Ksenija Kondali

The Spatial Imaginary of New York: A Literary and Cultural Study

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Contents

This volume aims to illuminate the ambiguities of New York City against the backdrop of history, culture, globalization, and transnationalism while reconsidering the interdependence between space and social structures. Following ideas from scholarship that include spatial and spatial literary studies about the complex and contested ways in which space is socially produced, constructed, and represented in fiction, this analysis examines the imaginary of the urbanscape by exploring Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) and Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* (2008) as literary illustrations. The novels' urban imagination and visions of this city are challenged by diasporic concerns, transnational processes, power relations and identity formation in mapping the spatial configuration and impact of the city on their characters. The intertwining of space and imaginative forms is analyzed within the framework of constructing an ideological city, bereft of the ambiguities of the American Dream and new cartographies amid the global insecurities of the early twenty-first century. This book elucidates issues of spatiality in general, and those of New York City specifically, and invites its readers to explore the beguiling interplay of narration, urban space, and identity.

1. Introduction:
Conceptualizing Spatiality in Literature

In literary history, especially since the age of industrialization, the city has taken the central stage in such a large number of texts that literature and urban space seem inseparable. In numerous writings about urban experiences in fiction, the diversity of views and the ambivalent visions of the city continue to provide readers and critics alike with ample material to engage them in their own way, evident in the unwaning popularity of such literary production and scholarship, quite possibly because "[u]rban space is never just the product of architects and urban planners, […] but it is also constituted by works of art, by the media, and by academic discourse" (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 3). Much of this attraction and topicality emanates from the notion that the city may be understood as an "imagined" locus that we construct for ourselves in our very existence within it, and therefore its transformative nature is what constitutes its force. As an example, James Donald asserts that the city constitutes "an *imagined environment*", involving "the discourses, symbols, metaphors and fantasies through which we ascribe meaning to the modern experience of urban living" (1992: 422). In recent decades, the complexity of the contemporary, post-industrial city of the global urban age has given rise to a particularly intense and interesting presence in both novels and films. Urban places and spaces, particularly in metropolises, signify the disaffection caused by globalization, or, more specifically, by the global neoliberal capital and its impact on urban life. The city and its transformation, exemplified in the city locations as fashioned by fiction and film, have become integral to the imagination of the global city in the twenty-first century.

Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the culture of the contemporary city "is not just the subject of representations constituted through different categories of knowledge […] and different disciplines […], it is also addressed by different genders, ethnicities, ideologies, races, classes, sexual orientations, nationalities, theoretical differences of every shape and form" (King 1996: 2). In terms of literary representations of

urban space, New York has long been considered the epitome of modern urbanity with a global preeminence, where the tensions of the different traditions, races, genders, faiths, cultural norms, and languages, as well as other affiliations and practices frame the raw reality of tough urban survival and the struggle for upward social mobility. It is hardly surprising that it is a city of global stature in multiple ways: "Every continent on the globe contributed people to the point where there were nearly 180 languages being spoken in the city at the turn of the century. New York embodied globalization like no other city on earth" (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: 690).

This study[1] weaves two primary threads: the first is the phenomenon of the city in general and of New York specifically, against the backdrop of spatiality-oriented literary studies; the second presents examples drawn from selected contemporary novels that frame the American[2] and broader context of such urban experiences. Following an overview of the field of spatial literary studies, its traits and relevance for this academic discussion, the text proceeds to highlight the implications of the spatial turn through several key theorists and selected methodological and theoretical developments originating in human geography in the two final decades of the twentieth century, that led to the spatial turn in the humanities in the 2000s. The subsequent section frames spatial (literary) studies within the discipline of American Studies in order to introduce the potential of reading the city of New York using the selected fictional texts as examples of contemporary explorations of the imaginary city.

1.1. The Spatial Turn and Spatial Literary Studies

As one of the crucial elements facilitating human activity, space converges everything, both the mundane and the exceptional, not excluding time and narratives. This feature has led Robert Tally Jr. to propose the convincing rationale that:

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[1]   This chapter draws upon and extends work initially formulated in the first chapter of Kondali 2017.

[2]   The use of the word "America" throughout this text predominantly refers to the United States of America, with the awareness that such naming is contested due to the reduced signification of the United States through this geographical spatial designation.

[W]hether we limit ourselves to the text itself, to the reader's response to it, or to a mixture of the two, we find literature to be thoroughly bound up in a network of relations with space. Generally speaking, space and spatiality, like time and temporality, have always been part of literature and literary studies. (2017: 1)

Tally represents a key theorist of the latest stage of multidisciplinary scholarship dedicated to the study of space and place, expanded by the spatial turn[3] in the humanities and social sciences. Although the theoretical consideration of space reaches far into the past and encompasses different disciplines, the last quarter of the previous century saw a more systematic dedication to the phenomenon of space conditioned by social and cultural aspects in a cross-disciplinary and transdisciplinary manner[4]. Perhaps contrary to some reservations that the spatial turn is just another theoretical fad, several decades later, the field of spatial studies remains a strong presence in academic discussions and literary analysis. As Catalina Neculai points out, it is also an evolving critical practice:

[A] geo-literary disciplinary crossbreed is still a project in the making. Two complementary critical gestures appear to be necessary: developing suitable ways in which the findings of human and urban geography can be brought to bear effectively upon the (re)production of space in fictional writing; and demonstrating that the literary imaginary may contribute to the knowledge of space and place, and to the reform and adjustment of socio-spatial practices themselves. (2014: 22)

With this analysis I hope to be able to contribute to the continuing critical attention to urban space which has not subsided since the spatial turn. The reaffirmation of space in theoretical inquiry was initiated in the 1960s, when the traditional sense of space that saw space as the setting or a neutral container came under scrutiny. Space was no longer seen as a mere void filled with content, like an empty container, "but as a fluid, heterogenic, and composite world, as a palimpsest (Gerard Genette), as

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[3]   The term was first used by Edward Soja in his 1989 volume *Postmodern Geographies*, in a subheading title "Uncovering Western Marxism's spatial turn" (1989: 39). The use of the key word evolved towards a paradigm shift that was focused on space rather than time (building on Foucault's ideas), but was heavily influenced by the neo-Marxist propositions of Henri Lefebvre. The explication of the author's ideas follows in the subsequent sections of this text.

[4]   For an earlier version of this discussion, see Kondali, *Prepleti paradigmi* (2017).

a hyperspace that produces derivative spaces, as a referent for an experience of the real, as a product of speech, and as a construct of social forces and power discourses" (Shymchyshyn 2021: 13-14). Therefore, space is practice, conditioned by causes and social relations, as "[g]eography matters, not for the simplistic and overly used reason that everything happens in space, but because *where* things happen is crucial to knowing *how* and *why* they happen" (Warf and Arias 2008: 1). However, within several years this understanding was further fostered by new perceptions of space as a social construct and relational network while the city gained interest as a readable text[5]. It seems justified, therefore, to insist that since the inception of the spatial turn "spatial practice has thus been regarded as inseparable from social practice" (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 6).

The development of spatially-focused literary studies is closely tied to criticism in a range of fields including literary geography and spatial humanities, with the resulting effect on contemporary research into the interrelations among space, place, and literature. This is not to assert that past scholarship has dedicated no attention to the relationship between literature and space or place, but "the development of distinctive scholarly practices related to that work within literary studies or within such spatially oriented sciences as geography are relatively recent" (Tally 2021b: 317). Tally's findings have been informed by the work of Bertrand Westphal who has advanced the long-standing symbolic dimension in understanding space:

> Historically, space has always been subject to symbolic readings. The concrete details of geography often relate to a spiritual hermeneutic rather than to immediate observation. […] Space and the world in which it unfolds are the fruits of a symbolic system, of a speculative movement, which is also a glimmer of the beyond, and (let us venture the word) of the imaginary. This imaginary is not entirely cut off from reality. (Westphal 2011: 1)

The traditional and limited outlook on spatial studies and criticism as pertinent only for, and limited to, material, real places has thus been successfully challenged by these arguments. Simultaneously, recent novelistic

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[5] In the later section of this volume, the examination of social spatial practices through literature will be steered in conjunction with Michel de Certeau and his arguments, which, albeit not the first in this field, are of great relevance in this context.

production has equally seen a surge in versatility and hybridity, as one critic has declared: "Contemporary fictions are anything but homogeneous. On the contrary, they are interesting precisely for their ability to locate themselves in the interstices – the spaces between national cultures, genders and histories" (Morrison 2003: 7). This statement refers to the geographical, cultural, and imaginary dimensions of fiction and the potential of such writing to reflect socio-spatial interdependencies.

It comes as no surprise that in numerous contemporary American novels the city has taken central stage in the literary imagination, with its roots going back over a hundred years. The inception of the urban imaginary in American literature is linked to the heightened industrialization from the early nineteenth century through the first two decades of the twentieth century, when the United States saw massive urbanization that in turn triggered diverse and developing literary production. A host of new technological and social changes transformed not only the spatial configuration, but also the human experience of space and time. City living is emblematic not just of a change in housing, but also of a shift in modern consciousness because the public gradually came to understand that newspaper reporting and factual representation were insufficient to portray the changing realities of urban life. The literary response came from authors of diverse outlooks and styles, frequently through new narrative techniques more suited to convey urbanity and the city was thus re-created and reimagined. The first large American urban centers arose from the early nineteenth century and by the first two decades of the twentieth century had become synonymous with metropolitan urbanity, with all the associated facets of city dynamics, as laid out in the following explication:

> At least since the emergence of the modern metropolis, that is, the city has become one of the most crucial topoi in the representation and reflection of human experience. Through the immediate encounter of various cultural and class backgrounds the city has therefore become the central location for negotiating as well as articulating different identities and interests. All of these constitute performative acts that take part in the semantic formation of urban space and at the same time open it up to constant and ongoing redefinition. (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 3-4)

Galvanized by this urban growth, new perceptions and discourses concerning space evolved, only to peak in the poststructural change

from place to space in the 1960s, thanks in part to, among others, theorists Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, David Harvey, and Fredric Jameson, who contributed to the ideas on how the prioritizing of spatiality over temporality supported the understanding of postmodernity. An extended consideration on the key ideas of spatiality is appropriate to illustrate the arc of this field of inquiry.

An immense contribution to what is perhaps the most widely known appraisal of the importance of space was delivered by Michel Foucault in his 1967 lecture "Des espaces autres" ("Of Other Spaces"), only translated into English and published posthumously in 1986, in which Foucault declared that, if we consider that the nineteenth century was governed by a major preoccupation with history, the era of the late twentieth century was likely to be dominated by spatiality: "The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtapositions, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (Foucault 1986: 22). This now famous declaration is typically hailed as ground-breaking for a more substantive consideration of space as an important dimension for dealing with concerns such as power negotiations, cultural conflict, and issues of identity. It took almost two decades for Foucault's lecture to appear in print, and interestingly, it was published in 1984, the same year Fredric Jameson published his seminal essay "Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" that "introduced to the world his influential concept of cognitive mapping" (Tally 2021b: 317). The authors pioneered the proposition that the spatial turn aims to advance the understanding of space as part of social practices and as crucial for the emergence of cultural phenomena (elucidated also in Foucault's "Of Other Spaces"):

> The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another." (1989: 23)

Foucault considers the intertwining of time and space in human existence and the socialization of spaces as determined by our experiences of space, the events occurring in a certain space, and our thoughts and feelings in terms of how we relate to space. Space thus emerges as the sphere where meaning is created, while previous notions of history are confronted, particularly in the late twentieth century and postmodernity. Whereas in "Of Other Spaces," Foucault describes heterotopias as "counter-sites" such as asylums, prisons, gardens, cemeteries, brothels, colonies, and boats (1989: 24-27), in his earlier book *The Order of Things*, he explicates the concept of heterotopia in relation to the city, suggesting the tense, even colliding nature of urban spatiality:

> when applied to the city [heterotopia] suggests a place capable of juxtaposing in a single locale several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. It is 'disturbing' because in the heterotopia things do not 'hold together' neatly in order, but are spaces of 'contest', of 'a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions' where 'no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again' because the city is too unstable and changing to sustain them as fixed and final. (Foucault 1966: xviii)

Foucault's ideas exerted a strong influence on French theorist in social sciences and literature Michel de Certeau who advances the idea that mere physical determination does not suffice for the purpose of defining social space and, in a related manner, that space by necessity should be viewed as a reflection of society. His book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (first published in 1974 and translated into English in 1984) represents a foundational work in exploring the ways spatial practices establish identities and transform space into lived places[6].

Disputing that space and place should be viewed as "a material and unchanging given which is then invested with meaning by human labor and imagination, to an understanding of it as dynamically produced and 'always already' imbued with meaning" (Gilbert 2009: 103), the work of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey was of crucial importance for establishing a new spatial approach. The main advocate of space as the "product" of social practice, i.e., of the production of space as a cultural process, that had a substantial impact on spatial theory and the postmodern spatial

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[6]   A more detailed analysis of de Certeau's spatial theory follows in this volume.

turn is philosopher Henri Lefebvre. In his study *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre offers his view of a socially produced space since space is "tied to the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, signs, codes and 'frontal' relations" (1992: 36). Drawing on Foucault's ideas and poststructuralist findings, Lefebvre presents a critical analysis of "differential space" (1992: 22) and cautions that space does not simply function as a "container" of social relations, but rather is produced by these relations. In Lefebvre's Marxist-influenced theory, the means of production of a society also produces space, i.e., the production of social space is hinged on social practices and structures of power. In other words, space "is a tool for thought and action. Space enables and space constrains. Alongside history and metrics like race, class, and gender, space demands our attention as a foundational feature of social production and struggle" (Crowley 2021: 206). For Lefebvre, "[s]pace is social morphology" (1992: 94), and the social configuration of human communities may be observed in daily life and people's behavior in public spaces, such as cities, streets, and houses, and social space thus functions "as a tool for the analysis of society" (Lefebvre 1992: 33-34). Lefebvre argues that the spatial practices of individuals are in continuous exchange with the regulated "representations of space" conditioned by the dominant relations of production and hence constitute official organizations of space. "Representations of space" are part of his "trialectic" conception in the production of social space consisting of a dialectical correlation between the given dimension, spatial practice, and representational spaces. "Spatial practice" for Lefebvre is "perceived space", i.e., space which relates to everyday space, space (re)produced within a particular society, while "representations of space" are "conceived space", typically understood as the space of normative institutions such as government officials, scientists, and urban planners. The third element is "representational spaces" or lived spaces, drawn from different aspects of the spatiality of the other categories and connected to the private dimension of the social production of space, thus denoting unofficial, often aesthetic conceptions of space (Lefebvre 1992: 39). For literary theory and analysis, this category of space is the space created by writers and artists. Ultimately, Lefebvre concludes, "space 'is' whole and broken, global and fragmented, at one and

the same time. Just as it is at once conceived, perceived, and directly lived" (1992: 355– 56). For the subsequent extension of spatial categories into other spheres of research and critical practices, especially feminist and postcolonial scholarship, it is important to note that Lefebvre alerts us to the inexorable workings of power relations in the social spatialization and destabilization of entrenched homogenizing tendencies:

> Differences endure or arise on the margins of the homogenized realm, either in the form of resistances or in the form of externalities (lateral, heterotopical, heterological). What is different is, to begin with, what is excluded: the edges of the city, shanty towns, the spaces of forbidden games, of guerrilla war, of war. Sooner or later, however, the existing centre and the forces of homogenization must seek to absorb all such differences, and they will succeed if these retain a defensive posture and no counterattack is mounted from their side. In the latter event, centrality and normality will be tested as to the limits of their power to integrate, to recuperate, or to destroy whatever has transgressed. (Lefebvre 1992: 373)

Lefebvre's trialectics has seen various interpretations and appropriations, among the most prominent being that of the urban theorist Edward Soja, whose variation of the Lefebvrian triad and social space interconnection was dedicated to the exploration of "how power relations and discipline are inscribed in the apparent innocuous spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology" (Soja 1989: 6). Recognizing that "space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience" (1989: 80), Soja advances the spatial dialectic through the reinsertion of space in critical social theories initiated in his volume *Postmodern Geographies*, while proposing a new concept in his 1996 study *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Soja's objective in *Thirdspace* is "to encourage you to think differently about the meanings and significance of space and those related concepts that compose and comprise the inherent *spatiality of human life*: place, location, locality, landscape, environment, home, city, region, territory, and geography" (1996: 1). Drawing on Foucault's heterotopia and Lefebvre's trialectics, and their ideas of a complex, multifaceted spatiality, Soja offers his own spatial model, announcing "the concept of Thirdspace most broadly to highlight what I consider to be the most interesting new ways of thinking about space and social spatiality" (1996:

2). Thus, Soja denotes Lefebvre's category of perceived space or physical space as "Firstspace" – "the concrete materiality of spatial forms", while "conceived space" becomes "Secondspace"– "ideas about space, re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms" (Soja 1996: 10–11). Soja's modification of Lefebvre's third spatial dimension of "lived space" is "Thirdspace"– "the real-and-imagined places as arena of socially lived life […] which is the 'real, new' way of conceiving space and space-making". This category originates from the "'thirding' of the spatial imagination", that produces a new, different mode of thinking about space that uses the "material and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance and meaning" (1996: 11). As a heterogenous, open space of inherent fluctuation, Thirdspace signifies the following:

> a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in *spatial praxis*, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power. (Soja 1996: 31)

Soja's concept of "Thirdspace," which represents a "place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives" (1996: 5), proves a useful method for analyzing spaces of difference in what Soja names "real-and-imagined spaces of their respective worlds," as having the potential to both restrict and allow resistance. Deploying Lefebvre's theoretical framework, Soja establishes the ideological implications of physical and conceptual space because "[p]ower is ontologically embedded in the center-periphery relation" (1996: 31). In his reading of Thirdspace as a "space of collective resistance" (Soja 1996: 35), Soja extends Lefebvre's theory on the social production of space and merges it with the spatial construction of power, and underscores that "power—and the specifically cultural politics that arise from its workings—is contextualized and made concrete, like all social relations, in the (social) production of (social) space" (1996: 87). This interdependence of space and power vested in Thirdspace can uphold the present political situation or have liberatory potential, as it is "also a meeting place for all

peripheralized or marginalized 'subjects' wherever they may be located. In this politically charged space, a radically new and different form of *citizenship (citoyenneté)* can be defined and realized" (1996: 35). Recognizing the emancipatory possibility of Thirdspace, Soja refers to bell hooks' radical act of "choosing marginality" (1996: 35) that indicates "a critical turning-point in the construction of other forms of counter-hegemonic or subaltern identity and more embracing communities of resistance" (1996: 97).[7]

Soja's invocation of Thirdspace as a space encompassing a radical and expanding zone that is generated and inhabited by marginalized persons is indicative of his awareness of the necessity for open space, but also testifies to the poststructuralist influence on geographies of resistance. Similar to other radical geographers such as Lefebvre, Harvey, and Gregory, Soja discusses postmodern representations of geographical spatiality and proposes conceptions that connect geography, architecture and urban studies, reverberating decades later, in current urban society. For Soja, "spatiality has long been synonymous with the urban" as he traces the effect spatiality has exerted "from Neolithic Catalhuyuk to the contemporary global city" (Warf and Arias 2008: 7). Soja's third book (completing his own trialectics of spatial studies) entitled *Postmetropolis* is dedicated to exploring the changing aspects of industrial capitalist cityspace. It engages cosmopolis as "the globalization of cityscape"[8], weaving the previous scholarship on urban globalization (such as that of Manuel Castells), but also transcending some of the limitations of the existent argumentation by supporting the use of the term *cosmopolis* "to refer to the globalized and culturally

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[7] Soja refers to hooks' work throughout *Thirdspace*, particularly to her book *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (1990).

[8] The term "cityscape" brings to mind the conceptualization of five "landscapes" of globalization by Arjun Appadurai, and the "anthropology of globalization and the signifying ending '-scape' for derivative words in the transnational framework". Appadurai offers the following dimensions of global cultural currents, i.e., "imaginative landscapes" to formulate the complex "fluid" and "irregular" dynamics or "flows" of globalization: "ethnoscapes" (multidirectional and globalizing flows of people), "financescapes" (flows of capital), "ideoscapes" (the topography of ideas), "mediascapes" (the flows and cultural imprints of globalized images), and "technoscapes" (the multidirectional and multimodal patterns of technological evolution and technology-mediated exchange) (1996: 32).

heterogeneous city-region" (Soja 2009: 229). Acknowledging the early stage of determining the impact and significance this term has created, Soja advances the capacity of cosmopolis to steer the discourse on globalization and the postmetropolitan transition onto new paths, towards possible assistance in reevaluating and recentering "the specifically urban discourse" to transcend the focus on the negative aspects of globalization. Such an approach would also take into account "the new opportunities and challenges provoked by globalization to rethink from a more explicitly spatial perspective established notions of citizenship and democracy, civil society and the public sphere, community development and cultural politics, social justice and the moral order" (Soja 2009: 231).

