourgeois family, the core emotional constituent of urban space and architectural planning (Pile 1996: 215). In words of Sudipta Kaviraj:

> in Tagore, images of love are always linked in a great tenderness of words to the past, to memory, to nature which lives serenely outside the city, and to dreams. But clearly, all these things – the past, the unspoilt countryside, nature – are transient, threatened, ultimately brought to submission by the city. (Kaviraj 2014: 268–269)

Going beyond the 'Gothic trappings' of 'haunted castles, supernatural occurrences, secret panels and stairways, time-yellowed manuscripts, and poorly lighted midnight scenes' (Hume 1969: 282), the spatial rupture between the country and the city is conjoined in the form of a romantic(ised) atmosphere which succumbs to a primordial greed reminiscent of the moral values of modern times[6] instead of a primordial innocence harking back to the promises of a simpler pastoral paradise. The city comes alive through a perverse, literally isolating experience involving the perils of prosperity. A tale of materialist passions, 'Monihara' is an urban Gothic gone awry, as romances often do. Attempting a psychoanalytic reading of the city (and its potential supernaturalisms) would imply there exists a consensus about a thriving unconscious unique to the urban space, and how such an unconscious helps in reproducing a specific mode of living and relating to the environment. While above reflections have occasionally guided my thoughts, my intent is to read the supernatural city in Tagore by a possible re-viewing of specific economic categories and their spatial interactions unique to the urban vis-a-vis literary personifications; to try and understand whether even in an 'other'-ised, unvalourised space dialectically opposed to the synergies of the city, echoes of its distinct materialisms can be felt, weaving emotions and industry within a larger psychodynamics of the urban.

Loneliness and The Spectre of Accumulation: At Home in the Uncanny

Narrated by a local schoolmaster to a stranger on the ghats of an abandoned ruin, the story chronicles the lives of one Fanibhushan Saha and his wife Monimalika: a childless couple who set up their home away from the city and well within the rural idyll, moving into their ancestral mansion ten years ago. Although the reason for such spatial shift is unclear in the story, Satyajit Ray's Fanibhushan, a doting husband and provider, offers more clarity: Monimalika's inability to produce an heir to her husband's immense fortune has been cited as the trigger for shifting places and creating a new home. The idyllic backdrop to marital bliss is immediately figured by a lack – the non-presence of a filial tether haunting the past lives and prefiguring the future selves of the couple.

The distance between Monimalika and Fanibhushan speaks of a gap in terms of disclosure, trust, and any real knowledge about each-other as individuals.[7] In a roundabout way, this abject lack of connection never quite allows them to address the filial gap: an uncomfortable truth consciously kept at bay. If on one hand Fanibhushan was consumed by the sheer proximity of beauty and his absolute inability to lay claim to it despite marriage, Monimalika's absolute lack of knowledge about her husband created no emotional urge to connect with his desires. Insufficient knowledge bred sufficient distrust; she gathered all her energy instead into building a material sanctuary of sorts; away from people and deeper into her world of objects erecting an impenetrable wall of loneliness she could neither fully comprehend nor confront. In many ways, this loneliness is distinct to the psychogeography of the city; a malady seemingly without a tether and unfettered by changes in habitat. While speaking of loneliness as a city, Laing compares it to a spell, a sort of enchantment that has a hold on us (Laing 2016: 44). Modernity's enchantment lay in modeling loneliness as one such obvious extension of the existential mode while also rendering it an existential threat. By such logic, the self becomes its own enemy. This is true for both Monimalika and Fanibhushan: both bedeviled by an untranslatable loneliness and doomed to seek its antidote through the lens of wealth.

Tagore connects this specific material lust to a distinctly feminine emotional void personified by a child (or the lack of it) – a precept of loneliness which Satyajit Ray furthers in his film, adding his own layers of paranoia to the character. While it is not uncommon for patriarchal colonial modernity to reinscribe doctrines of motherhood within profounder ideas of liberation and fulfilment (guiding the progressions of nationalist thought, in general), a prognosis of urban loneliness stemming solely from unfulfilled maternal desires might be too simplistic. While there can be different variants and remedial recipes of loneliness, Monimalika's loneliness was a malady only in a matter of speaking. In the movie, Monimalika is not affected by isolation at all. Freed from the clutches of a household in the city where she was defined by her lack, the isolation of the country becomes a welcome respite in which she gradually turns more reclusive, more herself. Isolation can grant us many wondrous and terrible things. For Monimalika, the pastoral offered a resplendent second chance; a disarmingly conducive context to unravel her desires. Put otherwise, in seclusion she found her own city to inhabit. She could finally be who she was. Which brings us to the question: who was Monimalika? Or, how was Monimalika?

'Nothing ever wasted in her hands; except her husband's constant adorations. All else she received were safely deposited. Stranger still was how her youthful splendour never atrophied. Not one drop of it was misspent. People believed, even years after marriage, she exhibited the same rawness of her adolescent years. Those who have icicles for heart become immune to the agonies of love, perhaps they stay fresh for years, like a miser they learn to count and collect fragments of their own selves.

Monimalika, however, was strong at work, never keeping any servants at her disposal. She couldn't tolerate the idea of paying wages for tasks she could accomplish with her own hands. She worried for no one, loved no one, simply worked and worked – never mourning, never complaining, never succumbing to illnesses for belaboring herself so furiously. Like a queen bee, she reigned supreme amidst bountiful health, endless peace, and a rising tide of accumulated wealth.' (Tagore [1898] 2017: 22–23)

While the subtext of wealth is only natural within gothic literary parameters predicated on bourgeois lives, Monimalika's characterisation, I argue, bears an eerie resemblance to the accumulative curse of capital itself; the near-vampiric undercurrents in the economy of her constitution become undeniable. Where does her strength and insusceptibility come from? Why doesn't her beauty fade? Why does she renounce love? Why is she not invested in the social etiquette of entertaining? Throughout, Tagore defines her as an optimal picture of abstinence and opulence. She detests keeping servants because it seems a redundant area of expenditure. She does not give in to spiritual temptations of the soul or conspicuous consumptions of the mind.

For a relentless worker who gets everything done by herself with strange tenacity, she doesn't show any sign of slowing down, seemingly above the natural biological laws of aging, fatigue, or disease. Unmarred by the ravages of time on beauty and form, Monimalika is preternaturally healthy. She is 'a saver, an ascetic', a domestic analogue and 'upholder of the Protestant ethic' (Moretti 1982: 73), itself hailed as a foreshadower of a religious ethic fuelling modern maximising principles. Her monomaniacal incentive to exist exists in gold. Monimalika dutifully observes all her obligations to her husband and the house (except producing an heir), carefully earning and accumulating her rewards in gold, intended as gifts of love but cherished solely as property. For a narrative premised on the terrors of necromance, what overshadows this urban Gothic is the spectre of accumulation which is now no longer restricted to the bustling economies of the developing city but has directly invaded the frontiers of the home and the hearth. Both Monimalika and Fanibhushan are collectively synthesized by this accretive principle. However, to recall Karl Marx: '[In] themselves money and commodities are no more capital than are the means of production and of subsistence. They want transforming into capital.' (Marx [1887] 2013: 502) If Monimalika's gold represented the unrealised potential of money in its purest form, Fanibhushan emerges as its transformative agent of capture and reinvestment, wishing to set the accumulating process of capital in motion.

The depths of disconnect between Monimalika and Fanibhushan is first realised following a serious credit imbalance in Fanibhushan's accounts threatening to destabilize his image and credibility in the market as a businessman. Tagore initially emphasizes about Fanibhushan's generic ineptitude or even disinterest towards business foregrounding it as a consequence of his overtly good nature and an unwavering sense of morality: two aspects which the narrator believed never helped the shoddiest of businessman achieve anything. Ray, however, slightly alters the backstory of Fanibhushan's deficits: a sudden fire in his estate one night which destroys a huge proportion of jute, the major source of his security and material comfort. Although there is no decisive hint in the story, the very visual of a merchant's stocks going up in flames is too formulaic an image of endemic unrest, subconsciously feeding the external economic tensions inherent in stratified relations of class.

After Fanibhushan's initial attempt to recover his losses by mortgaging Moni's jewellery is met with contemptuous panic, he is forced to seek solutions elsewhere and leaves for the city.