Probing the emancipatory potential of Thirdspace to destabilize binaries, Soja's methodology in exploring postmodern spatiality incorporates postcolonial, feminist, and ethnic aspects, evident in his laudatory acknowledgment of critics such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, and Arjun Appadurai and their expanding critical spatial thought on many research areas, including literary criticism (Soja 2009: 25). However, in addition to Foucault's heterotopia, Lefebvre's spatial trialectics, Soja's Thirdspace, and Harvey's time-space compression, there are also important studies not necessarily or exclusively spatial in nature, but belonging to various research fields that explore the interplay between social production and symbolic negotiation such as in the critical cartography by Denis Cosgrove, and, specifically, those of empire by Derek Gregory, margins by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, interstitial third space by Homi Bhabha, diaspora space by Avtar Brah, and gender in studying geography by Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose. This volume will address a selection of the above theorists, by no means comprehensive or finite in ambit, but striving to incorporate the representative "diverse critical and theoretical traditions in disclosing, analysing, and exploring the significance of space, place, and mapping in literature and in the world" (Tally 2021a: 2), as constituents of spatial literary studies. As Robert Tally points out, such a broad and diverse range of theoretical concerns corroborates the potential for "transdisciplinary encounters" of spatial literary studies (2021b: 329), while retaining a focus on "literature *per se*, including matters related to the interpretation, criticism, and evaluation of texts" (Tally 2021b:

329), thus allowing for the emergence of new textual geographies and literary cartographies (Tally 2021a: 2). In so doing, spatial literary studies facilitates a critical awareness of how space and place are represented in the "real-and-imagined" spaces of the world (cf. Soja 1996), and draws the attention of literary studies to the ways "literature reflects such understandings of space – how they operate thematically and at the level of plot and setting – but also to how literature shapes the understanding of space, how it intervenes in culture to produce new understandings" (Gilbert 2009: 105). The invigoration of literary studies and practices by the "spatial turn" showcases its wide impact across humanities, social sciences and literary geography while contributing to the rise of ecocriticism and its related field of geocriticism[9]. The centrality of space for the understanding of society in general has been revitalized by geocriticism because "the geocritical emphasis on space, place, and mapping correlates strongly to the conviction among spatially oriented critics that space is of the utmost social importance" (Tally and Battista 2016: 2). Geocriticism investigates "the human spaces that the mimetic arts arrange through, and in, texts, the image, and cultural interactions related to them" (Westphal 2011: 6). It pays particular attention to the "hidden relations of power in those other spaces" that other critical theories of the environment, such as ecocriticism, might overlook (Tally 2013: 114). Consequently, the relevance of space and spatial studies has gained broad recognition and continues to exert a critical influence across various disciplines, including literary and cultural studies. Robert Tally has probably been the single most influential scholar in this field in recent times. He terms his contribution to the reaffirmation of space in analyzing fictional texts "spatial literary studies", a theoretical-critical mode that focuses on "the relations between space and writing, offers a new perspective that seems particularly momentous in the twenty-first century, as borders and boundaries seemed to be transgressed, erased, redrawn, or reconceived almost daily" (Tally 2017: 3). He emphasizes the evident development in defining the scope and method of "spatial literary studies" over the past several years, which has variously been imbricated with other labels and research, such as literary geography. In

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[9] For more details on geocriticism concerning its trajectory of theoretical development, see Tally 2011, especially pp. 1-3.

his most recent book *Spatial Literary Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Space, Geography, and the Imagination* (Tally 2021b: 319), he emphasizes that the term "spatial literary studies" does not designate "a distinct field of its own but simply describes multiple practices and approaches to space, place, and literature" and is predominantly contained within the field of literature, and, by extension, the humanities. By comparison, literary geography is a more interdisciplinary practice linked more closely to geography and social sciences, as "a more spatially oriented version of literary history" (Tally 2021b: 322). Thus, literary geography, particularly the critical variant of this scholarship, is an interdisciplinary approach dedicated to probing the relationships between space and power as well as the way in which space and geography are depicted in literature, but also how they influence literary writing in form and style, with varying foci in their ideas. An important outcome of the spatial turn is therefore both the contribution of a new methodology to established disciplines and practices as well as the spawning of fresh and different interpretative frameworks, as Robert Tally (2017: 4) recognizes in "recent versions of hemispheric, transnational, or postcolonial American Studies", and identifying a "planetary turn" that incited "many of the traditional discourses within modern language and literary studies to make fascinating connections among the local, regional, national, and global circuits of cultural production."

Pivotal in extending the consideration of space beyond the range of geography is David Harvey whose 1973 study *Social Justice and the City* recommends him as the founder of Marxist geography and an uncompromising critic of current spatial studies. He affirms the substitution of the question "what is space?" with the question "how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?" (1988: 13-14). Harvey's early work provoked the reassessment of numerous social issues and sparked a debate about the inequalities relative to spatiality since Harvey considers social justice not merely as an issue of eternal justice and morality, but also as conditioned by social processes (1988: 15). Examining the relations between place and space, Harvey contends: "Place, in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct" (1996: 293). He sees the framework for issues of spatiality and identity as being built on the changes in modern capitalism within which space is not

merely the physical site of the capitalist order, but the foundation of social values that are continuously situated, deconstructed and reconstituted. Like Henri Lefebvre, Harvey departs from the traditional notion that space is a material and unchangeable phenomenon given meaning by labor and imagination. Rather, space is something dynamic and produced and therefore already imbued with meaning. Inspired by, but not utterly reliant on Lefebvre's trialectics, Harvey sees space not as an ontological category *per sei*, but as a social dimension: "social space is complex, non-homogeneous, perhaps discontinuous" (1988: 35). In keeping with this notion, Harvey insists that spatial forms are "seen not as inanimate objects within which the social process unfolds, but as things which 'contain' social processes in the same manner that social processes *are* spatial" (1988: 10-11).

David Harvey's canonical study *The Condition of Postmodernity* marked a shift towards the development of the postmodern spatial turn, particularly his theorization of the "time-space compression" (1990: 54) as quintessential to postmodernity. Tracing the "transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation" and the resultant "intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life" (1989: 284), Harvey elucidates the interconnection of the neoliberal economy, globalization, and postmodernity. The transition to flexible capital has resulted in the emphasis being placed on "the values and virtues of instantaneity [...] and disposability" (1989: 286), where cultural values also become commodified and thus "disposability should be understood as more than just throwing away produced goods [...] but also being able to throw away values, lifestyles, stable relationships, and attachments to things, buildings, places, people, and received ways of doing and being" (1989: 286). This point, along with the shifting conception of time that has the effect of a fragmented sense of space is relevant for the subsequent understanding of the literary texts in this volume. His greatest contribution to postmodern spatiality through his theory of "time-space compression" (1990: 54) resists the delineation of time and space, as well as of history and space, building on Foucault's idea of the necessity to distinguish between the modernist preoccupation with history and

the postmodern focus on spatiality[10] (Harvey 1990: 351). Foucault's influence is evident in Harvey's argumentation that "the social transformations of space, place, and environment are neither neutral nor innocent with respect to practices of domination and control" (2001: 185), illustrated in the dominance of space. Hence, as Harvey argues, "The geographical imagination is far too pervasive and important a fact of intellectual life to be left alone to geographers" (1995: 161). Since the late 1980s the compression of space and time has been intensified due to flexible accumulation and post-Fordist capitalism, with accelerated production, exchange and consumption, along with the important role of "spatial dispersal and geographical isolation" in how capital has influenced labor, especially in the urban working-class context (Harvey 1993: 88). The new information technologies and related globalizing transformations in the economy have further increased space-time and the related spatial dispersal.

Like Lefebvre and Harvey, theorist Derek Gregory investigates the contribution of the science of geography to the general interpretation of space, and in his volume *Geographical Imaginations* calls for the intersection of geography, political economy, social theory, and cultural studies (1994: 6). Drawing on Foucault's ideas about space, power and knowledge interacting with each other to produce a new reality, Gregory proposes the term "geography and the-world-as-exhibition" which is "a specifically modern constellation of power, knowledge, and spatiality in which visualization occupies a central place" (Gregory 1994: 5). His vision of critical human geography – "of a geographical imagination" – assumes the promulgation of the ways in which everyday places, spaces and bodies are produced. More precisely, he believes that "any critical human geography must attend to the ways in which meanings are spun around the *topoi* of

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[10] Interestingly, such a method of reading spatiality is challenged by Nicholas Spencer whose discussion of space in American fiction turns away "from the monolithic terminology of modernism and postmodernism" in order to render "a nuanced account of the rise of critical space in twentieth-century American fiction". While he acknowledges that "late-twentieth-century American fiction is dominated by spatial concerns," he insists that "such dominant spatiality takes heterogeneous forms and must be viewed as a transformation of the spatial thematics of radical American fiction of the early decades of the twentieth century" (2006: 2). This argumentation exemplifies both the range and diversity of lenses in re-considering the relevance of spatiality in US fiction specifically, and literature in general.

different lifeworlds, threaded into social practices and woven into relations of power" (Gregory 1994: 76). Informed by, but not limited to poststructuralism (1994: 10), Gregory's ideas reflect the growing interest in spaces of diversity and the refuting of previous geographical conclusions that space is made up of structures in favor of the interpretation of space as a series of relations. Influenced by the poststructuralist turn to space, which has brought about new approaches to the understanding of modern societies and spatial practices, Gregory believes that "[t]he production of space is not an incidental by-product of social life but a moment intrinsic to its conduct and constitution, and for geography to *make* a difference – politically and intellectually – it must be attentive *to* difference" (Gregory 1994: 414). The argument of difference concerning spatialized social organizations also informs the ways in which race, gender, and class are constructed in terms of space.

1.2. Spatiality, Spatial Categories, and the City

Spatial studies views space as being constructed by social interactions, defining and shaping gender differences that are, in turn, also produced by space. As leading cultural geographer Don Mitchell concludes, "gender is spatially constructed in that it is constructed in and through particular social spaces (however defined)" (2000: 219). In keeping with Lefebvre's understanding that places are developed through the intersecting of various discourses, practices, and ideologies, the constructed nature of space has also been endorsed by Doreen Massey, probably the foremost scholar in the critical inquiry of spatiality and gender in literary studies. Massey defines the "spatial as a social construct" (1985: 11), and considers "space as always under construction" (2005: 9). One of her key conceptions emerges from her critique of the binary of time and space, where time is understood as becoming and progress, and space as being and stasis. Massey contends that "space is not static (i.e., time-less), nor time spaceless [...] spatiality and temporality are different from each other but neither can be conceptualised as the absence of the other" (1993: 155), and proposes instead "space–time," an inseparable and interactive concept which identifies the human interpretation of space as inextricably tied to temporal

experiences. Thus, in her 1994 study *Space, Place, and Gender*, Massey defines space-time as "a field of contestatory interrelationships, out of which meanings were constantly constructed and renegotiated. Place(s) were part – and a potentially valuable, but by no means the only or ultimately important part – of those meanings" (Massey 1994: 136-7). Massey argues that time and space should be recognized as not being opposed to each other, but interrelated (1994: 264), where space constitutes a set of relations, in which "the social is inexorably also spatial" (1994: 246), and places are understood "not so much as bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations" (1994: 121). Place should therefore be interpreted dependent on what lies beyond it, as "a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey 1994: 154), and are conceptualized as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings" (Massey 1993: 66). These notions have particular relevance for the analysis of the relational nature of spatiality and gender, challenging the widespread inclination to understand both as invariable, bordered sites of a set identity. Massey states that "space and place, spaces and places, and our sense of them (and such related things as our degree of mobility) are gendered through and through. Moreover, they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time" (1994: 186). The experience of space is therefore shaped by specific conditions, and tends to be more diverse in the perceptions of those who are in some way contested due to gender, ethnicity, or class, etc. Hence, in her argumentation, places are identified "as formed out of numerous social relationships stretched over space" (Massey 2003: 69), and places are therefore not fixed sites, but change over time like processes, or, in Massey's words, they are "spatio-temporal events" (2005: 130), that also reflect potentially uneven and unequal access to power and space. As a result of this concern, feminist spatial studies is critically informed by Foucault's theory of power (1980), thus contributing to the intersectionality of gender, power and spatial relations.

Another cultural geographer with an interest in the interdependencies between space and gender is Gillian Rose who draws on Luce Irigaray and her idea of space as "a fantasy of something all enveloping, something everywhere, unavoidable, unfailingly supportive" (quoted in Rose

1996: 62)[11]. Unsurprisingly, a great deal of spatial consideration in feminist geography refers to the understanding of patriarchal power and confronting its agency. Citing Irigaray's understanding of the imaginary, Rose discusses the difference between real and non-real spaces as "constructed through the terms of sexual difference. […] Material real space could thus be re-described as the effect of masculinist power, its very materiality also its particular masculinity; but non-real space is also the effect of masculinist power, its lack of reality the sign of its feminization" (1996: 60). Space is characterized by the connection between the self and the other, and, consequently, strongly tied to the formation of identity, necessarily conditioned by gender issues. For Daphne Spain, the interaction between space and gender is clear, and in her 1992 book *Gendered Spaces*, she explains that "architectural and geographic spatial arrangements have reinforced status differences between women and men. [...] 'Gendered spaces' separate women from the knowledge used by men to produce and reproduce power and privilege." (1992: 3). The study of patriarchal pressure has prompted feminist geography to reconsider the issues of inequalities, subordination and marginalization inscribed in space. In a similar vein, "feminist literary critics have begun to undertake new cartographies, to trace the ways writers inscribe gender onto the symbolic representations of space within texts, whether through images of physical confinement, of exile and exclusions, of property and territoriality, or of the body as the interface between individual and communal identities" (Higonnet 1994: 2). Patriarchal social structures strive to impose borders upon space and the identity inscribed in it, manifesting spatial-social interdependence, but also serving as a key focus for many literary authors. Space thus assumes a special position for writers and readers alike, especially in ethnic writings as such authors endeavor to claim a place in literature and society, while redefining or determining their place in society as rightfully theirs, frequently situated in urban contexts. Despite its limited area, the city seems to offer the possibility to overcome clear-cut edges and borders in order

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[11] Within geography, both theoretically and practically, feminism has called attention to multiple forms of femininity and sexuality that probe the patriarchal norms inherent in various spaces. Of particular concern is the body as a space inscribed with meaning, often viewed, according to Gillian Rose, as an indicator of inclusion or exclusion (1993: 250).

to claim space and its conflicting social practices. The urban environment and its lived experience have typically been characterized by change, diversity, and contention, leading critics to conclude that "[d]ifference, rather than sameness, is essential to this reading of the city" (Campbell and Kean 2005: 164). This thread brings us to the issue of space as one of the main elements in the formation of identity and otherness in general, and of margins and the space in-between, including spaces of heterogeneity, more specifically.

Edward Said is one of the postcolonial theorists who have inspired geographers to study "othered" geographical spaces and to read space through racial and postcolonial lenses. His book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) contributed to exploring how colonial and imperial geographies as well as the "historical experience" have shaped culture "as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography". Said reminds us that this process "is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings" (1993: 6). In his study *Orientalism*, Said advances the investigation of "othered" spaces, viewed by the prejudiced center, i.e., West/Europe-focused outlooks, as deficient or different, and thus denounces the construction of the Orient as Europe's alterity. In his view, geography is an instrument of political measurement and signification that forms and resists meaning. While challenging the very existence of any single person outside of geography and thus beyond the struggle for geography, Said suggests that this struggle is not only one of material, but also of imaginative means, which necessitates geographical imagination (1994: 6). Drawing on Gaston Bachelard's "poetics of space", Said discusses the experience of space as familiar, identified as home, and of its opposite: "[…] often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is 'out there,' beyond one's own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one's own" (1979: 54). Said contends that our knowledge about time and space, or the fields of history and geography, "is more than anything else imaginative" (1979: 55), and introduces the term "imaginative geography", referring to various geographical discourses in historiographic, literary and other sources in which the imaginary assumes a

form of consciousness expressed in such a manner whereby certain social groups are able to claim the territories and space of others based on their imaginative narratives. These interpretations have given rise to the spatialized construction of otherness and set the course for examining geographical otherness in a historical sense, corroborating the argument that the postcolonial subject is based on both real and imagined geographical processes. Following Said's ideas, Joanne Sharp favors the term "imagined geographies", founded on tales and myths, "knowledges came from what we can call 'imagined geographies' based on myth and legend [...] producing a textualised world rather than one based on observation and experience. These imagined geographies were inhabited by imagined others" (2009: 12). Another postcolonial critic who has made an important contribution to debunking dominant and generalized interpretations in postcolonial criticism is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak has reevaluated not only the ramifications of hegemony in society, but also the effect of spatial hegemony[12], specifically related to the historical experiences of imperialism and the key term "subaltern" (Spivak 1990; 1999; 2001). In opposition to the predominantly white, male, heterosexual center, the margins are inherent in social awareness and practice, as a space of difference of the marginalized subjects and their representing hybridity (2001).

The new conceptualization of how we think about space in terms of Thirdspace generally emerges as a considerable challenge to conventional worldviews. A refreshing contribution to this field of inquiry has been offered by Homi K. Bhabha, especially in terms of moving colonial power and knowledge to the center of postcolonial criticism and postcolonial geography. Throughout his oeuvre, but most prominently in his volume *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha employs spatial terms and concepts, confirming his interest in spatiality and its relevance for the contemporary worldview. He contends that in the (post)colonial context subjects occupy what he terms "*in-between* spaces", striving "beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are

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[12] In the colonial and other dominating contexts of world order such as imperialism, the concept of hegemony mobilizes a particular spatial dimension, as indicated by E. Said: "Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control" (1994: 271).

produced in the articulation of cultural differences" (Bhabha 1994: 1), a touchstone of diverse identity norms. It is in this kind of situatedness, in this cultural interstice, that the subjects are both urged and best situated to resist essentialist and hegemonic narratives about time, space, race, and nation. For this reason, Bhabha views the spaces of the margins as privileged locations where the marginalized can subvert and debunk the prevailing knowledge and articulate cultural differences. He maintains that "by exploring this Third Space, we many elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (1994: 39). Building on ideas of the hybridity of identity, the postcolonial reassessment of the Other and critical reconsideration of the "fixed places" of the governing structures, Bhabha analyzes cultures as they "come to be represented by virtue of the processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are very vicariously addressed to – through – an Other" (1994: 58). In this way, Bhabha quashes essentialist understandings of culture and space, and identifies "this hybrid gap, which produces no relief, that the colonial subject takes place, its subaltern position inscribed in that space of iteration" (1994: 58) as the physical location for the expression of hybridity. The marginalized and subjugated are typically relegated to spaces conditioned discursively, limiting their possibilities for action, and therefore only the third space, the *in-between space*, or the margins are areas of discursive subversion and liminality. For that reason, Bhabha advocates this Third Space "which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific meaning of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation" (1994: 36).

Despite the differences in their notions about space, postcolonial theorists share similar visions regarding spatial categories such as center, margins, and liminality, as key to understanding how differences are produced and reproduced. Their shared vision is that of sites of heterogeneity and/or resistance as *loci* that enable a conscious and purposeful contesting of recognized spatial categories and structures of control and pressure. These locations are also integral to the strategies of destabilizing entrenched spatial classifications and yielding radical ideas that enable open and hybrid identities, eschewing binaries, particularly in the post-colonial context due to

the accompanying processes of displacement, particularly concerning exilic identities[13]. In what have become their canonical writings, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin underline the importance of place and displacement as "crucial features of post-colonial discourse", and they consider that "'place' in post-colonial societies is a complex interaction of language, history and environment", while the crux of their approach to place is discourse: "The theory of place does not simply propose a binary separation between the 'place' named and described in language, and some 'real' place inaccessible to it, but rather indicates that in some sense place is language, something in constant flux, a discourse in process" (Ashcroft *et al* 2006: 391)[14]. Their definition of place in their book *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* further solidifies the relationship between place and the mediation by language where place is "a palimpsest of a process in language: the naming by which imperial discourse brings the colonized space 'into being' [...] the simply observed place is a cultural palimpsest built up over centuries and retaining the traces of previous engagements and inscriptions" (Ashcroft *et al* 2007: 175).

The heightened attention to spatial categories has proven a useful trajectory to examine the intricate interplay between place, power, and postcolonial conditions, evident also in recent scholarship, such as Sara Upstone's concept of "post-space." Led by the concepts proposed by Foucault, Soja and Bhabha, Upstone (2009) determines the hybrid and changing nature of space in the contemporary world with the term "post-space" which, in contrast to the colonial use of power that supports the "colonial ordering of location" and thus dominance, is where "a chaotic sense of the spatial on all scales becomes a resource towards the re-visioning of the postcolonial position in society and consequent issues of identity, the possibilities inherent in postcolonial spaces as a direct result of their hybrid histories" (Upstone 2009: 24). The concepts of liminality and the representation of space in urban settings further underpin the processes of

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[13] For an exploration of how geographical dislocations also signify linguistic, cultural, and most importantly psychological displacements, not limited to a single generation, see Al Deek 2016.

[14] Given the centrality of discourse in the understanding of how place and home are constructed, it is important to note, as Emily Johansen warns, that "this conceptualization can obscure the actual physical and material experience of space" (2014: 24).

identity formation, coupled with the challenges of cities generally, and of American city spaces in particular.

1.3. Spatiality and the City in Literature

Most enduringly, the transformations of space have been affected by the heightened industrial production and economic order of capitalism, as argued by a number of theorists, including Edward Soja, David Harvey, and Fredric Jameson. The division of labor in capitalist production has entailed a particular spatiality, connected with its structure and reproduction, but also its temporality. These changes have transpired from technological contemporaneity, inexorably affecting the human experience of space, which can "be read as a highly polyvalent structure endowed with multiple semantic, social, and historic layers, which not only influence but rather constitute our perception of the space surrounding us. And this notion can be extended beyond the field of literary discourse, to urban space" (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 7). The city emerges as an important site of the capitalist economic order and society, embodying the fluid spatiality of the production of space within this context, reflected in its impact on culture, sense of belonging and identity. Rohleder and Kindermann observe that since the 1990s and in the wake of the spatial turn there has been an evident change in discourse in the humanities concerning space, reflected in academic publications on this subject having "a more interdisciplinary character. And it is exactly this point of intertwinement of various seemingly distinct fields of research that seems to us the most promising and fruitful approach to the city" (2020: 4-5). In keeping with Lefebvre's contention that "space is architexture and architecture" (1991: 118), and given the long tradition of the literary examination of place as a fundamental spatial and geographical concept that has also been prominent in the scholarship on literary spatiality, the category of space offers vast possibilities for further exploration. Against the background of these ideas and thanks to spatial literary studies, the city as a specific space has been explored through its various narrative constructions in both the present and the past. The urban setting has long inspired diverse exchanges, explorations and reevaluations, especially in terms of individual and social agency.

Presenting a historical mapping of the city in the Western cultural context, Pamela Gilbert (2009: 107) reminds us that despite the city's place as not only the locus of culture and civilization, but also of its corruptions, it was only late modernity, due to "the rise of the industrial city and the dominance of cultures associated with it," that generated "both a distinctive literature (and readership) and also a distinctive literary understanding of urban space." Gilbert further interrogates the interface between the new type of city with the earlier visions of urbanity, and also how the industrial city is opposed to the ideals of rural or village space with the associated values of "purity, authenticity, and morality. Thus, the modern city is particularly complicated, representing civility and freedom, but also the fall of human beings into relations more characteristic of commodity culture than an idealized pastoral simplicity" (Gilbert 2009: 107).