Meanwhile, Monimalika's initial calm and patience is wearing thin as she becomes acutely aware of an impending separation: a cleaving apart from her gold in the probable event of a non-recovery of loss. The deranged double to Fanibhushan's rationalist accretive desires, Monimalika resists the assimilation of her property into the circulatory system of capital. The regenerative principle is broken. The dissolution of the home is now complete.

Newer fears force her to confront older ones, and this is where we discern hidden scripts of a (possibly incestuous) past between Monimalika and Madhusudan, an old acquaintance. An element of secrecy hitherto unexplored in the story is introduced, throwing her monomania into relief when this old liaison from her past returns like a repressed memory, whom she's unable to dismiss. Christine Berthin reflects on how the Gothic exhibits itself through 'the endless reworking of illegitimacy as a "self-conscious trope of secrecy"… conceived as the gaps left within us by the secrets of others. Haunting is primarily the unconscious transmission of an unsayable, unnameable secret.' (Berthin 2010: 9)

In the text, Madhusudan is presented as Monimalika's distant cousin known to make good use of family connections for petty gainful ends but the film reveals a perverse tension between the two when one day, he drops by unannounced, seeking sustenance and refuge. The exact nature of their relationship is withheld which only amplifies its mystery. Later, a desperate Monimalika invites Madhusudan into her private chambers to devise escape strategies and the duo, united in their inexorable lust for gold, departs on the eve of one monsoon night. They're never seen or heard from again.

This is the narrative juncture at which Tagore introduces the terrors of vacuity, turning our attention to the interiorities of space. Fanibhushan, now returning to an empty hearth and an empty safe, is literally the solitary figure of desertion – ousted, unhinged, unloved – everything antithetical to the experience of a home. 'And in its emptiness the house ceases to be a sanctuary, loses its power to protect; far from being safe, it becomes an extended space, however claustrophobic, for the expansion of fear and evil. If nature abhors a vacuum, then an uninhabited house draws something to it.' (Wilson 2013: 117) And if the (preferred) site of the bourgeois mansion/family and the Gothic imaginary are hothouses for 'the irruption of the feminine' (Wilson 2013: 118), then its very absence from the chambers of habitation will appear uncanny[8]. Thus, to be 'at home' is to be at home with the 'unhomely'. It is somewhat of a truism that homes have been haunted much before 'haunted houses' emerged as a classic horror formula; its symbolic feminine associations with ideals of safety and seclusion (of the womb itself) obscure 'the fault lines in familial relationships.' (Bailey 1999: 6)

There's something about emptiness that unsettles us. From historic ruins to abandoned buildings to post-industrial wastelands triangulated by convoluted arcs of arrested growth, inevitable decay and the politics of memory, emptiness is an anomaly marking out a literal and cognitive space teetering between the temptations of human refuge and the threat of alien invasion, between wildness and civilization. Inherent in the grammar and dynamisms of architecture and the conditions of urban existence, absence is a dysfunctional eyesore in the anatomy of spaces rationally engineered towards occupancy. 'It is as if a house should always be inhabited', holds Elizabeth Wilson (2013: 114). Investigations into the modern unhomely thus naturally locates 'a tenuous relation between the idea of the urban and the idea of home', 'between the topography and culture of cities and the architecture of familiarity and the family that goes by the names '"dwelling"', '"building"', '"house"', and so on' (Wolfreys 2008: 169). While nature's abhorrence of void tends to guide the cultural imagination of abandoned or derelict spaces towards a 'haunted' or 'spectral' diagnosis, such attempts are more symptomatic of a deep-seated spatial anxiety in built environments than an outright awareness of modernity churning out its own ghosts. Foregrounding such anxieties is the idea/figure of the 'dedomesticated subject': an individual disoriented in their own architectural or anthropocentric ecosystems.