The sense of urban space as a complex and contradictory environment has permeated other scholarship and cultural texts, corroborating the vision of the city as the conjunction of narrative and space. However, as James Donald cautions, there cannot be a definite representation of the city, but only of some of the features and processes that shape it; thus, as he puts it, "there is no such *thing* as a city. Rather *the city* designates the space produced by the interaction of historically and geographically specific institutions, social relations of production and reproduction, practices of government, forms and media of communication, and so forth" (1992: 427). Similarly, it can be argued that the city is a convergence of the meanings people ascribe to it, bringing their own reading of the space, and seeking ways to produce their own narrative, making it similar to a text. In other words, the city is a construct, much like a text, and it represents "an inscription of man in space" (Barthes 1988: 193). The complexity of space springs from its merging of the material and the symbolic, reflected in "the narrative constitution of urban space, too, since language is also crucial to narrative. Urban space as a semiotic system interacts with the language(s) of narration" (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 11).

The interpretation of space as text is central to Michel de Certeau's spatial theory, especially in his interpretation of the daily experience of urban space that formed "a theory of everyday practices, of lived space, of the disquieting familiarity of the city" (1984: 96). He elucidates the practice

of space, i.e., the fluid and ambiguous nature of space, which is "composed of intersections of mobile elements [. . .] actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it [. . .] like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization" (1984: 117). Although this explanation leads him to probe the relationship between space and place, his primary field of interest and inquiry remains the urban space which signifies a text, typically a complex one. Drawing on phenomenological ideas, and identifying space as "a practiced place" (1984: 117), de Certeau proposes a different viewpoint of the quotidian by considering the everyday practices of space as significant, yet often undervalued, aspects of culture. Hence, everyday activities such as talking, walking, reading, and cooking are tactical in space:

> space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts. [...] Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers. In the same way, an act of reading is the space produced by the practice of a particular place: a written text, i.e., a place constituted by a system of signs. (1984: 118)

Urban space needs to be claimed, in other words, "read" or interpreted, through the practice of mapping or walking in the city, which for de Certeau is equivalent to the speech act through which city dwellers perform their daily spatial habits of moving and the routes through which urban life is lived and produced: "The act of walking […] has a triple 'enunciative' function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian" (1984: 97f). This conceptualization perceives walking as a tactic for the appropriation of space and is worth quoting at length:

> The ordinary practitioners of the city […] walk—an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers […] whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" […] The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. […] A migrational,

or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city. […]

The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other. (1984: 93)

The process whereby city inhabitants-cum-walkers follow itineraries and trajectories, appropriates and produces the text of the city resembling that of readers taking a text and dwelling in it, as a reminder that the production of space is linked to the social milieu. De Certeau writes of spatial practices which "in fact secretly structure the determining conditions of social life" (1984: 96). The resemblance of the practice in language and space is further highlighted by de Certeau: walking the city streets is "a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian, […] it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language), a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation" (1984: 98). De Certeau's ideas of stories, either everyday or literary, in the function of "a means of mass transportation, as metaphorai" (1984: 155) incorporate space as a narrative act, and if a story transports its readers to another place, then movement is also considered part of narration. His slant on "lived space" as instrumental in identifying various aspects of identity through stories has provided a valuable analytical framework that views the city as an intriguing and dynamic mesh of relations and practices. The city is thus not an unchanging, fixed space, but one that is continually refashioned through various performative acts, and the experience of urban space viewed through such a lens then renders the city "a construct, much like a text […] unfolding, challenging, confusing, thrilling and threatening all at the same time" (Campbell and Kean 2005: 156). The complexity of the urban space, with its different perspectives and orders of signification, makes it difficult to grasp, yet it is exactly this feature that imparts "the endless possibility of the city for artists and the fascination for historians and sociologists studying its meanings" (Campbell and Kean 2005: 156). In eluding any definite single meaning, the city does not only suggest its inherent relative nature, "but that certain dominant or prevailing discourses and fixed meanings have emerged in the city through time and that the contexts within which these readings have arisen need to

be reexamined in the light of new theoretical understandings" (Campbell and Kean 2005: 157).

Taking up de Certeau's arguments, Robert Tally supports the function of narratives in spatial terms, regardless of the level of cartographic characteristics, because all stories "may be said to constitute forms of literary cartography. In works of fiction, in which the imaginative faculty is perhaps most strongly connected to the verbal and descriptive, this map-making project becomes central to the aims and the effects of the narrative" (Tally 2014: 1). The conjunction between narratives and spatiality is further developed by labeling the former as, "in a sense, mapping machines" which, like maps, reach their readers "always and already formed by their interpretations or by the interpretative frameworks in which we, as readers, situate them." In addition, we as readers by default set the "narratives or spatial representations into some sort of spatiotemporal context in which they make sense to us, thereby also becoming more or less useful to us, in our own attempts to give meaningful shape to the world in which we live" (Tally 2014: 3). The equal and interactive relevance of time and space must be emphasized as it has also become ever more evident at the beginning of the twenty-first century, particularly in terms of the study of spatiotemporality in literature, such as that by Bertrand Westphal. He insists that "the coordinates of time and space must be correlated; certainly, they are inextricably meshed. While it is still conceivable to isolate time from space, or history from geography, it seems intransigent or unwise to deliberately keep the two dimensions separate" (Westphal 2011: 26). These different critical examinations of the city indicate the intricate issue of defining it. The dominant idea of the city as complex, ambiguous, contrary and enigmatic precludes the possibility of fixing it into a single, unitary shape. One of the ways in which the complexity of the city has been expressed is through the concept of "palimpsest, as sediment of historic layer upon layer, which are inscribed into the relational network" (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 12). Simultaneously, the production of urban space is directly conditioned by economic exchanges, political organization, power structures, social relations and other circumstances, further challenging conclusive debates about it. Like any other space, the city manifests and is also susceptible to hegemonic spatialities because, as Lefebvre claims, "the

ruling classes seize hold of abstract space as it comes into being (their po-
litical action occasions the establishment of abstract space, but it is not
synonymous with it); and they then use that space as a tool of power"
(1992: 314). According to Daphne Spain, the mechanisms of power net-
works and spatial distribution are typically linked to discrimination, also
in terms of gender differences, where differentiated physical arrangements
reinforce spatial segregation (1993: 137)[15].

Poststructuralist ideas of space that postulate its social construction
characteristically as networked space, eluding definiteness and rounded-
ness, are also embodied in the fragmentations of the postmodern city. Its
irony and absurdity arise from the new geographies of the third wave of
globalization[16], which, according to John Rennie Short, are "marked by
rapid space-time convergence. Space and time have become more impor-
tant […]. There are new geographies of place re-evaluation and devalua-
tion, […] and a rupturing of traditional connections between community
and self, and space and place" (2001: 177). This new awareness of the role
of space that has led to multiple perceptions of spatiality, including the
spatiotemporal compression that David Harvey relates to the processes
of globalization and the recent late capitalistic reshuffling, evident in the
"shrinkage of space that brings diverse communities across the globe in
competition with each other implies localised competitive strategies and a
heightened sense of awareness of what makes a place special and gives it a
competitive advantage" (Harvey 1989: 271). It comes as no surprise, there-
fore, that the effects of space-time convergence provide fertile soil ground
for contemporary novelists' narrative strategies. The following section en-
gages some aspects of the multifarious and contested process of "globaliza-
tion" in the light of the framework for its urban aspect, fusing the issues of
continuously evolving spatiality with the analysis of New York as a global
city in the literary texts selected for this volume.

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[15] Closely related to this discussion is the topic of the interrelation of bodies and cities,
or, in other words, the relationship between sexuality and space, also in the context of
urban spaces; for more details, see Grosz 1992.

[16] For more on the main definitions of the term "globalization," but also for an overview
of the socio-cultural and economic determinants, associative links, and responses to
it in literary studies, specifically the novelistic production of the twenty-first century,
see Shaw 2019.

1.4. Globalization and the Global City

Globalization as a term is "annoyingly ambiguous," as Warf and Arias (2008: 5) point out, shaped by "international finance, a worldwide space of flows, global deregulation, and the decline in transport costs" that have irreversibly changed the previous geographic focus on proximity. And rather startlingly, globalization has not diminished the importance of space. On the contrary: "Ironically, just as several pundits announced the 'death of distance' and the 'end of geography,' geography acquired a renewed significance in the analysis of international flows of information, culture, capital, and people" (Warf and Arias 2008: 5). According to Karen Halttunen, the long-term ramifications of globalization are manifested at the micro- and macrolevels, and are not limited to the European and US contexts but extend worldwide, with a tendency "to promote the destruction, homogenization, and Disneyfication of place" (2007: 7). However, for the scholars in the humanities and social sciences the growth of globalization has also been a prompt to reevaluate place and reconsider attachments to particular places, giving rise to new perceptions of geography as resistance to the disaffection triggered by the uniformity of modern settings. In the words of Arjun Appadurai, globalization has induced a "complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models" (1996: 32). How globalization has affected the discipline of geography in relation to particular spatial experiences is laid out in the following section.

Among the early indicators of these disciplinary shifts is 1970s humanistic geography, dominated by authors such as Edward Relph and Yi-Fu Tuan. In his 1976 book *Place and Placelessness*, the former wrote about "insideness" whereby a sense of place entails that an individual feels "inside" a place, in other words safe, enclosed, and protected: "To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with the place" (Relph 1976: 49)[17]. Tuan's corresponding concept is "the power of topophilia, the affective

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[17] At the same time, Relph was cognizant of the adverse feelings about a place (otherwise called "topophobia") as "attachment to a place is not entirely a pleasurable experience. The places to which we are most committed may be the very centres of our lives, but they may also be oppressive and imprisoning" (1976: 41).

bonds tying people to place" (Tuan 1990: 4), in other words, the ties between persons and particular locations that generate meaning and responses, evoking a sense of their being distinctive and important[18]. For Tuan, the attitude to sites of distinct intimate value is shaped intuitively: "Many places, profoundly significant to particular individuals and groups, have little visual prominence. They are known viscerally, as it were, and not through the discerning eye or mind" (Tuan 1977: 162). The new developments in geography, also influenced by Gaston Bachelard's "sense of place" (1994), became essential to the phenomenological appreciation of place.

The humanistic geography phase in disciplinary development was followed over the next two decades by new critical cultural geography, spearheaded by David Harvey and Doreen Massey, whose main goal was to expose the power dynamics in the socio-spatial construction. However, globalization and its related migratory tendencies defy national borders that are – "all reflective of one underlying transformation – [and] have also entailed a profound shift in identity and subjectivity" (Warf and Arias 2008: 6). In the era of globalization, the contemporary city has become of special interest and concern since the postmodern urban space represents a site of competing discourses, continuously vying for power, a "collage," with "highly differentiated spaces and mixtures" (Harvey 1989: 40). These processes influence the construction of "a global sense of place" (Massey 1997: 315-23), of a shifting, hybrid and contending nature.

Globalization is a complex, dynamic, fluid, unpredictable and multidimensional process. As one of the leading theorists in the field of globalization, immigration, urban sociology and inequality, Saskia Sassen has made an immense contribution to this expanding field of critical inquiry, especially in probing the complex connections between cultures of difference and the role of the metropolis in globalization. She emphasizes that globalization is a process that generates contradictory spaces, "characterized by contestation, internal differentiation, continuous border crossings. The global city is emblematic of this condition" (Sassen 1996: 221).

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[18] Among the studies setting new trajectories of geography and literature is the 1981 volume edited by Douglas C. D. Pocock entitled *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place*, offering an overview of the influences and development in "The Geographer's Engagement with Literature" (2014: 12), as well as contributions by other authors using spatial categories in literary analysis.

Identifying a group of cities of global import and profile she labels "global cities", and by the "situating of these cities in a set of global processes" (1991: 4), Sassen also cites New York as an example of corporate globalization, in the top tier in the economic hierarchy of the world cities. Global cities are both central to globalization and full of spatial contradictions, and Sassen points out that "cities are the terrain where people from many different countries are most likely to meet and a multiplicity of cultures come together" (Sassen 1996: 217). The significance and representation of global cities is also evident in their designation as "world cities", meaning that "[l]arge North American and Western European urban spaces are often signified as being greater than their ostensible geopolitical and cultural locations. […] They are understood and presented in media, political, sociological, and also literary narratives as microcosms of the world at large" (Gupta 2008: 38-39). This semblance of belonging to the global community might cloud the intense struggles in spatial terms that unravel in global cities where "the processes of producing space for cultural hegemony are more intense and have greater effect" (Zukin 1996: 45). A major part of the energetic economic transactions in such cities, originating from global investments, embodies the past global significance and patterns of cities such as New York, "transcending the limited life span of colonial and commercial empires" (Zukin 1996: 45).

The contradictory spatiality of global cities "with their concatenation of financiers, capitalists, professionals and creative types" (Poon 2014: 549) has been at the core of numerous deliberations, not least those of Edward Soja who, in his previously mentioned eponymous book published in 2000, used the term "postmetropolis" to propose that this kind of urban environment "can be represented as a product of intensified globalization processes through which the global is becoming localized and the local is becoming globalized at the same time" (Soja 2000: 152). It is the continuing challenge of critical inquiry across numerous disciplines to map the various (under)currents in the urban imaginary, but the current discussion in this volume will highlight some of its most pertinent aspects in American Studies.

1.5. (Urban) Space and American Studies

In the national imaginary for the construction of US identities, the city takes on a singular position, as an inexorable aspect of its socio-spatial narrative, marked by differing, also often divergent understandings, due to the history of conquest, control and power. Its contradictory character has generated conflicting dynamics and discourse that entered the US-nation building metanarrative and sense of exceptionalism, such as that of the Puritans' "city upon a hill" announced in John Winthrop's sermon that "can be seen as constructing a single discourse for his people, of the city as a testament to their grace" (Campbell and Kean 2005: 160). However, at the same time, contrasting responses were also to be heard as "there emerged a counter-discourse which defined the city as the place of recklessness and opportunity, a place of desire, offering the freedom from older, more traditional restraints" (Campbell and Kean 2005: 161). Space, including urban space, is a constant in the field of the literary and cultural studies of the United States, which has played a vital role in its identity construction as the central paradigm that dominates the American imagination. Taking stock of what he qualifies as the endemic understanding and use of the term "space", Stipe Grgas (2014: 73) reminds us that the reading of space which conditions the possibility for a differentiating experience of the American space also incorporates the character of "the American Adam", traced in the American literary archives by R.W.B. Lewis in his eponymous study. Lewis deems "the narrative of loneliness, represented in the story about the hero in space as central in the literary history of American writers. […] Where the hero knows no borders as this is a space of absolute possibility" (Grgas 2014: 76; my translation). The continuing fascination of Americans with space has been the subject of considerable debate, possibly arising from what Jean Baudrillard describes as the attitude of Americans to space as a particular sensation and thought, matching the physical vastness of the US: "space is spacious in their heads as well" (2010: 53). As a country with a huge variety of physical features, the United States has continuously experienced transformations in the geographical imagination, tightly linked to the relative geographical uprootedness and mobility of Americans themselves.

Throughout the tumultuous and often traumatic history of the US, space has continued to serve as the contested backdrop to social and cultural tensions, which is why the American attitude to space has been mostly ambivalent. It has been noted that the intertwinement of space with cultural aspects throughout its history take on specific sites, endowed with moral standards and expectations, as George Lipsitz explains:

> The politics and poetics of space permeate the culture of the United States as a nation through moral values that get attached to the open ranges of the western frontier and the far reaches of empire overseas; that contrast the barrio, the ghetto, and the reservation with the propertied and properly gendered suburban home; that juxtapose the finite limits of social space with the infinite possibilities of cyberspace and outer space. In both scholarly research and everyday life, the moral meanings attributed to these spaces and places have often been resolutely and creatively contested. (Lipsitz 2020: 229)

The discipline of American Studies abounds with critical texts that incorporate spatial perspectives, many of which are related to the urban situation. Spatiality as being vital in the formation of identity is also supported by Brian Jarvis, who situates the national identity construction within the spatial context: "Many of the key words in the discourses of American history and definitions of that nebulous entity referred to as 'national identity' are geocentric: the Frontier, the Wilderness, the Garden, the Land of Plenty, the Wild West, the Small Town, the Big City, the Open Road" (1998: 6). The quintessential "big city," a global city, in the United States is undoubtedly New York, which has embodied the yearnings, strivings and practices of many, both of those who have inhabited it and those who have not. This is true particularly of the second half of the twentieth century, when, according to critics, "New York City took on the role that the American West, the frontier, had played in the American imagination in the nineteenth century, the opening of the door to possibility" (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: 690). Scholars have declared the geographical imagination as possibly being central to all national political cultures (Agnew and Sharp 2002: 82), and in the case of American landscapes, its history has become an expression of what has long been considered a set of American values. Throughout US development, space in American imagination has signified geographies of subjugation and the struggle for territories embedded in imperialistic endeavors premised on "whiteness" as the license

to territorial expansion, specifically under the "Manifest Destiny" concept in the westward push. This context heavily invested in geography has not been exhausted in imperialistic projects; European colonization and imperialism have shaped the collective awareness of the subjugated in America as collective identities are conditioned by socio-spatial relations.

Space in America has thus become the terrain where personal fates have been interwoven with the shared, national history and with the space of domination, development, and destruction. Among the values inscribed in the American space is that of "reinvention," reflecting both the efforts and hopes invested in order to resist and transform the exploitative tendencies of the society that were assumed to be typical "American standards": "The persistence of the collective memory of an idealized American space depends on this perceived capacity for reinvention […]. Such reinventions can include recognition of demands by previously excluded ethnic groups, regions, or oppositional movements" (Agnew 2002: 7). The urban space in the US, primarily in the big cities such as New York, has offered the potential for reinvention to a vast range of diverse social groups and individuals, exemplified in numerous literary reflections. The particular allure of the city is closely connected to its symbolic capital because "New York always holds out the possibility of the reinvention of the self to achieve one's aspirations; it allows you to plumb the depths of your most authentic being, to see both the city itself and your own self in new and original ways" (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: xv). Such a capacity for reinvention, the opportunity to contest the inequality in the American context, especially in terms of race and ethnicity, has long been hinged on spatial arrangements since it is evident that socially marginalized individuals and groups are underprivileged in social, economic, but also spatial terms. As has been noted, although in the past, the United States' internal differences were frequently overlooked or downplayed, "these differences are best understood as differences between one place and another. […] these inequalities are best understood as inequalities between places. […] Inequality in the United States is primarily, although not entirely, a matter of geographic inequality" (Smith 2002: 321-322). The city thus represents an equally crucial determinant of spatiality in American culture and literature (along with the West) as another type of "wilderness" and frontier, a continuously

growing area, signaling the replacement of traditional values with the new tendencies of industrialization and urbanization. Writing about "the constitutive and mutually defining relation between bodies and cities" (1992: 242), Elizabeth Grosz explores the interdependence between urban and rural environments and offers a comprehensive definition of the city:

> By *city*, I understand a complex and interactive network which links together, often in an unintegrated and de facto way, a number of disparate social activities, processes, and relations, with a number of imaginary and real, projected or actual architectural, geographic, civic, and public relations. The city brings together economic and informational flows, power networks, forms of displacement, management, and political organization, interpersonal, familial, and extra-familial social relations, and an aesthetic/economic organization of space and place to create a semipermanent but ever-changing built environment or milieu. In this sense, the city can be seen, as it were, as midway between the village and the state, sharing the interpersonal interrelations of the village (on a neighborhood scale) and the administrative concerns of the state (hence the need for local government, the preeminence of questions of transportation, and the relativity of location). (Grosz 1992: 244)

Rural expanses and the city remain embroiled in some type of permanent friction that was first introduced in the American imagination in the earliest days of its colonization. They play off each other at the same time in a strained dependance and opposition which also springs from their being "privileged settings" as Philip Fisher describes them in his seminal study *Hard Facts* (1985), identifying sites that are not the "actual sites" of key historical events, but "ideal and simplified vanishing points toward which lines of sight and projects of every kind converge. From these vanishing points, the many approximate or bungled, actual states of affairs draw order and position" (1985: 9). Within the US context, Fisher makes specific reference to three privileged settings, including what "could be called the city of opportunity. The city is the privileged setting of possibility, of 'about-to-be' realized future states. The city is the future in a physical form" (1985: 12). This designation also implies the potential for reinvention and the imaginary of many whose futures seemed vested in urban space. Urban-rural relations and their transformative geographical imagination have also resonated in what can be said to be the two most crucial issues of contemporary literary studies in the US: the nature of the city and

the role of the city as the seat of historical and cultural diversity. The portrayal of the city in fiction tends to be as the location of multiple opportunities, but likewise as the stage for acts of fraud and dissipation, similar to the frontier representing the instrumental driving force behind American history and culture.

The early twenty-first century has witnessed an expected and dramatic rise in urbanization and a parallel may certainly be drawn: while at the beginning of the last century the United States was reported as per its census to be a modern, urban country, with the greater percentage of its population living in urban places, now the greatest part of the world's population are urban dwellers (Taylor 2018: 514). Estimates point to the further increase of the urban population, as "later in the twenty-first century, urban dwellers are expected to constitute more than 75% of humanity", indicative of both a spatial reshuffle and a more profound, "critical change in the nature of the human condition" (Taylor 2018: 514). This new awareness of our sense of self, both individually and collectively, has therefore been gravely strained, given the neoliberal order in the contemporary world, requiring "the restructuring of the urban imaginary, our situated and city-centric consciousness, and how this ideological refabrication affects everyday life in the postmetropolis" (Soja 2000: 324). What Soja labels "the urban imaginary" is "our mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretive grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate, and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live" (Soja 2000: 324). Soja asserts that a series of factors and transformations have reconstituted our urban imaginary, including: "Postfordist economic restricting, intensified globalization, the communications and information revolution, the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of cultures and identity, the recomposition of urban form and social structures, and many other forces shaping the post-metropolitan transition", also resulting in new approaches to the way we think and act in urban conditions. (2000: 324). While the interpenetration of global capital and spatiality in the US context has had a formative impact on American identity, it has also been marked by uncertainty, more so as the economy has transitioned towards the information age, so "we need to recognize that the relationship between location and identity has not always been as unstable

as it has become under late capitalism" (Halttunen 2007: 8). The central-ity of capital and capitalism in the discipline of American Studies has al-so been the focus of Stipe Grgas's more recent critical investigation, in which he concludes that it is impossible to discuss American spaces with-out considering the capitalist system that initially coopted, commodified and subsequently transformed them (2014: 78). Grgas highlights the key role of capital in the formation of American identity and, consequently, al-so of the production of space inherent in it. The city that embodies these processes and practices, along with the urban imaginary deeply rooted in the assumed capacity for reinvention, contestation, emancipatory and oth-er developments is New York, as the "yardstick city in the story of urban globalization" (Neculai 2014: 23). The next part of this volume provides an overview of the past and present significance of this city in the US and broader cultural conceptualization and practice.

1.6. Reading New York in Literature

> Because New York acts as both a window onto the new and a mirror into the once familiar, it is the most exciting city in the world.
>
> (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: xv)

To discuss the spatiality of New York and examples of it in literary pro-duction is nothing short of a daunting endeavor on account of the city's extraordinary history, significance, and imaginary. From its very incep-tion as a colonial site to its present-day status of a global city, New York City has been the subject of innumerable fictional and non-fictional rep-resentations, in the effort to capture the mythical phenomena enshroud-ing the locality of New York, "the historical gateway linking the Old World and the New World, and long America's most important city as well as the center of the nation's literary consciousness" (Harding 2003: 22)[19]. The fas-cination with New York has surpassed national boundaries, featuring in

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[19] For more on the rise of New York, especially as a city of modernity, see Harding 2003: 25-28. Also, for a historical overview of New York as the "Empire City," see Jackson and Dunbar 2002. The most comprehensive study of New York City's Dutch origins is Russell Shorto's *The Island at the Center of the World* (2004).

the international consciousness as "the city of superlatives […] New York is constantly remaking and reinventing itself, both in its physical structures and in its population" (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: xv). It has been deemed the most famous city in the world, given a special and national status, marked by a combination of opposites such as hope and anxiety, opportunity and dissipation: "While in longitudinal terms there has always been a sense of ambivalence, distrust even, concerning the city in American history, debates have continually focused their attention on New York as the embodiment of national decline, decay, and degeneration" (Harding 2003: 25). This urban center rapidly gained this reputation following the late capitalist development, and grew from the first US city with one million residents in 1860 to the current number surpassing 8.38 million, also spurred by the massive urbanization in the second half of the nineteenth century. This trend continued in the following century and "New York became an empire city, the capital of modern world history and the product of American industrial capitalism" (Harding 2003: 23). With the second half of the twentieth century came the new globalization[20] and "its key feature was a new landscape of consumption. While New York became the world's financial center, increased mass production was matched by the development of mass consumption" (Taylor 2018: 517). In such a context, it hardly comes as a surprise to read of New York ranking very high in disparities on the economic scale, so "in terms of metropolarity, the urban gap between the wealth and the poor" (Soja 2000: 399) is stark. New York is also characterized by "the incomparable density of power and culture" (Soja 2000: 135), not surprising in one of the "megacities" that already in 1950 was the only city with over 10 million inhabitants (Soja 2000: 236). New York's population swelled largely thanks to migrants and immigrants from across many areas of the world to whom New York signified a coveted destination, a fabled fulfilment of ambitions and anticipations, making the teeming, vibrant city the epitome of the American "melting pot," that, in popular projection, would enable social advancement, on their own initiative and merit, embodying thus the myth of the advancement from rags to riches and the dream of boundless opportunities. In this way, as both

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[20] For more on globality, globalization, and globalism see Soja 2000, especially pp. 192-227.

an urban and conceptual space, New York contributed to the idea of the American Dream as the key imaginative narrative of the modern United States.

The idea of mobility is deeply ingrained in New York's history and imaginary, as Rüdiger Kunow emphasizes: "From the earliest moments of European intervention in the 'New World,' 'America,' […] was a dense and suggestive signifier that produced mobile subjects. […] Internationally, it proved its evocative force in the successive waves of immigration" (2011: 246). The strong connection between mobility and "America", as Kunow puts it, has operated over an extended period of time and across different historical circumstances, enabling "the signifier 'America' to operate as a potent designator for the telos of individual and collective, real and imagined mobility" (2011: 247). His use of the word "telos" is deliberate, since the term "America", according to him, "has always had a double meaning, both spatial and metaphorical, it is destination and destiny, the end point from which all exodus and hardship would receive its justification and reward, by living the good life, by being melted 'into a new race of men,' an American race" (Kunow 2011: 247). This twofold nature of New York as a pivotal gateway to America and its associated values has been variously explored in numerous literary texts, in the continuing endeavor to find expression for its intricate imaginary. An additional and related aspect of New York's urban spatiality and vested teleological dimensions arises from "[t]he tension between assimilating to a dominant cultural paradigm and maintaining a particular racial, religious, ethnic, or cultural identity […] confronted and addressed every day in New York in a way that is significantly different from how other major cities deal with it" (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: 8). The mythological status attributed to New York as an iconic locality endows the city's signification in history in general, and in the history of immigration specifically, with a relentless pressure to assimilate into what is considered the ultimate space of exultant heterogeneity and urban appeal. Hence "New York City has been to the United States what America has been to the rest of the world, the great experiment in multicultural re-creation" (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: 690). The character of New York city as a multicultural urban environment reflects the potential of an inevitable coalescence in space and interaction, a veritable

"contact zone", which Mary Louise Pratt defines as "the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (2008: 8).

As a consequence of its layered past, colossal population size, associated values and other traits, New York City's multifaceted character has varyingly been designated as an example of numerous different sociospatial structures, including what Henri Lefebvre calls "abstract space": "simultaneously homogeneous and fragmented, subordinated to the flows and networks of world markets, and divided into units of exchange by real estate developers" (Zukin 1996: 50). Sharon Zukin's argumentation, however, also encompasses the often-fraught process of seemingly unbounded opportunities and looming degeneration:

> Viewed from the city, however, New York resembles a dismembered imperial space, an imperium whose tributaries owe less and less to the center, whose facilities are improved upon in the provinces, and whose utopian joining of freedom and power looks like a dystopia of dirt, violence and anarchy. Simultaneously utopia and dystopia, New York claims a place in America's and the world's moral economy. Does it exert this claim because it is changing, or has it always been this way? (Zukin 1996: 50)

These traits make New York City more of an alarming than an auspicious place, much like the rest of the country, instilling wonder, great expectations, and high hopes, but also uncertainty, danger, confusion, and homesickness, leading to the conclusion that "New York City is larger than life, and its effect on the American imagination has been profound" (Jackson and Dunbar 2002: 1). On the other hand, New York is an illustration of Lefebvre's "representational space," i.e., a space that is "is alive" while […] it embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations" (Lefebvre 1991: 42), in other words, a space that is by definition socially produced. The appeal of the city as a site of connection is heightened by the typical uprootedness and displacement of those seeking to establish a sense of place there; as a representational space [lived space], New York City exists through the practices of its inhabitants, and its dynamics and ability to change and address those in its space make it active, hence it "is alive: it speaks" (Lefebvre 1991: 42). Similar to Lefebvre, de Certeau

asserts that place assumes meaning through the relationship between materiality and phenomenology (Johansen 2014: 35), and he famously wrote of New York City seen from a skyscraper as a text "in which extremes coincide—extremes of ambition and degradation, brutal opposites of races and styles, contrasts between yesterday's buildings, already transformed into trash cans, and today's urban irruptions that block out its space" (de Certeau 1988: 91). This multi-dimensional text/space is in a state of continuous transformation, but from the distant point of the skyscraper, i.e., from a distance, de Certeau underlines that all one sees are the ordinance, material elements of grids and blocks, the "theoretical" city because the actual life of the city lies in the hustle and bustle of its streets (1988: 93). In order to truly experience and examine urban space, it must be done at "street level", as de Certeau advocates.

Whether at street level or from afar, New York City is a metropolis that has captured the imagination of countless people in America and throughout the world, as a city that eschews traditional representation and definition, a vast jumble of shifting fragments and glimpses. Writers have been compelled to create new methods to convey the experience of the city, from whatever vantage point they read it. There is no scarcity of literary writing about New York, and the variety and originality is well beyond the scope of this volume[21]. Many literary authors have sought to portray the complexity of New York's imaginary. William Dean Howells's novel *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890) presents a haunting sense of New York as a divided city, while New York City's demi-world is depicted through the intimate gaze and acerbic writing of Stephen Crane in the same period of the late nineteenth century. A host of other luminaries in fictional prose follow, including James Weldon Johnson, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, John Steinbeck, John Dos Passos, James Baldwin, Paul Auster, Donald Barthelme, Jay McInerney, etc. In their writing, they explore New York City as both a locality and also a desired and imagined place in American identity. Fiction about a layered, polysemous cityscape such as New York City necessarily reflects the plenitude of this urban environment, with "a history of accumulating cultural influences and populations, so that

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[21] See Ickstadt 2010 for an overview of different modes of twentieth-century New York writing and its development.

variegation becomes the quality of the city. Fiction centred on New York sometimes captures the early transitions that lead to this contemporary variegated feel of the world in a city, the cosmopolis" (Gupta 2008: 40). This city, as perhaps no other in the United States, owes its diversity to its high percentage of (im)migrants throughout its history, in particular following the late capitalist global order and provides a crucial metaphor for understanding the late-twentieth century metropolis[22]: "The historical and cultural experience of the western metropolis cannot now be fictionalized without the marginal, oblique gaze of its postcolonial, migrant populations cutting across the imaginative metropolitan geography of territory and community, tradition and culture" (Bhabha 1990: 16). New York conflates multidimensional statuses as a cosmopolis and metropolis, but also as a global city, according to Saskia Sassen's volumes of seminal global studies (1991; 2002). Sassen places cities like New York, London, and Tokyo at the worldwide nodes of new economies, but also relates them to difference: in culture, ethnicity, and the reconfiguration and gentrification of old industrial facilities, etc. A critical and cautionary analysis of global capitalism has also been offered by Edward Soja, who points out its undervalued feature determined by "the *globalization of labor*" (Soja 2000: 195), an extensive movement of workers to the major hubs of production. He detects the profound impact in terms of the globalization of labor and capital upon inequality in cities such as New York "in shaping and defining the contemporary postmetropolis", concluding that in such localities as New York "the influx of global capital and labor, as well as fashions, music, cuisines, architectural styles, political attitudes, and life-sustaining economic strategies from all over the world" has an effect that goes beyond issues of capital and labor as it creates "also the most economically, politically, and culturally heterogeneous cityspaces that have ever existed" (Soja 2000: 196). Heeding De Certeau's suggestion to refer to literary texts for an analysis of urban activities as the novel "has become the zoo of everyday practices since the establishment of modern science" (1984: 78), the focus of the following chapters will be this primary corpus. There is no scarcity of literary

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[22] For a discussion on the representation of New York's urban transformations and the literary scene of the city in the 1970s and 1980s, see Catalina Neculai's monograph *Urban Space and Late Twentieth-Century New York Literature* (2014).

examples of how postcolonial migrants experience the complexity of the multilayered and polysemantic urbanscape of New York City, embodying all the above processes of the globalization of labor and capital spawning inequality. For this analysis, the first primary literary text is Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006)[23].

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[23] A minor part of this material has been discussed, albeit with a different focus, in my article "Migration, Globalization, and Divided Identity in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance Of Loss*" (Kondali 2018).

2. The Representation of New York in *The Inheritance of Loss*

"New York is the most fatally fascinating thing in America. She sits like a great witch at the gate of the country, showing her alluring white face and hiding her crooked hands and feet under the folds of her wide garments—constantly enticing thousands." James Weldon Johnson, *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1927: 64)

2.1. A Novel of Migration and Geographical Displacement

Among the vast number of literary texts featuring New York as a metaphorical and symbolic location for their protagonists, the selection of Kiran Desai's 2006 novel *The Inheritance of Loss* may not seem an obvious first choice. However, considered in an extended and more discerning manner, this novelistic exploration of New York as a "geographical imagination" (Gregory 1994) and its significance in "the globalization of cityscape" (Soja 2009), among others, enables a new approach to this "global novel"[24], given the fact that many "postcolonial Indian novels include a large number of city novels" (Ganapathy-Doré 2011: 75). Desai's novel comes decades after the first wave of Anglophone literary writing in India following the publication of Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), which initiated a new world-wide interest in postcolonial literature. At the turn of the centuries and particularly in the early twenty-first century, the release of novels such as *The Inheritance of Loss* marks a shift away from the focus on historical-national issues towards a broader sense of the challenges and sensibilities related to decolonization, diasporic destinies, cultural

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[24] Helpful explanations of the terms global, postcolonial, and world literatures are offered in De Loughry 2020: 1-23.

confrontations and identity crises[25]. With the rise of globalization and transnational literature, a younger generation of authors with roots in India, known as "Midnight's Grandchildren," including Kiran Desai, tackle contemporary concerns through novelistic production of compelling breadth, variety, and quality. As a critic has noted, "Multiculturalism and globalization, opposed to ethnocentric and orthodox tendencies, have added vigour to the narratives, and voices, hitherto repressed or in oblivion, are now audible" (Singh 2013: 26). Salman Rushdie's landmark collection of essays "Imaginary Homelands" (1991) provides the main framework for diverse fictional texts that are typically labeled "migrant" or "diasporic" writing, reflecting the background of the migrant authors of several generations (including Kiran Desai), whose hybrid identifications and literary production exemplify the global perspectives of literature in English related to Indian origin known under various names: Anglophone Indian literature, The Indian Novel in English, The Indian English Novel or IWE, and the Postcolonial Indian Novel in English[26].

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, awarded, among others, the 2006 Man Booker Prize, explores India's postcolonial resistance against the colonizer's legacies through the portrayal of traumatized characters whose fates illustrate the confusion, wounds and inequalities caused by colonial domination and globalization. In doing so, "the novel explores the persistence of colonialism and colonial modes of thinking, suggesting that these persevere in contemporary forms of globalization" (Neumann 2019: 227). The novel is organized in two main narratives, with the primary setting in Kalimpong, a small foothill station town "high in the northeastern Himalayas […] where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim" (Desai 2006: 16), and set in the mid-1980s. As it follows the fate of Sai, the granddaughter of a retired Indian judge, in his ramshackle home, the novel also follows the struggles of the cook's son Biju who tries his luck in America working in the shadow economy of New York as an undocumented immigrant worker. It is this second location and narrative thread that is of particular interest in this analysis, but a few notes of explanation in terms of

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[25] For more on postcolonial literary production characterized as "Diaspora novels" see Singh 2013.

[26] For useful theoretical overviews of postcolonialism and related issues of the postcolonial Indian novel in English, see Ganapathy-Doré 2011, and Anjaria 2015.

the novel's thematic preoccupations and literary strategies are called for in order to establish a comprehensive analytical framework.

In the novel, Desai presents the 1980s Gorkhaland uprising, but also the background to the last colonial days of the British Raj, drawing a parallel with the new forms of economic and other dependencies and ties to America. According to Kristian Shaw, "The isolated locale of Kalimpong becomes a complex glocal site of cultural contestation, torn apart by the seductive influence of cultural Westernization and a neo-nationalist Gorkhaland movement" (2019: 29). Through abrupt flashbacks, Desai's storytelling weaves the past and the present, and with a string of characters, explores the themes of journeys, identity, wealth, exploitation, and poverty, as well as the relationships based on colonial legacies. Together with the theme of the globalized economy's precarity, the novel also acknowledges that "globalization has been accompanied by the resurgence of subnational cultural and political regionalisms" (Soja 2000: 206). Desai's novel, hailed as "briskly paced and sumptuously written," owes its "principal brilliance" to "her insightful exploration of how colonial vestiges are shaping the dynamics of economic globalization and multiculturalism" (Prasad 2013: 70). In Kalimpong, Westernizing influences demonstrate the infiltration of globalization in the traditional east Indian community, causing tension among its members exposed to new globalizing cultural influences. At the same time, the characters, whether in the past or the contemporary setting, become economic migrants whose sense of identity and belonging to a place are profoundly changed, showing signs of dislocation and disaffection. Thus, the novel "is punctuated by tragedies and violent conflicts, both in the physical environment and in the inner lives of its characters, and it is saturated with a sense of instability and constant anxiety" (Poray-Wybranowska 2021: 64).

Desai sets the broader context of colonization and imperialism against that of economic and cultural globalization, which trickle down to each character who is left with "the inheritance of loss" from the preceding generation. The cook's son embodies the experiences of debilitating inequality and humiliation endured by disempowered and destitute immigrants struggling to make a living in the "cosmopolis" (Soja 2009) of New York: "His father could not remember or understand or pronounce the

names, and Biju changed jobs so often, like a fugitive on the run—no papers" (Desai 2006: 10). Biju's struggle with economic exploitation is firmly embedded in the global mobility of multitudes forced into modern-day indentured servitude, resulting in a divided sense of self. Additionally, his failure to attain upward social mobility serves to deflate the metanarrative of the American success story. In this sense, the character's failure plays against the broader conceptualization of mobility in the American context and the assumed inevitability of assimilation: "the imaginary fusion of mobility and Americanness, with mobility here understood as vertical mobility, plays itself out in the role model of the American Dream. [...] something like a rite de passage which people are going through as they become fully American" (Kunow 2011: 247).

The two narratives are imbricated through the similarity of the anxiety both the judge and his cook's son experience in their respective journeys abroad. The judge rises from the Gujarat smallholder caste thanks to the efforts to Indianize the ICS, obtains a degree at Cambridge on a scholarship and becomes both resentful and idolizing of the British. He retires and cuts himself off from the society in Kalimpong, where he has purchased a dilapidated mansion, formerly belonging to a Scottish colonist. The unexpected arrival of the judge's orphaned granddaughter and the unfolding upheaval in the region trigger flashbacks to the multiple dislocations he has experienced in his lifetime, while similar processes of estrangement related to "spatial dispersal and geographical isolation" (Harvey 1993: 88) are suffered by the cook's beloved son, Biju. The fractured sense of non-belonging and challenged cultural identities of the characters are traced in these main strands, with several additional side stories, revealing their marginalization and (passive) victimization in the globalization processes, shaped by the "socially produced space" (Lefebvre 1993). The emerging transnational relations are informed by issues of cultural alienation, hybridity, and related themes, evident in the literary production of many Indian English novelists or IWE, including Kiran Desai[27]. Considered one

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[27] For more details about the reception of the novel and generally of IWE see Allington 2014. An important note is due here as the depictions have been linked to "the exotic thematic" of "Dark India", representing images of the country turned to "the darker side of the neoliberal turn, the rupture of the social fabric by class and caste divisions, the sufferings of the indigent majority and the failure of the postcolonial state," as

of the "twenty-first century texts concerned with the poetics and politics of deterritorialization" (Masterson 2009: 411), *The Inheritance of Loss* implies a migration process that is indicative of the American and global economy embodying the new world order following the end of the British Empire and the legacy of decolonization.

2.2. Globalization and New York City's Shadow Class

The bane of neo-liberal globalization is a focal point for Desai in this novel. Her critical descriptions of Biju's plight in New York's cityscape expose the "the plight of the subalterns disempowered by globalization" (Prasad 2013: 62), nomadic workers and "Third World" immigrants seeking to carve out an existence in the global city. Biju, who is introduced to the reader at the age of nineteen, although "he looked and felt several years younger" (Desai 2006: 23), spends several years of drudgery in exile, sharing the predicament of numerous undocumented service staff, relegated to the low-end and temporary jobs in the dismal basement kitchens of New York restaurants. Through his character, a victim of globalized modern-day indentured servitude, Desai criticizes "the grimy underbelly of globalization in an era dominated by the dual hegemonies of Thatcher in the U.K. and Reagan in the States" (Masterson 2009: 419), set in New York as a "postmetropolis" (Soja 2000). The novel portrays Biju as the victim of "the contemporary moment in poignant scenes of destitution, dislocation following immigration, and the undemocratic nature of globalization disadvantageous to the poor and vulnerable masses in the developing countries" (Prasad 2013: 65). The geographic displacement and economic precariousness of Biju and the other characters direct the reader towards tracing the spatialized sense of self. Biju's shifting existence "details his sense of stasis and immobility as he works a series of menial restaurants jobs in basements and cellars across New York" (Shaw 2019: 30). The desperation and disenfranchisement of illegal workers in a "global city" such as New York diminish the construct of the American Dream and the

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argued by Nivedita Majumdar, who detects implications of "the exoticism discourse" (2014: 74).

possibilities of success in the "First World" as the "underclass" members strive for "real-and-imagined spaces" (Soja 1996).