Caught in the crossfires of emptiness and inhabitance, Fanibhushan is the embryonic outcome of the modern unhomely; his ancestral home – the structural behemoth of lineage and generational affluence – simply turns into a house: a 'locus of the individual and isolated subject', reinventing the urban experience by emphasising 'the [dedomesticated] subject's haunting urban adventure as a coming to awareness of modernity' (Wolfreys 2008: 173). Loneliness resurfaces like the uncanny iterability of the city repressed within, which cautions: there's no defence against isolation except love. And if love is nothing but a home-sickness (Freud 1919: 15), and a home is nothing but a happier perversion of the unhomely, then loving itself becomes an act of alienation: an act of welcoming 'the other within oneself' (Wolfreys 2008: 172); an act which begets nothing but loneliness and bedlam. And if home – wherever that is – can only be negotiated through the devil's snare of inhospitality, then love – read as a migration towards it – is essentially an act of self-annihilation, a death-knell. Yet love we must. So, despite becoming untethered in the wake of Monimalika's egress and disintegrating into delusory fever-dreams of her anticipation, Fanibhushan awaits the return of his love, his home-sickness:

> A glass-paned almirah of souvenirs: little figurines of Chinese dolls collected since childhood, essence vials, coloured glass decanters, dainty packs of cards, large sea shells, even the empty soap-cases were immaculately arranged. The tiny, round kerosene lamp which Manimalika fancied and prepared with her own hands every evening, still rested in its niche, burnt out and cheerless… Monimalika, please return, light your lamp and brighten your room, stand in front of the mirror and adorn yourself, your objects await. No one desires anything from you, simply arrive with your indestructible youth; revive this pile of orphaned objects by breathing in your undying beauty; the mute lamentations of matter are turning this house into a graveyard. (Tagore [1898] 2017: 28–29)

As far as the interiorities of hauntings were concerned, the bedroom enjoyed a special place in common lore and literary imagination as the logically preferred site of ghostly disturbance or visitations (Davies 2007: 47–48).[9] And with an inversion of an intimate storehouse of memories into a mausoleum on display awaiting a resurrectionist miracle, the uncanny transformation of the home into a crypt seems complete. At home in the uncanny, Fanibhushan and Monimalika – unsustainably bound to each-others' accumulative spirit, exhibit a longing for belongings, the latter having dual interpretations; spatially, expressing an affinity for a place that is familiar, and materially, a sense of protective ownership. While ownership, or in this case, the condition of being 'possessed by your possessions' brings to mind the fundamentals of a primordial precapitalist spirit: the auri sacra fames (the hunger for gold), 'as old as the history of humanity'[10], Fanibhushan's yearning for a place symbolizes his death-drive; an instinct which Freud specified as the 'final goal of all organic striving', 'the instinct to return to the inanimate state' (1961: 32). Death, by its very nature, is the climactic incomprehensible, the unknown territorial limits igniting morbid fascination. Home is thus a cessation of movement, a place where the uncanny prospects of confused and misdirected detours are finally put to rest; the heimlich and the unheimlich have become one.

As the apotheosis of Fanibhushan’s death-drive, Monimalika transforms into the literal femme fatale of Gothic narratives as she was always intended to be. ‘”Romance” becomes “nec-romance,” that is the “site” or “para-site” of the raising of the dead’ (Berthin 2010: 12).[11] Robbed of her physical opulence, Monimalika is now the personification of the effects of time on flesh: a skeleton; bedecked in jewels, fuelled by the ancient and proverbial spirit of accumulation. Effectively de-humanized and alienated from the pretense of a corporeal body, she is at once ‘the monster and the victim of an earlier attack’ – the ‘diabolical, creeping foe which kills body and soul… describing another dark figure who stalked the pages of nineteenth-century literature’[12]: the vampire (Mighall 1999: 108-124). The preceding description holds a stark resonance with the stalking spectre of dead capital itself which – impelled by a continuous desire for growth – invariably debilitates the physical and moral consciousness of those forming an attachment to it out of economic or lustful persuasions. Hideous, frightful, wandering, and drawn to the shadow economies of a parasitic colonial enterprise/expansion, Monimalika is the ‘striking figure defined by excess and unrestrained appetite’ (Gelder 1994: 22), an uncanny home where ‘the erotics of insufficient [or unrealised] intimacy’ (Laing 2016: 39)[13] goes beyond the pleasure principle of temporary gratification and transforms into the primal energy of the ‘death drive’ – ‘the energy that vanquishes [productive] energy’ (Smith 2010: 5). And that home welcomes and frightens Fanibhushan, as the familiar often do.

Conclusion: How Far is the City from Home?