One of the important narrative perspectives of the novel is the comparison between British colonialism in India on the one hand, and the postcolonial and neoliberal capitalism of a globalizing world, on the other. As Murari Prasad states, Desai "relates the dynamics of decolonization to today's economies, politics, cultures and identities in terms of contemporary global formation," which places the novel in "the realm of global fiction" due to its ideological attitude that "gives place to the colonized in the new international network and advances debates surrounding the idea of globalization" (2013: 63). The spatial context of New York in the secondary strand of the novel fortifies the idea of the "struggles for cultural hegemony" (Zukin 1996), intricately connected to the economic divide Saskia Sassen recognizes in global cities. Cautioning against the trend in which the new urban context has given rise to developments affecting "economic polarization," Sassen pinpoints "the vast supply of low-wage jobs required by high-income gentrification in both its residential and commercial settings" hinged on the increasing number of "expensive restaurants, luxury housing, luxury hotels, gourmet shops, boutiques, French hand laundries, and special cleaners" (1991: 9). In the novel, Desai signifies these processes in many instances through the use of pretentious restaurant names (e.g., "Baby Bistro" and "Le Colonial"), Whitmanesque catalogues of "the multiplicity of cultures that come together" (Sassen 1996), and the ironically imbued spring awakening in the metropolis of global popular cultural iconography, as in the following passage:

> It was spring, the ice was melting, the freed piss was flowing. All over, in city cafés and bistros, they took advantage of this delicate nutty sliver between the winter, cold as hell, and summer, hot as hell, and dined al fresco on the narrow pavement under the cherry blossoms. Women in baby-doll dresses, ribbons, and bows that didn't coincide with their personalities indulged themselves with the first fiddleheads of the season, and the fragrance of expensive cooking mingled with the eructation of taxis and the lascivious subway breath that went up the skirts of the spring-clad girls making them wonder if this was how Marilyn Monroe felt—somehow not, somehow not. . . (Desai 2006: 60)

This quotation captures a unique image of New York in the budding regeneration of spring in all its contrasts. The olfactory sense of place and the ironic spring equivalent of blossoming nature in the cityscape underscore the idea of "a socially produced space" (Lefebvre 1992). At the same time, the spring awakening in the urban context is contrasted with the spatialized non-belonging in Biju's abject and crowded basement quarters at the bottom of Harlem, the site of underclass destitution "which reflects their social status and the two-tiered geography" (Král 2014: 146). The building represents a modern-day version of tenements, showing how the "global proletariat" is housed, i.e., how "the Other Half Lives"[28] (Riis 1890/1971):

> The building belonged to an invisible management company that listed its address as One and a Quarter Street and owned tenements all over the neighborhood, the superintendent supplementing his income by illegally renting out basement quarters by the week, by the month, and even by the day, to fellow illegals. […]
> Biju joined a shifting population of men camping out near the fuse box, behind the boiler, in the cubby holes, and in odd-shaped corners that once were pantries, maids' rooms, laundry rooms, and storage rooms at the bottom of what had been a single-family home, the entrance still adorned with a scrap of colored mosaic in the shape of a star. The men shared a yellow toilet; the sink was a tin laundry trough. There was one fuse box for the whole building, and if anyone turned on too many appliances or lights, PHUT, the entire electricity went, and the residents screamed to nobody, since there was nobody, of course, to hear them. (Desai 2006: 58-59)

The spatial arrangements are conditioned by the existing economic and social stratifications, relegating the marginalized "underclass" to their only possible "space of difference" (Soja 1996), exemplified in the juxtaposition of the "freed piss" acting as the demarcation line of "the local homeless man at the edge of his hunting and gathering territory, which

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[28] The referencing of Jacob Riis' publication *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (1890) here is to draw a parallel between Desai's literary critique of the displacement and depravity caused by globalization today and the photojournalist's chronicling of the urban squalor of the slums in New York City during the Gilded Age. The latter constituted an impetus for the reform movement in many fields, including working-class housing. Biju's predicament seems like a sour commentary of what has become of the 1880's "muckraking" crusade against poverty, corruption, economic and social depravities in big cities such as New York.

he sometimes marked by peeing a bright arc right across the road" (Desai 2006: 59). Such a space, given the postcolonial context of Biju and the global proletariat, implies the interstitial qualities of the spatial category described by Arjun Appadurai as "ethnoscape": "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (1996: 33).

The economic divide in global cities and the substantial increase of cheap immigrant labor is a staple of postmetropolitan regions exemplified by New York, as discussed by Edward Soja. Biju's fate in *The Inheritance of Loss* places him among the disenfranchised immigrant poor who, "by their very survival, not only reduce average income levels for the bottom 10 percent, but they are also seen as dragging down income levels for the native-born poor by taking up the lowest-paying jobs and absorbing a significant part of the reduced pool of welfare expenditures" (Soja 2000: 269). The stark inequalities of the "First World" economies have thus been observed as having far-reaching consequences for all workers, both locally and globally, with the last quarter of the twentieth century causing an unprecedented increase in transnational labor, as well as voluntary and involuntary migration, according to Soja (2000: 195). Based on their diversity, scale and scope, he designates these migrants as "a truly global proletariat, but one that remains highly fragmented, difficult to organize, and not yet conscious of its potential global power" (Soja 2000: 195). Biju struggles to eke out a living in New York, and after a string of jobs, he "takes on the disidentified subjectivity position" (Nanda 2021: 128) in his second year when he becomes a delivery boy for a Chinese restaurant. His new job adds another dimension of (seeming) mobility and introduces the spatial category of alternative mapping of space "as a practiced place" (de Certeau 1984), but at "street level" (de Certeau 1988):

> General Tso's chicken, emperor's pork, and Biju on a bicycle with the delivery bag on his handlebars, a tremulous figure between heaving buses, regurgitating taxis—what growls, what sounds of flatulence came from this traffic. Biju pounded at the pedals, heckled by taxi drivers direct from Punjab—a man is not a caged thing, a man is wild wild and he must drive as such, in a bucking yodeling taxi. (Desai 2006: 56)

The description interweaves issues of neo-colonial culinary choices and Biju's dwarf-like figure fighting the personified means of urban transportation that are crowded, uneasy and aggressive in this shaky navigation of New York's feral streets, also emphasized by the repetition of "wild." This is a parody of the frontier, a contemporary mechanized wilderness writhing under the incessant demands of the global economy, exacting speedy delivery, high productivity, and nomadic workers, always on the prowl to create "a differential space" (Lefebvre 1992). As a reminder, a pivotal idea in Lefebvre's spatial approach to difference is the interaction between the "abstract spaces" of capitalist notions of production and consumption, and differential spaces. The latter exist both as spaces of collective resistance to the prevailing socio-spatial order and opportunities for marginalized persons. Drawing on Lefebvre's spatial thought, Catalina Neculai singles out "an urbanized consciousness that has the capacity to morph the space of the imaginary, which characterizes literary representation into a representation of space" (2014: 48) tied to "the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose" (Lefebvre 1992: 36). The streets where Biju maneuvers his bicycle and maps his precarious subsistence reflect the dominant social and spatial relations, inducing his "topophobia" (Relph 1996) against the backdrop of postcolonial and globalized economic ramifications. At the same time, the infernal and naturalistically-colored descriptions of the city in different sections of the novel enhance the sense of the struggle of the toiling shadow class in the mayhem of the metropolitan area, "a two-tiered system and an underworld of exploited migrants" (Král 2014: 39), as in the following example:

> Above the bakery the subway ran on a rawly sketched edifice upheld by metal stilts. The trains passed in a devilish screaming; their wheels sparked firework showers that at night threw a violent jagged brightness over the Harlem projects, where he could see a few lights on already and some others besides himself making a start on miniature lives. At the Queen of Tarts, the grill went zipping up, the light flickered on, a rat moved into the shadow. Tap root tail, thick skulled, broad shouldered, it looked over its back sneering as it walked with a velvet crunch right over the trap too skimpy to detain it. (Desai 2006: 82)

The multiplicity and starkness of various sensory experiences are spatially inscribed in the unforgiving, near-demonic conditions that inevitably

take their toll on the bodies and minds of the workers exposed to such debilitating day-to-day drudgery. Their precarious situation is further driven home as they do not even manage to deter a rodent infestation since the rat avoids being trapped, with a grin, as if in sardonic mockery of the presumed efficiency of the global city.

2.3. The Postcolonial Spatial Imaginary of the Global City

Desai probes the layered effects of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism, set against globalization and its implications in spatial terms represented through New York as the site where conflicting social systems intersect and materialize. Biju's experiences of New York's urban space exact only a tenuous sense of place for him, because it is a confounding location, "a site of competing discourse" (Harvey 1989). His portrayal subverts the myth of endless chances and upward social mobility for "the postcolonial subject's integration in the formerly imperial centre by settlement in metropolitan cities that are carriers of dominant values" (Ganapathy-Doré 2011: 63). The novel reveals the difficulties the metropolitan landscape presents for such postcolonial subjects because they cannot avail themselves of genuine opportunities or situate their identity in the global urbanscape where they buckle under the demands of globalization which "assumes the homogeneity of space" (Westphal 2011: 41). Typically, in the process of assimilation, the urban environment pressures the immigrants into denying their cultural background and embracing the "insideness" (Relph 1976) of the seemingly enabling and liberatory space of the city where they often become trapped in the ever-elusive promise of the American Dream.

Thus, on one occasion, Biju's delivery of an order for three Indian female students demonstrates the chasm between him and the Westernized diaspora, in denial of New York's cosmopolitan assumptions towards heterotopia (Foucault 1989). The students are part of the gentrification processes (Sassen 1991) as "Indian women of the English-speaking upper-educated, […] new additions to the neighborhood in an apartment just opened under reviewed city laws to raised rents" (Desai 2006: 56). The local residents are opposed to these processes, nevertheless, "[o]ne day the

Indian girls hoped to be gentry, but right now, despite being unwelcome in the neighborhood, they were in the student stage of vehemently siding with the poor people who wished them gone" (Desai 2006: 56). Biju's attraction to the Indian girls quickly sours as he hears their comments about Anglicized predilections for a suitable husband. Daniel Allington identifies them as "the novel's sole representatives of the 'hybridity' celebrated by the post-Rushdie school's multicultural tradition [whose] intermingling of languages and cultures appears to be nothing more than a form of consumerism, and their supreme cultural confidence is only a function of their wealth" (2014: 128). In a city that enables their contact across castes, "[a]s an illegal and invisibilised migrant" (Neumann 2019: 229), he is rejected by his fellow-countrywomen and feels even more alienated by their self-righteous and arrogant behavior: "Standing at that threshold, Biju felt a mixture of emotions: hunger, respect, loathing" (Desai 2006: 57), making him turn to "his native culture as he fortifies himself against the newly minted Westernized desires, mocking the Anglicized Indian students" (Nanda 2021: 128). His inconsequential attempt to seek vengeance on the girls is an outlet for his stunned state, turning into an expression of resistance and protest over his marginalization because "Biju's minority statement is against the Anglicized Indian women, who are seen as insipid representatives of middle-class migrants conforming to white normativity" (Nanda 2021: 128). His response is to wolf-whistle through their security-barred window (imparting the sense of imprisonment) in the wake of "the rejection he faces from all quarters". As Aparajita Nanda explains: "In a fascinating reversal of the colonial gaze of power, Biju claims back his agency, his spatial positioning — 'standing at that threshold' — compensating for his status as an interstitial racialized other" (2021: 128). The threshold Biju occupies for a brief moment is one of demarcations between two spatio-social realms belied by the assumed equalizing urban environment. In the words of John Masterson, "Beneath the glossy rhetoric of a borderless planet, supposedly liberated by liquid capitalism, […] the chronotopes of contemporary culture are defined by exclusionary practices" (2009: 423). In contrast to celebratory renderings of globalization extoling connection, cultural diversity, and hybridity, Desai critiques what is

"inherent in the new urbanization process" and that is unmistakably "an intensification of socio-economic inequalities" (Soja 2000: 265).

The incident triggers a surge in Biju's profound sense of non-belonging and loneliness, and, as he moves on, pushing his bike along the cold streets of New York, his efforts at warding off at least some of his feelings of despondence and the biting cold invoke recollections of his native India. The following description also imparts the external stimuli of New York's spatial environment, along with alliteration and stark similes functioning as an inter-literary suggestion that inverts and mocks F. S. Fitzgerald's Gatsby staring across the bay of dark water at night:

> The shadows drew in close, the night chomped more than its share of hours. Biju smelled the first of the snow and found it had the same pricking, difficult smell that existed inside the freezer; he felt the Ther-mocol scrunch of it underfoot. On the Hudson, the ice cracked loudly into pieces, and within the contours of this gray, broken river it seemed as if the city's inhabitants were being provided with a glimpse of something far and forlorn that they might use to consider their own loneliness. Biju put a padding of newspapers down his shirt—leftover copies from kind Mr. Iype the newsagent—and sometimes he took the scallion pancakes and inserted them below the paper, inspired by the memory of an uncle who used to go out to the fields in winter with his lunchtime parathas down his vest. But even this did not seem to help, and once, on his bicycle, he began to weep from the cold, and the weeping un-picked a deeper vein of grief—such a terrible groan issued from between the whimpers that he was shocked his sadness was so profound. (Desai 2006: 58)

Biju's deep-seated feelings of loss, deprivation, injustice and homesickness come together in this aching, near-atavistic cry that seems to speak of his sense of place as "registered in one's muscles and bones" (Tuan 1977: 184). The cold cityscape and its sensory impressions have a poignant effect on Biju's emotional responses, evoking nostalgic reminiscences of his family and past experiences. Yet Desai eschews the pitfall of sentimentality while presenting the clamor of New York's contrasts thanks to a narrative style that interbraids absurdity, the tragic, a sense of the grotesque and biting humor. The jarring predicament of modern-day tenement dwellers and illegal workers in hellish basements is underwritten by their fragile spatial grounding and resulting crisis of identity. At the same time, the novel subscribes to the postcolonial explorations of space that have

centered "on the image of the metropole as opposed to the colony or post-colonial space, and analyses of globalization have begun to focus on global flows of capital, labor, and information, as technologies reorganize space" (Gilbert 2009: 105). Another illustration of the spatial alignment and sense of loss in New York's "underbelly" is offered in the following passage:

> It was a little after 1 A.M. when he left Freddy's Wok for the last time, the street lamps were haloes of light filled with starry scraps of frozen vapor, and he trudged between snow mountains adorned with empty take-out containers and solidified dog pee in surprised yellow. The streets were empty but for the homeless man who stood looking at an invisible watch on his wrist while talking into a dead pay phone. "Five! Four! Three! Two! One—TAKEOFF!!" he shouted, and then he hung up the phone and ran holding onto his hat as if it might get blown off by the rocket he had just launched into space. Biju turned in mechanically at the sixth somber house with its tombstone facade, past the metal cans against which he could hear the unmistakable sound of rat claws, and went down the flight of steps to the basement. (Desai 2006: 59)

Accentuated by elements of the street light ironically depicted as "haloes" and circumscribed by a miasma-like fog, the description imparts the gloomy hollowness of the denizens' lives, reduced to mere automated movements and talking into the void. Piles of garbage form a stark contrast against the snow, implying Biju's hometown of Kalimpong at the foot of the Himalayas[29]. Biju descends into the burrow of the "underclass" basements that are similar to the restaurants in which he works and that constitute New York's contradictory spaces produced by globalization (Sassen 1996). This is another dimension of the urban landscape, an invisible and miserable "space-time" (Massey 1993): "There was a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York, but Biju was ill-equipped for it" (Desai 2006: 29). Throughout the novel, Desai calls attention to the direct relationship between the spatial ordering of the metropolis and the social divisions based on categories such as class and race, but it is the description of the string of upscale restaurants that sheds a particularly strong light on this issue. It has thus been argued that "[e]ven their presentation on the page is designed to draw our attention to the palimpsestic qualities

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[29] In several instances in the novel, there are direct references to the ramifications of colonialism on the Himalayan landscape, which is beyond the focus of this analysis; for more on this topic, see Poray-Wybranowska 2021: 58-80.

of both discourses and spaces commonly associated with globalization" (Masterson 2009: 422). Desai's style edges toward imagism in prose, eliding most verbs and unnecessary epithets:

> Biju at the Baby Bistro.
> Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, Pakistani.
> Biju at Le Colonial for the authentic colonial experience.
> On top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian.
> On to the Stars and Stripes Diner. All American flag on top, all Guatemalan flag below.
> Plus one Indian flag when Biju arrived. (Desai 2006: 28)

The taxonomy of the order, in the restaurant and elsewhere, relies on the spatial distribution of people, flags, and prices, recreating the colonial patterns of the extraction of labor and mapping. In Nanda's words, "Miserable and alienated, overwhelmed by the marginalized space he occupies, Biju identifies, and yet disidentifies, with the semiotics of space" (2021: 129). In the wake of his wolf-whistling revenge on the Indian female students, Biju steps up his contemptuous resistance to the members of the Indian diaspora who eat beef and before long even refuses to work in restaurants serving beef. However, "Biju, racially excluded and dodging surveillance, discovers to his cost, that immigrants are a transient and disposable workforce, not potential citizens in the USA" (Prasad 2013: 68). Leaving his basement quarters early one morning with his meager belongings, including his mattress – "a rectangle of foam with egg crate marking rolled into a bundle and tied with string" (Desai 2006: 154) – his buoy in the shifting existence of the global precariat, "Biju looked back for the last time at that facade of former respectability deteriorating. In the distance stood Grant's tomb like a round gray funeral cake with barbarous trim. Closer, the projects were a dense series of bar graphs against the horizon" (Desai 2006: 154-155). The condensed image of the doom-like atmosphere, conveyed by the bar graphs resembling prison bars, tie in with the previous images of New York's unyielding and fixed cityscape. At the same time, it stresses what Eric Prieto has detected as the contemporary inclination for "dynamic space and a devaluation of human attachment to place, a repository of experiences and emotions" (2013: 75-106). Biju and other

characters like him grapple with New York's cityspace as their "practiced place" (de Certeau 1984), representing the unyielding condition of their daily existence, constructing their sense of place, but their act of walking as "a space of enunciation" (de Certeau 1984: 98) imparts meaning to the space without the intimacy of mutual obligation. The "walking rhetorics" (de Certeau 1984: 100) of the "walkers, Wandersmänner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (de Certeau 1984: 93) do not induce acceptance, understanding or intimacy. Rather, the traversing of the city only serves to reinforce Biju's sense of non-belonging and isolation: "Illegal residents like Biju can subvert the grammar of the city by refusing to follow the rules of habitation, but they generally do not succeed in overthrowing that grammar (what de Certeau calls the "'proper' meaning") to a significant degree" (Ferguson 2009: 39). The angular austerity of New York's skyline contrasts with Biju's daily experience at "street level" (de Certeau 1988), but after one accident in the kitchen when Biju injures his knee and is forced to rest, he views the urban environment in a different light and from a new angle:

> So Biju lay on his mattress and watched the movement of the sun through the grate on the row of buildings opposite. From every angle that you looked at this city without a horizon, you saw more buildings going up like jungle creepers, starved for light, holding a perpetual half-darkness congealed at the bottom, the day shafting through the maze, slivering into apartments at precise and fleeting times, a cuprous segment visiting between 10 and 12 perhaps, or between 10 and 10:45, between 2:30 and 3:45. As in places of poverty where luxury is rented out, shared, and passed along from neighbor to neighbor, its time of arrival was noted and anticipated by cats, plants, elderly people who might sit with it briefly across their knees. But this light was too brief for real succor and it seemed more the visitation of a beautiful memory than the real thing. (Desai 2006: 196)

The prison-like imagery is again conjured up in this passage of urban representation, while the personified skyscrapers wrestle with each other for light. The emphasis is on the transience of time and waning light, where even the sun seems regimented, thus enhancing the atmosphere of hegemony. His observation of the world outside from the basement window has been compared to that of "one of the prisoners in Plato's allegory of the cave who end up thinking that the shadow of the world outside is

the real thing, or in Baudrillard's terms that the fake has become the real" (Král 2014: 162). The reference to jungle creepers has been interpreted as the introduction to the "possibility of frailty […] an author writing in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center could hardly be unaware of that frailty" (Ferguson 2009: 39).

Biju becomes increasingly conscious of the hypocritical constraints imposed on him by mainstream society and resigns himself to the fleeting nature of encounters made and lost due to spatial realignments. Thus, the invitation by a former co-worker to visit him after his relocation to another job and neighborhood confirms Biju's emptied sense of connection and realization that "[…] he probably wouldn't see him again. This was what happened, he had learned by now. You lived intensely with others, only to have them disappear overnight, since the shadow class was condemned to movement" (Desai 2006: 109). The shifting layer of the "underclass" is part of the "migrational city" (de Certeau 1984), whose disposability contributes to their fragmented sense of space (Harvey 1989): "The emptiness Biju felt returned to him over and over, until eventually he made sure not to let friendships sink deep anymore" (Desai 2006: 109). Biju's sense of not fitting in to this cityscape not only persists but intensifies as New York is not a place of belonging for him, but one of economic hardship, and there is no affiliation with the city while living in it as an immigrant and constantly agonizing about being deported. His worries are also transmitted in the repetitions: "Oh the green card, the green card, the–Biju was so restless sometimes, he could barely stand to stay in his skin" (Desai 2006: 88). On one occasion, desolate and restless, Biju goes to the Hudson riverfront, looking out from Manhattan's shoreline, in a reversal of the typical and tourist-preferred vista:

> After work, he crossed to the river, not to the part where the dogs played madly in hanky-sized squares, with their owners in the fracas picking up feces, but to where, after singles night at the synagogue, long-skirted-and-sleeved girls walked in an old-fashioned manner with old-fashioned-looking men wearing black suits and hats as if they had to keep their past with them at all times so as not to lose it. He walked to the far end where the homeless man often slept in a dense chamber of green that seemed to grow not so much from soil as from a fertile city crud. […] He walked to where the green ran out into a tail of pilings and where men like himself often sat on the rocks

and looked out onto a dull stretch of New Jersey. Peculiar boats went by: garbage barges, pug-nosed tugboats with their snoots pushing big-bottomed coal carriers; others whose purpose was not obvious —all rusty cranes, cogs, black smoke flaring out. (Desai 2006: 88-89)

In her inimitable style, weaving selected literary tropes with a dry undertone, Desai redirects the reader's attention away from the street-level to the waterfront, rendering a naturalistically-imbued atmosphere of the gritty urban landscape. It is at these moments that Biju's failure to assimilate runs deep and his homesickness escalates: "His alienation from New York reiterates his sense of belonging to India—the latter a deeply etched narrative that remains an ingrained affect—which refuses to fade away despite his repeated attempts to reject his past while inhabiting an alien culture and place" (Nanda 2021: 129).

2.4. "Place-ness" and "Non-place" in New York City

All spatial categories are marked by specific contextual traces, topographic and sensory elements, inducing varying effects on each and every one of us. Due to the "Rorschach-like ability of place to mean different things to different people and in different contexts" (Prieto 2013: 14), our experiences of locations are distinct. In considering the spatial imaginary of Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, several other critical terms are required in this analysis. The first is possibly most closely related to the affective investment of a site, which Jesse Patrick Ferguson (2009: 36) denotes as "place-ness", which is "not just the physical locale of home and home-region, but also a person's emotional, legal, aesthetic and existential investment in a given physical location". As Ferguson highlights the duality and contextual relevance of place-ness that can be seen "as the historical presence, both personal and communal, and it often entails a sense of ownership – sometimes in the sense of private property, sometimes in the sense of belonging to a place", he also warns of the duality of this concept as it does not "entail only an abstract knowledge: it actually determines the way humans physically inhabit a location" (Ferguson 2009: 36). Biju's wrestle with survival in the city is a case of such "place-ness," as Ferguson explains, given the lack of "insideness" (Relph 1976) or "topophilia" (Tuan

1990), suffusing his sense of place with distress, destitution and vulnerability. The extent of the sense of "place-ness" is illustrated throughout the novel, because Biju is forced to change his job and has no permanent address. Ultimately, he ends up leaving New York and America with diverse losses: "without name or knowledge of the American president, without the name of the river on whose bank he had lingered, without even hearing about any of the tourist sights" (Desai 2006: 293). Biju is disassociated from New York's landmarks, deprived of the experiences "a legal resident or visitor would say give New York its place-ness" (Ferguson 2009: 39).

Biju's sense of non-belonging to New York gives rise to another useful spatial category, that of "non-place". New York to Biju is "a 'non-place' with which he is in a contractual relationship, as Augé (1995) would suggest. Biju's lack of connectedness owes too much to how he suffers from the affective dimension of displacement" (Nanda 2021: 129). Reference is made here to Marc Augé's book *Non-places: Introduction to An Anthropology of Supermodernity*, originally written as an anthropological study, based on his research into individuals' experiences and attachments with each other in late capitalism. According to Augé, "place" can be defined "as relational, historical and concerned with identity", and, in keeping with this logic "a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place" (1995: 77-78). In Augé's view, the increasing number and variety of non-places such as supermarkets, shopping malls, airports, and subways, has resulted in the failure of individuals to gain a sense of place or attachment with each other, which led him to propose the idea of non-place by differentiating between "two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces" (1995: 94)[30]. Although individuals seemingly gain access to spaces and interactions, they are dispossessed of meaningful connections: "non-places mediate a whole mass of relations, with the self and with others, which are only indirectly related to their purposes. Given that anthropological places create the organically social, so non-places create solitary contractuality" (1995: 94). Rather than facilitating relationships with the community, "the user of a non-place is in contractual relations

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[30] On Desai's interest in the symbolic meanings of airports, see Masterson 2009.

with it (or with the powers that govern it)" (Augé 1995: 101). The result of exposure to such an occupation of a temporary space is detachment: "The space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude" (Augé 1995: 103), especially in the postcolonial, globalizing world.

For Biju and other immigrants, their geographical dislocation and precarious existence in such an alien environment makes New York City a "non-place." As Aparajita Nanda contends, Biju's disassociation "with New York is brought on by the burden of historical trauma that he already carries with him. New York, therefore, remains a non-place for Biju, as he never forgets his Indian roots and never assimilates into American culture" (2021: 127). As "a global city", New York embodies the conditions that foster capital accumulation, displacement, and inhuman destitution, morphing into a state David Harvey has termed "accumulation by dispossession" (2005: 159–165). In this context, "set in a world of hypermodernity where people never cross paths and in which there is no real social interaction" (Král 2014: 161), *The Inheritance of Loss* illustrates how the urban imaginary of the "cosmopolis" represents rootlessness and the condition whereby individuals are reduced to mere roles that preclude their meaningful interactions with their surroundings. Loneliness and a profound sense of loss connect Biju's migration experience to the judge's journey decades earlier. Both characters endure emotional privations and bodily humiliations brought about by cultural dislocation. Specifically, Biju works and lives in New York for several years without any exposure to its attractions: "no Statue of Liberty, Macy's, Little Italy, Brooklyn Bridge, Museum of Immigration; no bialy at Barney Greengrass, soupy dumpling at Jimmy's Shanghai, no gospel churches of Harlem tour" (Desai 2006: 293). Biju's fragmented sense of space also signals what Harvey (1989) sees as "disposability", and he remains "in a liminal state before ultimately returning to Kalimpong in defeat and humiliation: a disposable component in the global economic system" (Shaw 2019: 30). While Biju's sense of estrangement and nostalgia take over, his understanding of loss – of the opportunities he missed in America, his inheritance, "home away from home", is redirected towards a new inkling of other possibilities: "He returned over the lonely ocean and he thought that this kind of perspective

could only make you sad. Now, he promised himself, he would forget the insight, begin anew" (Desai 2006: 293).

Biju's return home is presented as a dramatic unravelling, following arduous flights and other difficulties, including being tricked, robbed and stripped down to his underpants by guerilla thugs near his hometown. After his hardships in America, he goes back to Kalimpong and his father: "Back from America with far less than he'd ever had" (Desai 2006: 324). This is possibly the breaking point in his relationship with the spatial imaginary of New York: "The theft of his earnings there serves to sever his last tie to the place-ness of New York, effectively making it as though he had never visited the U.S." (Ferguson 2009: 39). Desai's angle on globalization and the dimensions informed by the colonial legacy and neo-colonial elements also exposes "the popular 'positivist' view of the increased transnational flow as the harbinger of modernity and economic opportunities" (Prasad 2013: 62). Rather than identify new pathways for belonging and connecting, Desai investigates, in the words of Kristian Shaw, "the creeping insidiousness of Westernization and the lingering legacy of imperial rule" by "indicating the staggering adversity migrants face in breaking away from their cultural inheritance" (2019: 30). With this ending, the novel comes full circle in representing the imbrication of colonization, the logic of neoliberal global capitalism, and New York's urban spatiality. Nevertheless, the novel also intimates how representations of these issues might fuse with visions of possible prospects beyond the restraints of neoimperialism, globalization, and cultural exclusivity. The lens of New York's spatiality does not preclude the importance of retrieving the voices and narratives of those who are relegated to its "underclass"; in this sense, Desai's novel "is dedicated to making visible those histories that are hidden under hegemonic discourses, commodified spaces, and national icons", which thus "unmask New York's ostensible cosmopolitanism as a neoliberal façade" (Neumann 2019: 230). Desai undermines the notion of the centrality of New York City as a "global city" and its multiple pull factors that beguile and confound newcomers from various parts of the country and the world, just like the character of Biju. The novel is therefore listed as an example of "a literature of exiles and migrants […], with characteristic tropes of nostalgia, alienation, and cultural heterogeneity expressed in

spatial terms" (Gilbert 2009: 105). As issues of journey, relocation, and diaspora are integral to the interpretation of this novel in general, but also of its representation of New York City, a further closer discussion of these and related issues is called for.

2.5. Migration and "Diaspora Space"

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, New York appears a veritable example of "contact zones," as defined by Mary Pratt: "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (2003: 4)[31]. Such was Biju's experience of the socio-economic and culturally spatialized order in the urban environment where its inhabitants share space, but where they also come up against limits and contend for survival or ascendency. Regardless of New York's potential as a place of encounter and exchange, it is represented as emblematic of "the stratified society in the USA. Biju faces racial apathy and his tribulations suppressed by his transient elation crush him internally. […] The cultural segregation determined by economic inequalities is palpable in globalization's variegated spatial attributes" (Prasad 2013: 67). The spatial imaginary reflects the difference in terms of class, and we are presented with "the New York view of the cosmopolis, consisting in fluid and variegated populations which are stratified nevertheless" (Gupta 2008: 41).

The issues of migration and home are focal in the novel, reflected in Biju's return to India and the loss of the imagined America, a country of hopes which made him invisible. The traumatic displacement experienced by diasporic subjects and their struggle for subsistence in New York City is exemplified in characters like Biju as they navigate the power relations inscribed in the urban spatiality. As Bill Ashcroft in *Postcolonial Transformation* points out, "to inhabit place is, in a variety of ways, to inhabit power" (2001: 172), which infers that disenfranchised and destitute

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[31] Following Pratt's understanding of "contact zones," Oana Sabo makes a useful nuanced differentiation with "diasporic 'contact zones'", namely "the interactions not between the colonizers and the colonized, or Europeans and South Asians, but between immigrants, diasporics, and ethnic minorities" (2012: 388-389).

characters like Biju are denied "insideness" (Relph 1976) since the geography of New York offers no affiliation or embeddedness, and reduces them to "spatial dispersal and geographical isolation" (Harvey 1993: 88). The interaction between power and spatiality in literary analysis is demonstrated in the novel, with an awareness of the specific circumstances, attesting to "the necessity to account for the particular conditions and histories that variously shape the relations between space and place, rather than relying on dichotomous categories with preset evaluations" (Crowley 2021: 223). Therefore, the present research is also cognizant of the interconnectedness of (post)colonial geographies and globalization, where "[c]olonialism in *The Inheritance of Loss* is revealed as a latent historical force in the global contemporary, that as a historical experience has not been worked through, let alone been overcome and that therefore makes global equality impossible" (Neumann 2019: 227). Given the centrality of the colonial legacy in considering the socio-spatial order for New York's "underclass," Aparajita Nanda suggests a functional designation of the urban environment as a "neocolonial cityscape" (2021: 126), that is "the neo-colonial city as a key site that recalls the colonial practice of exploitation" (2021: 128). *The Inheritance of Loss* offers a critical assessment of the grim fate of immigrants within the global order and the cityscape that crush their sense of self-esteem, agency and growth. Due to migration, cultural dislocation and spatial segregation, these postcolonial subjects are thus invisibilised and plagued by a "fragmented sense of space" owing to their "disposability" (Harvey 1989), evident in the following passage:

> Biju walked back to the Gandhi café, thinking he was emptying out. Year by year, his life wasn't amounting to anything at all; in a space that should have included family, friends, he was the only one displacing the air. And yet, another part of him had expanded: his self-consciousness, his self-pity – oh the tediousness of it. Clumsy in America, a giant-sized midget, a bigfat-sized helping of small […] Shouldn't he return to a life where he might slice his own importance, to where he might relinquish this overrated control over his own destiny and perhaps be subtracted from its determination altogether? He might even experience that greatest luxury of not noticing himself at all. (Desai 2006: 268)

The character's realization of his disassociation from the urban environment as a result of forced economic subordination implies the spatial

construction of his sense of self. Biju's disenchantment with New York and feeling of hollowness caused by living in a foreign space have been shaped by the inexorable inheritance of colonialism and continuing "othering" within the context of migration and globalization. Following Doreen Massey and other scholars, new understandings of diaspora have emerged within the framework of globalization, specifically that of the "diasporic horizon": "contemporary nations have developed a 'diasporic horizon' – that is, a spatiotemporal horizon defined in terms of multilocality, diversity, dispersal and conflict" (Fortier 2005: 185). This conception reflects the interconnection between the various factors of "imagined geographies" (Sharp 2009) in terms of diaspora, including the impact on diasporic subjects in their new country. The novel presents the imbricated experiences of spatial and diasporic dispersals, with a spotlight "on the material experiences of various ethnic diasporas […] in the context of late twentieth-century capitalism" (Sabo 2012: 376). At the same time, Desai advances a different consideration of diaspora divergent from previous theorizations that concentrated on the issues of individual and collective exile and migration, followed by "their re-anchoring in their host countries" (Sabo 2012: 376). Desai's approach to diaspora brings to light "the material conditions that have given rise to transnational flows of people as well as the ways in which diasporic identities are lived and experienced in the context of global capitalism" (Sabo 2012: 376). New York as the embodiment of "the globalization of cityscape" (Soja 2009: 229) and a major immigrant destination where diasporic individuals inscribe their aspirations and identities into the spatial imaginary of the city as a "diasporic horizon" (Fortier 2005) may thus also become a "heterotopia" (Foucault 1989) and a potential counter-site.

Within the broad and complex field of diaspora studies, an important reframing of diaspora in relation to global capitalism is offered in Avtar Brah's study *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Brah identifies the interweaving of "the concepts of diaspora, border, and politics of location" that make up "a conceptual grid for historicised analyses of contemporary transnational movements of people, information, cultures, commodities and capital" (1996: 177), thus imparting a more complex interpretation of the concept of diaspora. As a global hub of diasporic living,

New York City exemplifies the "diaspora space" that Brah defines as "the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes. It addresses the global condition of culture, economics and politics as a site of 'migrancy' and 'travel'" (1996: 178). In the novel, Biju's migration and diaspora space illustrates the new global economic order of exploitative capitalist hierarchy and hegemony where in addition to the postcolonial effects of the British decolonization process, the low-wage workers in America are also subjected to unfair conditions. The complexity of diaspora also has spatial implications, as "all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces" (Brah 1996: 180-181). In the novel, New York's urban environment brings to the surface the specific issues of diasporas in their quest for a defined place called "home." Brah scrutinizes "the subtext of 'home'" which the concept of diaspora embodies: "a politics of location as locationality in contradiction – that is a positionality of dispersal; […] of movement across shifting cultural, religious and linguistic boundaries; of journeys across geographical and psychic borders" (Brah 1996: 204). In this manner, the redefinition of contemporary diaspora space points to its intricate, layered, unpredictable and hybrid nature, highly relevant for Desai's novel, "which is also preoccupied with the delineation and transgression of various borders, personal and political, national and transnational" (Masterson 2009: 414).

The notion of diaspora space in New York as a global city is strongly associated with "dis/location" that precludes "topophilia" (Tuan 1990), made apparent by Biju's decision to return to his homeland India. His imaginary of America in general and of New York specifically only tangentially involves geographies of diaspora as "social relations that connect people from different places," that indicate "the internal differences and conflicts" in places contending to be uniform in identity (Massey 1994: 5). Biju's sense of the city, as illustrated in the previous quotation, speaks of disenchantment and liminality, closely tied to the distinct divide between the "core" and the "periphery." The novel intimates the contrast that Soja has argued regarding power and the center-periphery relation (1996: 87), and exposes the profound crisis of American urbanity. Desai's critique of the globalized capitalist order is presented through cleverly layered

narratives that testify to the hectic pace of New York as the "space-time" (Massey 1993) of the millennial turn. Another novel featuring the spatial imaginary of New York as a "cosmopolis" (Soja 2009) is Joseph O'Neill's novel *Netherland*, discussed in the following section.

3. The Representation of New York
in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*

"Ah, what can ever be stately and admirable to me than
Mast-hemm'd Manhattan?
River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?"

(Whitman 1892/2004: 188)

3.1. Introduction: *Netherland* and the 9/11 Aftermath

The novelistic depictions of New York City acquired an added critical dimension following the attacks of September 11, 2001, prompting contested deliberations as to whether such a tragic and traumatic event should and could be transposed into literary form. At the same time, the event is closely connected to the semiotic signification of New York's financial centrality that undergirds its spatial imaginary featuring corporate office towers and skyscrapers, integral to the city's skyline and character. In order to illustrate these socio-spatial issues in novelistic form, this chapter investigates Joseph O'Neill's novel *Netherland* (2008) and its representation of New York against the backdrop of the globalized economy, and various forms of migration and mobility. To this end, this section of the book traces several strands of the novelistic portrayal of New York City, exploring the themes of capital and globalization, but also the significance of migration, cricket, and the American Dream. These themes and motifs are intricately woven throughout the novel, with references to *The Great Gatsby*[32], employing a retrospective structure. The main characters embody the seemingly disparate worlds of privileged mobility and cosmopolitan exile on the one hand, and the struggles of immigrants for survival and the sense of self propounded by New York as a metaphorical representation for the whole

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[32] More details on the use of *Gatsby* are offered later in the chapter.

of America, on the other: "The myths of New York are America's dreams and dilemmas writ firsthand both large and small, and what we make of them tells us much about ourselves" (Margolies 2007: 13). The inimitable quality of the city in global terms has made its mark on O'Neill, which he sums up in an interview as follows: "New York City is possibly the most morally, ethically and economically successful city in the history of human beings" (O'Neill 2013: 3). The conviction that New York enables the pursuit of countless undertakings seems widely shared by both its inhabitants and those who have never set foot in the city. *Netherland* explores two divergent experiences through its protagonists whose affiliation with the city and its 9/11 aftermath is both shared yet individual and reimagined, as is the case with many aspects of New York and their literary representations. After all, as Bertrand Westphal has argued, fiction is not a mere mimesis of reality but "it actualizes new virtualities hitherto unexpressed, which then interact with the real according to the hypertextual logic of interfaces" (2011: 103). Hence, the events of 9/11 are reconsidered through the personal sensations of individuals, shaped by their spatial imaginary and represented in literary form as "fiction detects possibilities buried in the folds of the real" (Westphal 2011: 103).

The novel takes the form of an extended flashback recounted by the autodiegetic narrator, Hans van der Broek, a Dutch-born equity analyst, who at the beginning of the novel is in London when he receives the news of the murder of his fellow cricket player Chuck. The information prompts Hans to recall his time spent in New York, albeit with reluctance and bitterness: "I find it hard to rid myself of the feeling that life carries a taint of aftermath. [...] for the first two years or so of my return to England, I did my best to look away from New York—where, after all, I'd been unhappy for the first time in my life" (O'Neill 2008: 4). Hans reflects on his first migration from London to New York with his English wife Rachel and son Jake, and the shift after the 9/11 attacks when their relationship fell apart. After the destruction of the World Trade Center, they decide to leave their apartment in lower Manhattan and relocate further away in the hope of finding refuge in the Hotel Chelsea, but as Hans' wife becomes increasingly distressed with living in New York and frustrated by Hans' disengagement about the Bush administration's actions, she returns to London with

their son. Dispirited, Hans broods over his situation, the trial separation, his past, present and future life. By chance, he connects with fellow cricket players and finds some respite from his emotional turmoil: "That summer of 2002, when out of loneliness I played after years of not playing, and in the summer that followed, I was the only white man I saw on the cricket fields of New York" (O'Neill 2008: 10). During a cricket game he is introduced to Chuck Ramkissoon, a Trinidad-born cricket umpire and enthusiast, who offers Hans his friendship and a new experience of New York. Their shared passion for the sport and search for reinvention in New York contribute to the representation of the city as their backdrop for their perception and dismantling of the American Dream, albeit in differing ways as despite being uprooted, the two protagonists are very different types of migrants.

Even though the events of 9/11 and their novelistic responses are not the mainstay of this analysis, a few introductory remarks are necessary for a more rounded understanding of the novel. Undoubtedly, Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* can be understood as a literary reinscription of 9/11,[33] and is even described by some critics as one of the "9/11 novels" instrumental in propelling "the careers of newer literary stars such as Mohsin Hamid, Joseph O'Neill and Amy Waldman" (Keeble 2019: 274). Among the differing views on the categorization of *Netherland* with reference to 9/11, several critics present interesting perspectives. Snyder maintains that "*Netherland* can and must be read as a post-9/11 novel" (2013: 462), undertaking a reading of the novel "as both a post-9/11 and a postcolonial novel" (Snyder 2013: 487). Not surprisingly, another critic concentrates on "O'Neill's treatment of the visual [that] emphasizes cross-cultural, critical, and shifting possibilities of sight. Rather than reiterating scenes of 9/11's destruction or its 'domestic' impact, *Netherland* includes scenes of seeing that look beyond familial and national boundaries" (Wasserman 2014: 252). Since the novel's opening is set in the period after the attacks, it seems logical to mark it as a novel about 9/11, but Hans "seldom mentions

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[33] The "9/11" (or "post-9/11") literary corpus is considerable in scope and diversity; see, for instance, Randall 2011; Versluys 2009; Wagner-Martin 2013, especially pp. 287-307. For more about the writers who are in agreement regarding the literary response to 9/11, see Gray 2011: 1-19. Regarding arguments about whether *Netherland* should be classified as a 9/11 novel or not, see Snyder 2013: 459-461.

it–except that the miasma of the destruction of the World Trade Center towers has poisoned New York and its people" (Wagner-Martin 2013: 302). Hence, although the tragedy of the Twin Towers and its destruction are not described, as Richard Gray elaborates, the staggering magnitude of the events is evoked indirectly or vicariously in many novels, with a common feature: "The determining feature of trauma is that it is unsayable. So perhaps the way to tell a story that cannot be told is to tell it aslant. […] to approach the contemporary crisis by circuitous means, by stealth" (2012: 800)[34]. O'Neill appears to adopt a similar strategy by avoiding narration about the horrors of the 9/11 event, but not completely muting the tragic aspects of life.

The novel begins with the news of Chuck's handcuffed body found in the Gowanus, strongly suggesting a mafia execution for which this canal is notorious. In this manner, the opening of the narrative initiates the flashback story, but also the topic of violence and "a foreboding sense of loss that operates throughout the story", intimating 9/11 "through the centrality of the theme of death in the novel" (Ertuna-Howison 2011: 115). The literary expression of the traumatic event is conducted through Hans' narration, his impressions, sensorial perceptions, sense of place and belonging, in a distinctive manner, as a disengaged and melancholic narrator[35]. The author of the novel has referred to Hans as an "'international' and 'post-national narrator,' whose roots and past are elsewhere in the Netherlands and whose future, it seems, may happen anywhere" (cited in Mansutti 2011: 119). In a similar vein, the socio-spatial character of the novel's New York has been defined by O'Neill as "a vaguely cosmopolitan, stateless, postnational sort of place" (2013: 3). Although *Netherland*'s New York is set in

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[34] Note should be taken of the resultant novelistic production about the September 11 attacks taking up the need to memorialize and probe the shocking developments in order to make sense of them, but also contributing to "Commemoration, Commodification, and the 9/11 Novel Industry" (Knewitz 2013: 162). In a rather caustic remark about the interrelation between the commercial effect of the event-related novel, one critic cautions: "[L]iterature–be it poetry or the novel–is not as adversarial to commodity culture as the adherents of the 9/11 genre sometimes want to make us believe" (Knewitz 2013: 166).

[35] For a more detailed discussion about the fictionalization of trauma issues in the novel see Araújo 2013, and O'Gorman 2015 concerning the role of literature in the construction of post-9/11 identity.

the post-9/11 context, it is not concerned with the event directly. The ram-ifications of the attack on the World Trade Center and the collapse of its towers are signified through the lives and perceptions of the characters. O'Neill elucidates this approach in an interview responding to the ques-tion as to why he chose to leave out the actual experience of 9/11. He des-ignates Hans as the mouthpiece of the issues concerning 9/11, "presented in the context of what's on his mind. September 11 is one of those events that exist on the border of language, and I think Hans is one of thousands who find it almost impossible to reduce the experience to words" (O'Neill 2011: 15). Rather than articulating his state of mind verbally, Hans engages in an ancillary expression through a spatial mapping of New York and "the changes in the psycho-geographical coordinates" (Pease 2019: 143) as the story unfolds, disclosing his ambivalent relation to New York's cityscape.