It would not be an overstatement to call Calcutta a city of Corinthians. Opulent architectural testaments from colonial times, abandoned or ruinous buildings have literally loomed large over the changing history and skylines of the city. Heritage becomes less a matter of government ownership or restoration projects and more a matter of slow death, contingent on extensive social and solitary campaigns of memory, nostalgia and neglect centering the ‘locus horribilus’ (Grunenberg 1997: 195) or terra nullius: ‘forever caught on the hop between imminent ruin and desperate remedy’ (Chakravorty 2007: 1). If the idea of heritage can be construed as resuscitating the dead through memory mechanisms of lores and keeping cultures of myth alive, then houses serve more as mausoleums than museums.

This brings us back to the quintessential formula of the 'setting' central to the (sub)urban, and Gothic narratives in general, which unmistakably portray a relative 'deprioritisation of the city' as far as literary subtexts in Bengali cultures of supernaturalism is concerned. Tithi Bhattacharya reflects:

> One can now see why none of the Bengali stories are set in Calcutta. The city does not count to the Bengali mind as a valid city, let alone an old one till the mid-twentieth century… Calcutta is seen to be godless, unhealthy and relentlessly modern and anxious. History did not get made there and neither did ghosts. (Bhattacharya 2009: 143–156)

But cities, like the spectres it produces and nurtures in its wake, brings about a nervous fascination and ambivalence in their unconscious encounters with the disoriented subject. They aren't just labyrinthian expanses of architectural lines criss-crossing each other, but an experiential mode rather difficult to map. Julian Wolfreys dwells on the categorical elusiveness of the modern dwelling: 'what is properly the 'city'… [becomes] improperly difficult to define except as an experience or event belatedly recalled and subsequently narrated' (Wolfreys 2008: 173, emphasis mine). This develops an interpretation of the city similar to a chronicle: a disjointed story we keep narrating in the hope of it achieving greater coherence over time, an exercise in storytelling (or a storyteller's exercise). This is how Monihara begins, as recounting of past uncanny events to a listener dubious about its authenticity yet invested in its chronology. Till no trace remains of him at the end of the narrative exercise and he, quite literally and promptly, vanishes. Like a temporally unstable 'event' prone to disappearances and rupturing the chronology of the 'chronicle', the ghosts of Tagore end up waxing and waning like 'the phantom figure(s) of the city's pulse' (Wolfreys 2008: 173), voluntarily displaced from its limits yet involuntarily operating under its enchanted materialisms. This is how the ubiquitous city unfolds: like a story about the supernatural; indeed, what better way to express the impossibility of writing about Calcutta 'in its realist ugliness as an aesthetic object' (Kaviraj 2014: 293) than translating its aestheticisms through a genre denounced as unrealist and escapist, in the larger literary traditions of the romantic and sublime? A genre at once 'a symptom of and reflection on the modern' (Clery 1995: 10), the supernatural and the city have been adversarial lovers impossible to rid themselves off of each-other's concerns, both on a collision course with the terra incognitae or the unexplored internal landscapes of the human heart and mind entwining concerns of geography and psychoanalysis; unlocking, adapting, and influencing the modern crucible of ‘home’. Calcutta collects like a trace – a precipitate – in Tagorean theatrics of home and the world, physical and the metaphysical, mocking and mimicking existing spatial parameters of desolation to incubate a proxy or phantom economy where accumulative instincts and the inherent insecurities of capital could run free, deregulated:

> … the meanings of **artha** (money) and **anartha** (generally… evil deeds), etymological antonyms, subtly suggesting a connection between the abundance/excess of wealth and the corresponding abundance of evil in the modern city… An astonishing analysis of human effort at the heart of the modern city follows: everything is momentary, fragmented, disconnected… coming together for a moment, at the next going asunder. (Kaviraj 2014: 285)

If being modern means being alone wherever one is, and wherever one dwells, as Wolfreys puts it, then any discursive approach towards haunting and the supernatural has to intersect, eventually, with the shifting peripheries of the urban and the concomitant economies of emotion. Only then can we unpack the dialectical opposition between the urban and sub-urban sub-texts of terror and arrive at its spatial intersections – disenchanted and hungry for more.

Endnotes

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[1] See David Arnold's 'The Tropics and the Travelling Gaze' [2006] for a detailed explanation of the cultural production of the tropics via the visual rhetorics of vantage points in landscape.