3.2. *Netherland*'s Topophrenic Cartography

Netherland is a novel of complex narrative weaving, with diverse warps sit-uated in a spatiotemporality that resembles topophrenia, a concept pro-posed by Robert Tally Jr. in his study *Topophrenia: Space, Narrative and the Spatial Imagination* (2019). Detecting a "spatial anxiety" (2019: 1) em-bedded in human experience, Tally claims that "topophrenia characteriz-es the subjective engagement with a given place, with one's sense of place, and with the possible projection of alternative spaces" (Tally 2019: 1). The characters' attitudes to locations, inscribed and molded by their actions and associated thoughts generate a close connection between their inner emotions and subjective experiences with the tangible external aspects of physical or social spaces. Tally deems topophrenia as unavoidable and omnipresent since it "characterizes nearly all human activity, as a sense of place […] – it is an essential element of thought, experiences, and being" (2019: 2). As an alternative definition, the term topophrenia is further ex-plained as "a certain identifiable 'place-mindedness' that informs our ac-tivities and thinking" (Tally 2019: 23). The process of interaction between Hans and New York is represented in the form of a layered recollection spanning several years and through diverse occurrences and actions that circumscribe his sense of the city. Accordingly, in one of his interviews,

O'Neill underscores that "[o]ne of the pleasures of *Netherland* […] is that rich sense of place. In each book, it's easy to envision what the area looked like, what the people were like, what the different cultures were like" (O'Neill 2011: 17). Hans begins his reminiscences of the post-9/11 period in New York with the collapse of his marriage. His personal anguish is intimately entwined with the feeling of dread and disorientation that engulfed both the protagonist and the entire nation at that time, not surprisingly since "9/11 has become for the United States the most visible and haunting symbol of the new permeability of its borders, its vulnerability to outside elements" (Giles 2007: 51). As the author of *Netherland* states in his interview, the context is also intimated in the novel's title, evoking the subsequent moment and sunken socio-spatial configuration as "it's also a way to think of Ground Zero after the attacks, that heart-breaking void. And, yes, it can be associated with the mental state of Hans and some other characters–including the character named New York City" (O'Neill 2011: 9). The significance of the city thus declared by O'Neill is highlighted throughout the novel and from its inception as Hans contemplates the period of personal depression during his stay in the Hotel Chelsea:

> Those circumstances were, I should say, unbearable. Almost a year had passed since my wife's announcement that she was leaving New York and returning to London with Jake. This took place one October night as we lay next to each other in bed on the ninth floor of the Hotel Chelsea. We'd been holed up in there since mid-September, staying on in a kind of paralysis even after we'd received permission from the authorities to return to our loft in Tribeca. Our hotel apartment had two bedrooms, a kitchenette, and a view of the tip of the Empire State Building. It also had extraordinary acoustics: in the hush of the small hours, a goods truck smashing into a pothole sounded like an explosion, and the fantastic howl of a passing motorbike once caused Rachel to vomit with terror. Around the clock, ambulances sped eastward on West Twenty-third Street with a sobbing escort of police motorcycles. Sometimes I confused the cries of the sirens with my son's night-time cries. I would leap out of bed… Afterward I slipped out onto the balcony and stood there like a sentry. The pallor of the so-called hours of darkness was remarkable. Directly to the north of the hotel, a succession of cross streets glowed as if each held a dawn. The tail-lights, the coarse blaze of deserted office buildings, the lit store-fronts, the orange fuzz of the street lanterns: all this garbage of light had been refined into a radiant atmosphere that rested in a

low silver heap over Midtown and introduced to my mind the mad thought that final twilight was upon New York. (O'Neill 2008: 19-20)

The quotation exposes the starkness of the hotel arrangement for the family and the strain it exerts on their relationship. The prolonged state of their inadequate refuge at the hotel seems to reduce them to a hiding in a burrow despite their location on the ninth floor. From there, they enjoy a glimpse of the iconic skyscraper that marked New York's "tallest building in the world". However, the sounds of personified police vehicles and other noises trigger traumatic reactions evident in his wife's sickness and Hans' alarm after mistaking the street noise for their son's cries. Their state of shock and trauma seems to correspond to the disorientation embodied in the Hotel Chelsea. Instead of being "a space of intimacy and isolation, permanence and transience […] emblem and repository of New York City's storied past," as Sarah Wasserman proposes, "the hotel is a space of failed promises: the sense of home it offers is hollow" (2014: 257). Additionally, Hans' night watch on the balcony is a futile attempt to watch over and protect the most precious aspect of life – his family – that he is struggling to preserve and safeguard. His failure is intimated in the description of the night skyline, characterized by ominous lights, vacant buildings and the deceptive allure of dazzle, inducing banal impressions of the end of New York as a personified presence, yielding the observation that Hans "projects New York City after 9/11 as a phantasmagoric space" (Knewitz 2013: 160). His feelings of abandonment and self-pity are stirring and illustrate the topophrenic ramifications in "a city gone mad" (O'Neill 2008: 22): "Life itself had become disembodied. My family, the spine of my days, had crumbled. I was lost in invertebrate time" (O'Neill 2008: 30). The literary treatments of New York following the September 11 attacks thus disclose a new unwanted and uneasy "place-mindedness" (Tally 2019), that of a topophrenic quality generated by the disorientation and terror of the 9/11 aftermath. As an illustration, Hans describes how Rachel had a corporeal dread and "spatial anxiety" (Tally 2019) of the iconic Times Square, otherwise known as a major tourist and visitors' attraction:

She had fears of her own, in particular the feeling in her bones that Times Square, where the offices of her law firm were situated, would be the site of the next attack. The Times Square subway station was a special ordeal for her.

Every time I set foot in that makeshift cement underworld – it was the stop for my own office, where I usually turned up at seven in the morning, two hours before Rachel began her working day – I tasted her anxiety. Throngs endlessly climbed and descended the passages and walkways like Escher's tramping figures. Bare high-wattage bulbs hung from the low-lying girders, and temporary partitions and wooden platforms and posted handwritten directions signaled that around us a hidden and incalculable process of construction or ruination was being undertaken. (O'Neill 2008: 20)

The gloomy, death-like appearance and sensation of the place are accentuated by the "cement underworld" (the harsh and unyielding materiality of the site), with the basic and exposed light sources transforming the busy and crowded location into a nightmarish experience as recalled and relived by Hans. An additional layer to this state of mind is created by referring to the Dutch graphic artist Maurits Cornelis Escher and his famous, provocative, geometrically-infused works, of which many include non-conforming, dazzling and disconcerting images[36]. This topophrenic experience illustrates Tally's point that "the pervasive place-mindedness infusing our subjective experience in and apprehension of the world is characterized by a profound sense of unease, anxiety or discontent" (Tally 2019: 23). For Hans, his state of mind living in New York in this period is marked by debilitating dejection associated with the inadequacy of "home" that is a far cry from Bachelard's "sense of place" (1994) or Tuan's "topophilia" (1990), divesting him of positive emotional bonds:

I felt, above all, tired. Tiredness: if there was a constant symptom of the disease in our lives at this time, it was tiredness. At work we were unflagging; at home the smallest gesture of liveliness was beyond us. Mornings we awoke into a malign weariness that seemed only to have refreshed itself overnight. (O'Neill 2008: 23)

His work pace seems circumscribed by the tradition of the Puritan work ethic, but the toll of the dominant socio-spatial order and its affective engagement warps into lassitude, only exacerbated when his wife leaves for London. In the wake of his loss, Hans seeks distraction from depression and loneliness, finding solace, but also a new spatial attitude to New York by playing cricket and spending time with Chuck "who not only hauls him

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[36] See Escher's official website (https://mcescher.com/) for more details on this artist's work.

out of his cloistered existence as an equities analyst, but also takes him to the distant reaches of the outer boroughs and […] people, who for a time at least, […] reawaken him to the possibilities of life" (Kakutani 2008: n. p.). Hans thus "creates the need for a space of emotional shelter that the cricket field fills in" (Pease 2019: 143), and gains a new grasp of the city and the varying aspects of urban spatiality, mirroring the spatio-temporal compression that David Harvey (1989) ascribes to the globalized and late capitalist order, connecting New York's cityscape to the affective dimensions of capital, globalization, trauma and transnationality. As a cosmopolitan nomad of sorts, Hans embodies the history of transatlantic mobility that has circumscribed European colonial settlements[37], as supported by the author's observation that "Hans van den Broek is the original colonial eye revisiting New York" (O'Neill 2013: 3). The topophrenic approach manifests itself as an intense exploration of New York through very specific cartographic references in the novel, functioning as a structuring method, but also supporting the character development, particularly that of Hans. From the very beginning, the novel unfolds as a narrative of trajectories and travel arrangements, "as a book about international movements, transoceanic journeys and global transactions" (Araújo 2013: 104). Hans' trajectories within New York and beyond the United States involve traversing known and alien territories, surmounting obstacles of a "real-and-imagined place" (Soja 1996), daring to go beyond the familiar and charting a new map of the spatial imaginary, thus making it possible to label *Netherland* "contemporary transnational fiction—characterized by a narrative emphasis on border crossing and on global interconnections and interdependences" (Johansen 2014: 4-5). The present-day efforts by Hans to gain perspective conflate with the colonial dimension of New York's past which is also endorsed in the novel's title as explained by O'Neill: "On one level, Netherland can be taken as a synonym for New York, since 'New Netherland' is the historic name for this part of the world" (O'Neill 2011:

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[37] In a different but related context, writing on Caribbean identity, Stuart Hall discusses movement and new forms of mobility within both national and global frameworks, including the position and spatiality in the case of "the modern or postmodern New World nomad, continually moving between center and periphery" (1990: 234). By extension, *Netherland*'s protagonists Hans and Chuck signify this narrativization of mobility.

9). The convergence of the historical interpretation of the city and the socially constructed spatial strata provide an important component in the structure of the novel as a narrative of urban space, entered "into the relational network" (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 13). The interlacing of physical space, memories, social ties and emotional involvement are the constituents of *Netherland*'s literary cartography of the 9/11 aftermath tied to New York's principal status as a global city within the capitalist order.

3.3. *Netherland*'s New York: Cityscape and Capital(ism)

In an instructive invocation of Fredric Jameson's famous imperative to "always historicize," Susan Stanford Friedman urges that we must also "always spatialize […] that is, always ask how locational and geographical specifics particularize any given phenomenon or interpretation of it" (Friedman 1989: 130). In the framework of this novel, the spatial details contribute to multiple narrative threads, all related to the characters' attempts to cope with post-9/11 Manhattan as a site of trauma and the broader context of New York's transnational urban spatiality in a corporate-constructed globalized world. Elizabeth Anker insightfully recognizes that "the 9/11 novel is troubled not so much by the unresolved trauma of 9/11, as the ideological landscape of capitalism and the many species of speculation that sustain it" (2011: 474). The significance of Manhattan both in the US cultural framework and globally is unquestionably vested in capital. In his 2014 book *American Studies Today: Identity, Capital, and Spatiality*, Stipe Grgas offers a compelling argument on the centrality of capital in urban development in the US. He recalls that American cities were not founded merely by the issuing of a papal bull or the expansion of a religious shrine, but that their rise and fall was founded on the logic of capital (Grgas 2014: 241). Grgas highlights the coupling of space and capital in the presentation of cities in the United States (2014: 242), noting that Manhattan exemplifies how the new dynamics of aligning space with the principles of buying and selling became grafted onto the existing urban structure. In the urban configuration beneath Houston Street there is an irregular, haphazard construction, whereas the remainder of the island is characterized by a regular street grid (Grgas 2014: 242). Furthermore, Grgas attributes

the choice of Manhattan as the target for the 9/11 attack to the symbolic weight the city carries as the seat of the global economy (2014: 247). The spatial features of New York as a "global city", embodying "the new urbanization processes stimulated by globalization" (Soja 2000: 196) in terms of capital and capitalism are represented through the character of Hans, an equities analyst who migrates from London to New York as the financial center of the neoliberal economic order. This element further strengthens the argument for "resituating *Netherland* within a world-systemic understanding of capitalism and reading the novel against itself" (Westall 2016: 290). In a similar vein, Donald Pease detects "a prototypical post-9/11 neoliberal fantasy" in the representation of *Netherland*'s cityscape (Pease 2019: 146), one that is intent on establishing "an imaginary relationship with the financialized military complex Hans depends upon for his livelihood" (Pease 2019: 140). As Pease astutely observes, Rachel and Hans belong to "the transnational financial class" (2019: 144) and Hans' personal misery is resolved in a happy reunion with his family at their new home located in an affluent part of London (Pease 2019: 143). Disapproving of the prevalent critical opinions about the post-9/11 novel as affirmative of "liberal multicultural and cosmopolitan values," Pease cautions that these critics project liberal multicultural beliefs and assumptions in their interpretations of the novel, and thus disregard "the tensions neoliberalism creates between market and state and between capital and territory in clear view throughout *Netherland*" (Pease 2019: 146). In part, the dominant imaginary of New York's socio-spatial order as promoting economic prosperity, social emancipation, and cross-cultural and transnational interactions is built on the companionship Hans develops with Chuck. This friendship started at a cricket match at Staten Island and continues when they run into each other while returning to Manhattan by ferry[38]:

> An event for antique sailing ships was taking place in the bay. Schooners, their canvas hardly distended in the still air, clustered around and beyond

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[38] Critical views have pointed to the symbolic use of the ferry in *Netherland* associating O'Neill's vision of New York with multiple representatives of the American literary tradition, not only Fitzgerald but also Walt Whitman and his epigraph from "Leaves of Grass," with the reference to "a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of the rest of the earth. I dream'd that was the new City of Friends" (cited in Snyder 2013: 481, 13n).

Ellis Island. […] The ferry slowed down as we approached Manhattan. In the shade of the huddled towers, the water was the color of a plum. (O'Neill 2008: 18)

The scene, predominantly a waterscape, captures multiple historic and spatial references: the quaint vessels in the sunset are set against the backdrop of New York's iconic site/sight of Ellis Island as the former main gateway for millions of immigrants arriving in the US, augmented by the reference to the "huddled" mentioned in the inscription on the Statue of Liberty featuring lines from Emma Lazarus' poem "The New Colossus". Additionally, the explicit mention of the "towers" evokes the World Trade Center buildings and 9/11 Manhattan, but in a vicarious manner, as a way of approaching the traumatic events "by stealth" (cf. Gray 2012), while simultaneously accounting for Hans' sentimental recollection, as the author indicates in an interview: "He is remembering New York, so he is automatically nostalgic about it, and homesick for it, so he remembers and takes pleasure in everything" (O'Neill 2013: 5). The imaginative and symbolic reverberations of New York's significance in the US and in broader terms are infused with layers of experiences and meanings that O'Neill captures in the descriptions. Although sections like these in the novel corroborate the critical observation that *Netherland* extols "the sights and splendors, of New York as a global city" (Walonen 2022: 1390), the neoliberal capitalist order that global cities are built on should not be overlooked in critical analyses of this novel.

Evidently, the descriptions of New York's sites in *Netherland* disclose the subjective, partial vision of the narrator, reflecting his status as a transnational, cosmopolitan migrant who avails himself of the new technological advantages and benefits from the global economy. At the same time, the process of the narrator gaining a sense of belonging links the novel to postcolonial texts since "a major feature of postcolonial literatures is the concern with either developing or recovering an appropriate identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft *et al* 2006: 392). Thus, in one of Hans' journeys around New York with Chuck, he observes the unfamiliar area of Brooklyn and takes in the diversity of its historical layers, economic pursuits and other activities, including the legacy left behind by the primary European settlers in New York, as he recalls: "[…]

and then I saw the leaning wooden spire of the old Reformed Protestant Dutch church" (O'Neill 2008: 154). Hans becomes uneasy when Chuck shows him "ancient headstones, crumbling and toppling, […] the graves of Brooklyn's original settlers and their descendants. […] 'all of it was Dutch farmland. Until just two hundred years ago. Your people'" (O'Neill 2008: 154). According to Claire Louise Westall, Chuck associates New York, and by extension, the US, with "the land of capitalism's (im)migrants. That he also manages to erase the native population and their claim to the land as he names them marks the systemic consequence of this Dutch precedence, and the European colonialism within which it sits" (2016: 297). This context of New York's past ties in with Hans' white privileged émigré status in the "global capital flow" and its "financescape" (Appadurai 1996), evident in the way he sums up his job as an investment analyst in the language of corporate reductionism: "These efforts required me, sitting at my desk on the twenty-second floor of a glassy tower, to express reliable opinions about the current and future valuation of certain oil and gas stocks" (O'Neill 2008: 121). The colonial trajectory of New York's development as a city corroborate the points about the inextricable nexus between space and capital raised by Grgas (2014). Moreover, no other city in the United States stands out as the symbol of the economic and social mobility that lies at the core of the American Dream, and "[…] New York, although concretely present as geographic space and sensuous experience, is also abstracted as the visible sign of invisible forces that shape it and encompass it" (Ickstadt 2010: 21). Hans reveals his understanding of this socio-economic and spatial interconnectedness when remembering his initial migration to New York and the accompanying capital-driven dynamics:

> Money, then, had joined the more familiar forms of precipitation; only it dropped, in my newcomer's imagination, from the alternative and lucky heavens constituted in the island's exhilaratory skyward figures, about which I need say nothing except that they were the most beautiful sight, never more so than on those nights when my taxi from JFK crested on the expressway above Long Island City, and Manhattan was squarely revealed and, guarded by colossal laughing billboards, I pitched homeward into its pluvial lights. (O'Neill 2008: 92)

The description conveys the excitement of a newly-arrived financial opportunist whose observations reveal his association of New York's urban

spatiality with the affective aspects of capital in a city that connotes global monetary importance. Additionally, the imagery incorporates references to soaring structures enhanced by the ambiguous word "figures", also denoting digits, central to monetary transactions. Other details include the personification of billboards[39] as commercial harbingers and the sense of establishing himself as belonging in the city, as if corresponding to a preconceived construction of New York in his mind. But then, New York is hardly an underimagined city, with its "contradictory faces of glamour and misery and its man-made quality. Then, the gigantic built environment and the relative unimportance of nature" (Vahnenbruck 2012: 6). In *Netherland*, Hans perceives the urban configurations of New York through various phenomena, some physical (related to the weather, the time of day, the city infrastructure, cricket grounds, etc.), and some social, including Hans' personal problems and memories, the Hotel Chelsea neighbors, Chuck's illicit entrepreneurial activities, etc. In the vivid portrayal of the diverse urban facets in the novel, O'Neill is praised for doing "a magical job of conjuring up the many New Yorks Hans gets to know. He captures the city's myriad moods, its anomalous neighborhoods jostling up against one another, its cacophony and stillness" (Kakutani 2008: n. p.). The challenge of representing the various aspects of New York and its affective impact on the protagonists is twofold: one lies with the complexity of narrating the city, i.e., any city, because it is "always also performing conflict, interpenetration, and fragmentation. Urban space like no other has become the location in which conditions of coexistence are negotiated and constantly redefined" (Rohleder and Kindermann 2020: 14). According to Alan Trachtenberg (1982: 103), reading the city as a text assumes tackling all of its ambiguities, its "new inexplicableness […] and new unintelligibility." Writing about the late nineteenth-century "incorporation of America" and urbanization, Trachtenberg defines the city as a modern place where the possibilities of technology, planning, industrialization and commerce come together in a single environment. This aggregation of the urban imaginary and the nature of the city experience is similarly captured by

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[39] The billboard reference might be a far-fetched yet possible allusion to the worn and weathered billboard with T. J. Eckleburg's eyes in the interstitial area of the Valley of Ashes featured in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

Marshall Berman in his book *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (1983), where the very title indicates the knotty issue of understanding the urban situation in fixed and finite terms, a condition that arose with the advent of modernity: "To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction […] in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and our world—and, at the same time, threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are" (Berman 1983: 14-15).