[2] Paraphrased reflections of author-traveller Maria Graham's 'Journal of a Residence in India' [1812] and Mary Martha Sherwood's 'The Life of Mrs. Sherwood' about their first impressions of Calcutta. [as reproduced in Chattopadhyay's work.]

[3] Problematizing straightforward notions of city, town, or country, Sengupta instead focuses on the varied relationships triangulating them as composite spaces in terms of their networks of functioning: '*the idea of peripheries or sub-'urban' conditions cannot always be delimited to defined belts around cities. Rather, they are a result of more complex dependence–autonomy relationships and ensuing flow of cultural practices, sometimes even between physically far-flung areas…In such a scenario, designations such as 'urban', 'suburban' or 'non-urban/rural' are themselves called into question*.'; 'Between country and city: fluid spaces of provincial administrative towns in nineteenth-century Bengal', Urban History, Vol. 39, No. 1, pp. 56-82. Anindita Ghosh further claims that '*the idea of 'villages' did not entirely disappear from the organizational and functional mentality of Calcutta's residents. They sat uneasily within the modern layout of the metropolis as* ***tollahs****,* ***tulis****, and* ***paras***' as designated residential and caste-based occupational hubs. See 'Urban Space, Technology, and Community' in *Claiming the City: Protest, Crime and Scandals in Colonial Calcutta, c. 1860–1920*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

[4] Visual images of the rural were always compromised between 'the idyllic pastoral haunt of the nationalist imagination and the fallen social space calling for nationalist reform.' See Dipesh Chakrabarty's 'Memories of Displacement: The Poetry and Prejudice of Dwelling', Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies, The University of Chicago Press, 2002, p. 130

[5] According to Sigmund Freud, *heimlich* 'is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is, in some way, a subspecies of *heimlich*.' For further clarification, see 'The Uncanny', trans. James Strachey, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 17, 1955, p. 226.

[6] Sudipta Kaviraj's reflections on early nineteenth century Calcutta cast the city as 'a place of new ambitions' and disorienting dreams; dreams which were not historically familiar because they weren't 'conventionally cherished through the social grammar of desires', hence pulling into focus the risks attendant to indulging in the city's 'moral adventures'. While Tagore's protagonists may have consciously chosen to situate themselves away from the urban gaze to script their own desires, both characters were distilled by modernity: armed with a distinctly modern disposition of detached association to elicit rewards, each exhibiting in their relentless hunger for 'excess' an untroubled, unconscious correlation of materialist gain and happiness – a malady pervading the collective unconscious of the metropolis. See his essay, 'The Art of Despair: The Sense of the City in Modern Bengali Poetry' in *The Invention of Private Life* (Permanent Black, 2014, p. 272-300)

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[7] The author writes of Fanibhushan as a patient but foolish man; a master of anglicized finesse who bought into a transactional notion of love, treating material comforts as a guarantor of affection.
[8] Freud states *heimlich* 'is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or another a subspecies of *heimlich*.' See Sigmund Freud's 'Das Unheimliche [The Uncanny]' (1919), [trans. James Strachey] in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 17, 1955, p. 226.

[9] Owen Davies writes: '*As well as being where people most often breathed their last, it was also the room where deep emotions were most frequently manifested. It was a place for dreaming, having sex, exchanging intimate confidences and expressing solitary anguish. Undressed in the darkness, this was where people felt most exposed psychologically*.' in 'The Geography of Haunting', *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)
[10] Max Weber writes: '*[T]hose who without reservation [surrender] themselves to it as an instinct – the Dutch captain, for example, who "would sail through hell for profit, even if he burned his sails."* in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Routledge, 2012, p. 20-21. While Monimalika was not interested in profit per se, an unchecked surrender to such proverbial instincts did prove fatal.

[11] Also see Ruth Parkin-Gounelas's *Literature and Psychoanalysis, Intertextual Readings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 127.

[12] See Mark Neocleous's essay 'The Political Economy of the Dead: Marx's Vampires' on the importance of the oft-used literary metaphors of the 'living dead' within Marxian frameworks of capital.

[13] Laing uses this phrase as a synonym for loneliness itself.

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