Another challenging aspect in representing New York lies in the affiliation of the city with values that are at the same time inspiring and corrupting, and therefore often depicted either "as a savage amoral Wild West […]—or the city as an imagined New West offering American dreams of self-renewal, self-reinvention, individualism, and promises of prosperity" (Margolies 2007: 11). An interesting example of evoking the concept of the "frontier" and the geographies of the American West in the novel is offered in the following recollections by Hans: during his walk in the city, "[c]orralled by the black snow ranged along the curbs" (O'Neill 2008, 68), he came to the statue of Horace Greeley, a nineteenth-century newspaperman and politician, known for the phrase "Go West, young man, go West," ironically substituted by Hans with Broadway instead of the Western prairie expanses of Greeley's day and age. Walking down Broadway, along an unfamiliar section of the street, he comes across a heterogenous New York, represented by a catalogue of commercial transactions that are very different from his global trade speculations. All of the traders he observes are driven by survival, progress, and upward mobility, as expected from the city of capitalist ventures:

> wholesalers and street vendors and freight forwarders and import-exporters—UNDEFEATED WEAR CORP, SPORTIQUE, DA JUMP OFF, signs proclaimed—dealing in stuffed toys, caps, novelties, human hair, two-dollar belts, one-dollar neckties, silver perfumes, leather goods, rhinestones, streetwear, watches. Arabs, West Africans, African Americans hung out on the sidewalks among goods trucks, dollies, pushcarts, food carts, heaped trash, boxes and boxes of merchandise. I might have been in cold Senegal. (O'Neill 2008: 69)

O'Neill's response to an interview question about New York upholds the imaginary of the city endowed with economic and social uplift, as well

as a particular sense of belonging: "But I think there is a shared subjective status about coming and being here. I think what it offers, de facto, is economic opportunities and a relationship of identity with the city (as opposed to the United States)" (O'Neill 2013: 3). Throughout *Netherland*, the seedy and degenerative aspects of the urban environment propelled by the workings of capital are revealed in nuanced terms, usually prompted by the protagonists' unpleasant experiences, such as the bureaucratic error preventing Hans from getting his driver's license renewed. Frustrated and infuriated, Hans leaves the Department of Motor Vehicles into the chaos of the city:

> As I stood there, thrown by Herald Square's flows of pedestrians and the crazed traffic diagonals and the gray, seemingly bottomless gutter poos, I was seized for the first time by a nauseating sense of America, my gleaming adopted country, under the secret actuation of unjust, indifferent powers. The rinsed taxis, hissing over fresh slush, shone like grapefruits; but if you looked down into the space between the road and the undercarriage, where icy matter stuck to pipes and water streamed down the mud flaps, you saw a foul mechanical dark. (O'Neill 2008: 68)

The main character's attitude to New York's cityscape in this passage is vividly depicted through clear references to disagreeable sensorial experiences, underscored with ironic overtones and the personification of vehicles, emphasized by the mechanized operations and infernal qualities attributed to the urban space. Hans' sense of New York as a place of ambiguous belonging is interlaced with his feelings of helplessness and injustice in the cosmopolis that alienates and deterritorializes him. However, it is this strategy of deterritorialization that, according to Richard Gray, allows narratives like *Netherland* "to make the turning point in American history that is 9/11, if not understandable, then at least susceptible to understanding […] It is this that transforms crisis into a story that can be accurately and adequately told" (2011: 83). As a reminder, the idea of deterritorialization originates from the 1972 work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by the French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in which they point out that "The decoding of flows and the deterritorialization of the socius thus constitutes the most characteristic and the most important tendency of capitalism" (1984: 34). The urban environment into which Hans steps in the above scene connotes the production process

in capitalism that generates "an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge, against which it brings all its vast powers of repression to bear" (Deleuze and Guattari 1984: 195). Hence, Hans' state of infuriated frustration, in which he feels "thrown" and "seized" under the relentless pressure of "unjust, indifferent powers," with cars "hissing" in a world of frantic city operations intimates the deterritorialization unleashed by the domination of capital. The impression of such a cityscape and its impetus is one of fragmentation, or, as noted by one critic, "the actual experience of deterritorialization manifests itself as much more jagged and fractious, bound up with tensions and inconsistencies that cannot be subsumed merely within global systems or regimes of capital accumulation" (Giles 2007: 48). When Hans' recalls his early days in New York working as a financial expert, the interconnectedness of space and capital is clearly established:

> It was quickly my impression […], that making a million bucks in New York was essentially a question of walking down the street–of strolling, hands in pockets, in the cheerful expectation that sooner or later a bolt of pecuniary fire would jump out of the atmosphere and knock you flat. Every third person seemed to have been happily struck down: by a stock market killing, or by a dot-com bonanza, or by a six-figure motion picture deal for a five-hundred-word magazine article about, say, a mystifying feral chicken which, clucking and pecking, had been found roosting in a Queens backyard. I too became a beneficiary of the phenomenon, because the suddenly sunken price of a barrel of oil—it went down to ten bucks that year—helped create an unparalleled demand for seers in my line. (O'Neill 2008: 91)

However, in his own way, Hans undergoes a changed sense of New York toward the end of the novel. When he is "deterritorrialized" in London and reunited with Rachel, he becomes angry when he is acknowledged solely as a Dutchman and not for his affiliation with New York. He feels: "deprived, certainly, of the nativity New York encourages even its most fleeting visitor to imagine for himself. And it's true: my secret, almost shameful feeling is that I *am* out of New York–that New York interposed itself, once and for all, between me and all other places of origin" (O'Neill 2008: 181). Ironically, it appears that the trajectory of his ambivalence

toward New York's spatiality only reaches a complete state of "place-mindedness" once he has left the city and returned to the capital of the first seat of global capitalism.

3.4. *Netherland*'s "Desirer" Mapping of New York

Throughout *Netherland*, Hans experiences New York for different purposes, at various stages of his life and in diverse company, most of the time for the purpose of playing cricket and with Chuck. Interestingly, his renewed interest in cricket occurs during the summer he joins his acquaintance Vinay, a food critic, for restaurant visits: "From time to time I went with him to places in Chinatown and Harlem and Alphabet City and Hell's Kitchen or, if he was really desperate and able to overcome his loathing of the outer boroughs, Astoria and Fort Greene and Cobble Hill" (O'Neill 2008: 50). It is while exploring the eateries of South Asian cab-drivers that Hans sees a cricket match on television, reawakening his passion for this sport and eventually introducing him to Chuck, who, in turn, acquaints Hans with an unfamiliar part of the city, thus granting him a fresh perspective on the urban environment: "It was Chuck, over the course of subsequent instructional drives, who pointed everything out to me and made me see something of the real Brooklyn, as he called it" (O'Neill 2008: 146). Hans' introductory roaming of New York, however, consists of solitary walks in his initial period of residence there, and is described in the novel similar to the well-known narrative strategy of walking as a "chronotope." The term proposed by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin refers to the spatio-temporal coordinates of a narrative, "where the knots of the narrative are tied and untied" (Bakhtin 1981: 250). These are the places where the text compresses time and place to form a "concrete unity" that contributes to the plot while also showing how time and history develop (Bakhtin 1981: 84). As Hans investigates the city, taking "a vague sauntering interest" (O'Neill 2008: 121) in the neighborhood, he takes note of the diversity with a discerning eye, explained by *Netherland*'s author as follows: "There's also the paradox of the geographic particularity of his observations, which is often characteristic of a person who is lost… To be lost is to be forced into a zone of attentiveness" (O'Neill 2013: 8).

His heightened awareness of mapping the urban space, particularly during his walks, permeates Hans' narration and reflects his evolving relationship with New York. His keen geographic specifications become coordinates in coping with changing feelings or situations, such as grief. It was after the loss of his mother that Hans began talking long walks, "trying out the part of flâneur" (O'Neill 2008: 91), pushing his baby son in the stroller, seeking relief from his distress as if projecting an alternative space to forge a "counter-site" (Foucault 1989), evident in the following passage: "I'd find respite from our apartment and its transformation into a kind of parental coal mine, and walk and walk until I reached a state of fancifulness, of indeterminately hopeful receptiveness" (O'Neill 2008: 93). His new role as a parent and lingering mourning for his mother converge in the spatial and narrative modes, evoking memories of her as a way of creating a "differential space" (Lefebvre 1992), effectively making the strolls a double journey into his own past and back to his childhood:

> […] as if I were the one scooting along in the buggy and my mother the one steering it through the streets. For my outings with my baby were taken also in her company. I did not summon her up by way of remembrance but, rather, by fantasy. The fantasy did not consist of imagining her physically at my side but of imagining her at a long distance, as before, and me still remotely swaddled in her consideration; and in this I was abetted by the streets of New York City, which abet desire even in its strangest patterns.
> All of which brings me to the second, and last, New York winter I endured on my own, when I wondered what exactly had happened to the unanswerable, conspiratorial place I'd found years earlier, and the desirer who'd walked its streets. (O'Neill 2008: 93)

For Hans in New York, walking is an important means of achieving spatial attentiveness and emancipation, and his mapping of New York seems to be an attempt to counter the dislocating non-spaces (Augé 1995) of New York and their lack of any finite placement that could augment his sense of non-belonging and disorientation. He also observes New York from a train and driving around with Chuck, during jaunts to the outskirts of the city, in an effort to tackle his mental and cultural ghettoization, as a state of mind inducing him to "forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers" (Rushdie 1991: 19). Hans gains a more nuanced

awareness of the intricate city dynamics when Chuck guides him through racially diverse neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens where he reveals the unexpected facets of places that seem marginal or even squalid, allowing Hans to open himself up to new socio-spatial experiences:

> […] I became familiar with the topical sights: the chiming, ceaselessly peregrinating ice-cream truck, driven by a Turk; the Muslim funeral home on Albemarle Road out of which watchful African American men spilled in sunglasses and black suits; the Hispanic gardeners working on the malls; the firehouse on Cortelyou that slowly gorged on reversing fire trucks; the devout Jewish boulevardiers on Ocean Parkway; the sticks of light that collected in the trees as though part of the general increase. Lush Flatbush… (O'Neill 2008: 152-153)

Observant of and increasingly more familiar with the multiple facets of New York's cityscape, the protagonist acquires a new vision of the previously alien aspects of the city and its inhabitants, many of them economic or other types of migrants. As part of the ethnoscape, they "manage to repeat certain cultural habits in another space. This form of metanational existence allows them to avoid a too stressful contact with the Other, by establishing a continuum between their former life and their current one, between here and over there" (Appadurai 1996: 73). For the protagonist, the city becomes a more intimate social and cultural system of understanding and structuring the world, joining other New York denizens with "a practical relationship," "an interaction between 'subjects' and their space and surroundings" (Lefebvre 1992: 18). Hans registers the cityscapes with curiosity and reveals his impressions of the "real Brooklyn," for instance along Coney Island Avenue, "that low-slung, scruffily commercial thoroughfare that stands in almost surreal contrast to the tranquil residential blocks it traverses" (O'Neill 2008: 146). The description demonstrates how the material and the bizarre converge in the cosmopolis, in a manner designated by Gray as a "catalogue of the sectarian and the surreal", but also as a location enabling "a hybrid, heterogeneous space that resists the discourse of 'us-versus-them' on which the verbal currency of terrorism and counter-terrorism depends" (2011: 70). The following passage illustrates the multicultural mélange observed on these excursions, taking in the cityscape's potential to bridge the social chasm of nationalist rhetoric and divisiveness in post-9/11 New York:

[…] a shoddily bustling strip of vehicles double parked in front of gas stations, synagogues, mosques, beauty salons, bank branches, restaurants, funeral homes, auto body shops, supermarkets, assorted small businesses proclaiming provenances from Pakistan, Tajikistan, Ethiopia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Armenia, Ghana, the Jewry Christendom, Islam. (O'Neill 2008: 146)

The near-oneiric storytelling of the protagonist unfurls into a series of fascinating images as the city's diversity is enumerated, signifying the multiplicity of ethnic, religious and cultural practices, whereby O'Neill beckons us "to inspect the faultlines, the interstitial spaces, beyond a boundary, any boundary laid down by the linear narrative of nation" (Gray 2011: 70). On the other hand, the description of the city's socio-spatial complexity connotes the history of New York and its importance as a key immigration entry-point and "as a site of multiple ethnic and cultural encounters" (Gray 2012: 805). Nevertheless, the pivotal attraction and cartographic motivation for Hans is cricket, serving as a conduit for a new and liberating foundation of New York's dwellers, distinctly referenced in the following passage: "it was on Coney Island Avenue […] that Chuck and I came upon a bunch of South African Jews, in full sectarian regalia, watching televised cricket with a couple of Rastafarians in the front office of a Pakistani-run lumber yard. This miscellany was initially undetectable by me" (O'Neill 2008: 146). The economic and cultural varieties described in the above passage (and in other sections of the novel) indicate "the intensification of flows across cultures" that results in "a more inwardly appearing world" (Appadurai 1996). Traced by the protagonist's mapping of New York, the effects of heterogenization draw attention to the intricate workings of capital within the global city and its economy, and, as Soja remarks, "polarizing and fragmenting cityspace in new and different ways" due to the "a significantly restructured set of *class relations* arising directly and indirectly from the new urbanization processes stimulated by globalization" (2000: 196). The merging of Hans' corporate professional rationale of a globalized economic order and his "desirer's" cartographic exploration becomes emblematic of his complex relationship with New York, mediated in a post-9/11 elegy about cosmopolitanism and transnationalism. More often than not, the character's experiences of the city disclose affective dimensions with a lingering wistful tone arising from the poignant

recollections of his past, his mother, and the arc of homecoming. The narrator's confession about the rapture of discovery and the bond forged with the urban landscape casts New York in a distinctive light, making it possible to interpret *Netherland* as a novel that navigates "the new fictional space of a metropolitan in-between: of the migratory and transitional that is experienced locally as well as globally" (Ickstadt 2010: 23).

An important component of the protagonist's exploratory ventures is the role of place names, as established earlier in this discussion regarding the Dutch church and colonial New York's first settlers. According to Michel de Certeau, place names become cartographic coordinates that "carve out pockets of hidden and familiar meanings." In his view, in addition to the primary material aspect, these names also serve "the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden, or permitted meaning" (1984: 104). This mode is evident in *Netherland* and contributes to the palimpsestic role of New York's place names. An example of their palimpsestic functions is the reference to the Dutch colonists and Hans' country of origin in the novel's title, "itself the most pronounced instance of the place-name-as-palimpsest" (Snyder 2013: 479)[40]. The complexity of representing New York gains another dimension with the operation of the palimpsest as "a key figure and strategy in *Netherland*, both a motif that appears within the text and also the narrative's primary modus operandi" (Snyder 2013: 481), enhancing the representation of the intricate and evolving relationship of the main character with New York's cityscape.

In the novel's remarkable ending, the representation of New York's urban imaginary and its global positioning is extended to compound a view of the Towers from the Staten Island ferry with the present as "Hans ends up on the London Eye, remembering his mother, recalling the time he was looking not just at New York but at himself" (O'Neill 2011: 15), as the novelist explains in an interview. At this juncture in the novel, Hans recollects

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[40] Additional symbolic cartographic features are achieved by the interliterary and intertextual references *Netherland* evokes, such as the Neverland of J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, but, according to Snyder, "Netherland as a title most significantly figures the spatial or temporal process of reference itself" (2013: 479-480). The considerable literary resonances of other literary texts in this novel certainly merit a separate analysis, but are not the main aim of the present study.

a pre-9/11 visit by his mother to New York and the panorama they observed from the Staten Island Ferry. Despite being set in different cities, the two urban panoramas are both captured with radiant sunset hues, in an elegiac tone. The depiction of New York's iconic skyline in the company of his mother connects the urban landscape with his excitement and the sense of belonging to a community while sharing the experience on the crowded ferry deck: "Everybody looked at the Statue of Liberty and at Ellis Island and at the Brooklyn Bridge, but finally, inevitably, everybody looked at Manhattan. The structures clustered at its tip made a warm, familiar crowd" (O'Neill 2008: 255). The sense of elation through the personification of Manhattan's skyline as a collective "geographical imagination" (Gregory 1994) imparts the legacy of immigrant arrivals, hoping to fulfil their ambitions and promises of reinvention. The glass towers, similar to the one where Hans engages in his lucrative global trade analysis, are depicted as mirroring the uplifting attitude to the city: "[…] and as their surfaces brightened ever more fiercely with sunlight it was possible to imagine that vertical accumulations of humanity were gathering to greet our arrival" (O'Neill 2008: 255). Moreover, the scene establishes a connection with the episode unfolding in the present through the rapture of Hans' son and others on the Ferris wheel ride in London where the visual mapping from the heights, towering above a global city provides an imperial view: "there's the NatWest Tower, which now has a different name; there's Tower Bridge. But the higher we go, the less recognizable the city becomes. Trafalgar Square is not where you expect it to be. Charing Cross, right under our noses, must be carefully detected" (O'Neill 2008: 254). The towers of corporate capitalism and historical sights are blended in the scenic and rising motion of the London Eye, which serves as an "optical tool" enabling us to travel from London to New York (Araújo 2013: 106). At the same time, this scene at the end of the novel ties in with Hans' first conversation with Chuck on the same ferry line, observing "the huddled towers" (O'Neill 2008: 18), intimating the backdrop of 9/11 in New York as a "spatio-temporal event" (Massey 2005).

The concluding imagery and wistful recollection of his loss, juxtaposed with the reunion with his wife and son, offers the promise of a new vision of his experience of New York even from a such a distance. It is only

by remembering the state of his spatial engagement and the affective effect of the cityscape that his sense of belonging becomes resolved. It is a process, as O'Neill asserts in an interview, noting the lack of finite or stable qualities of vision with the Ferris wheel turning: "So there's no such thing as a kind of homecoming and the static viewpoint associated with being at home. It goes on…" (O'Neill 2013: 6). The wheel has metaphorical connotations for the greatness of America encapsulated in the myth of the American Dream and its infinite opportunities that have attracted millions over the course of many years, including Chuck and Hans. However, New York's urban landscape of global capitalism showcased the Twin Towers as beacons of the idealized potential for wealth and reinvention, exuding a sense of spatial engagement and possessing a topophrenic character. Simultaneously, the emphasis on "[t]he distinctly visual movement of the novel—its ambivalence toward nationality and the legacy of colonialism, its willingness to mobilize alternative modes of seeing" (Wasserman 2014: 267) provides another level of complexity in representing spatiality that eludes finitude for the sake of yielding "a new and estranging optical mode" (Wasserman 2014: 267). It is the vision of the towers and their emblematic reverberations across the Atlantic that underwrites the novel's focus on the ambivalence surrounding the categories of New Yorkers and Americans in the current "spatio-temporality." The globalized context of today, as O'Neill propounds, disperses the previously held notion "that America is a privileged place, that obtaining American citizenship provides a unique opportunity which cannot be duplicated anywhere else on the planet, is no longer applicable–if it ever was applicable. […] You don't have to come to America to participate in the 'American Dream'" (O'Neill 2011: 13). The uniqueness of America as a place of boundless socio-economic possibilities as well as grand gestures and ambitions is called into question, and, particularly since the 9/11 attacks, New York's sheer dynamism, renowned for infusing its inhabitants with a distinctive vitality, is also subjected to scrutiny. This perception of America and New York leads to the final section of this chapter that aims to examine the city's special place in (inter)national mythology and the construction of identity against the Gatsbyesque literary backdrop.

3.5. New York's Immigrants and the American Dream in *Netherland*

When examining the reviews of *Netherland*, a prevailing notion of praise foregrounds what appears to be an uplifting vision of New York based on the novelistic portrayal of the city as one with the capacity for intercultural encounters, hope and reinvention. Such an opinion is offered in a review stating that O'Neill "[…] gives us New York as a place where the unlikeliest of people can become friends and change one another's lives, a place where immigrants like Chuck can nurture (and potentially lose) their dreams, and where others like Hans can find the promise of renewal" (Kakutani 2008: n. p.). Such an enthusiastic evaluation of the novel belies the privileged position of the transnational elite represented by Hans who doubles as a narrator and thus sets the dominant tone and angle in the novel regarding immigration, globalization, and transnationalism anchored in New York's cityscape. The homodiegetic narrator's background, his cosmopolitan and economic mobility, are cast against the undoubtable significance of this city in the historical context of transatlantic exchange and colonialism. This representation of New York aligns with Richard Shorto's argument about the "island city", listing reasons of geography, population and liberal Dutch colonial roots as instrumental in the development of this global city, "the island at the center of the world", as rendered in the title of his volume about the Dutch founding of New York, "that would become the first multiethnic, upwardly mobile society on America's shores, a prototype of the kind of society that would be duplicated throughout the country and around the world" (Shorto 2004: 8). However, this kind of society is grounded in the exploitative capital order with a cartographic interconnection established thanks to the operation of commodity and technology. In *Netherland*, a contemporary transatlantic connectivity is offered in the use of virtual spatial mapping with the help of Google Earth technology. Hans first uses it in an effort to "visit" his son in London during his separation from his wife. Subsequently, toward the end of the novel, he employs this technology from his London home to inspect New York and the cricket field he tended with Chuck as the symbolic pivot of Chuck's American Dream, "the site where Chuck has sown the

first seeds of his dream" (O'Neill 2008: 81). Now the virtual inspection reveals the fallow project: "But with Chuck dead, the field is brown, […] the grass has burned – but it is still there. There's no trace of a batting square. The equipment shed is gone. I'm just seeing a field" (O'Neill 2008: 252). The possibilities and disenchantment of immigrants vested in the dream of progress are laid bare, on a laptop screen, with Hans staring at the cricket field for some time. Then he zooms out in the aerial camera of the geolocation software: "[…] with a single brush on the touchpad I flee upward into the atmosphere […] From up here, though, […] There is no sign of nations, no sense of the work of man. The USA as such is nowhere to be seen" (O'Neill 2008: 252). Since the cricket field is now dried up, as described in the above passage, it "symbolically suggests, contemporary globalization and transnationalism foster a respatialization of identities that include the local, the global, and the translocal" (Zamorano Llena 2013: 244). The protagonist's sense of New York, of the multicultural city of New York, now seems relegated to the past, as he shuts down the computer, attends to his work first and then goes on with his London life. Reunited with his family, in an immigrant's new chapter, his American Dream has morphed into new promises of privileged possibility in another global city of the world.

One of the dominant elements in the literary analysis of *Netherland* is its comparison with F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* since both novels offer an evocative contemplation of the American Dream. However, the starting point in outlining the differences is evidently the context: "Unlike Gatsby, though, this story of success takes place on a fully globalized terrain" (Gray 2011: 69). As the author notes, because of the globalized world we live in, "the American dream narrative which is commonly attributed to Gatsby simply doesn't work as a current premise" (O'Neill 2011: 13). The representations of New York by both Fitzgerald and O'Neill are grounded in the fallibility and corruption of the American Dream, but the divergences, arising from the respective circumstances, envision disparate interpretations. Whereas in *Gatsby*, as O'Neill explains, it "is premised on the existence of an autonomous, intact America", in his *Netherland*, "there are forces–including 9/11 and the globalization of the economy–which have destroyed that premise and put an end to a hugely significant literary and cultural era in American life" (O'Neill, quoted in Snyder 2013: 464). The

contemporary world of New York depicted in *Netherland* echoes the previous generations of immigrants as well as the new arrivals, inscribing their expectations and ambitions in their vision of the city and the American Dream. The intersection of the two novels is the portrayal of New York, and *Netherland* compounds "its palimpsestic rendering of New York and its colonial history through its use of Gatsby" (Snyder 2013: 480). O'Neill's portrayal of the characters' sense of socio-spatial identity is fraught with an awareness of ambiguous belonging in multiple cultural worlds, conceived in the novel "as a regenerative palimpsest where Indian, Turk, Caribbean and Pakistani immigrants try to suture their own identity to the fabric of American society in name of a new racialized Gatsbian dream" (Mansutti 2011: 117). The resounding intertextuality of *Gatsby* in *Netherland* is clearly acknowledged by O'Neill in stating that his novel "is derivative of *Gatsby*. But *Netherland*'s debt to Fitzgerald involves vastly more than plot similarities. *Gatsby* is such a great book because with it Fitzgerald created a kind of space which hadn't existed before. And *Netherland* is a beneficiary of that space" (O'Neill 2011: 13). An illustration is provided by citing a passage from *Netherland* to pinpoint the convergence of these elements, including the cityscape, the waterscape, the enduring colonial vestiges and the elation in observing and discovering "the island at the center of the world." In one of the driving expeditions which Hans undertakes with Chuck, we see them returning from the "real Brooklyn" to Manhattan and getting stuck in traffic on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway: "The clouds in motion over the harbor had left a pink door ajar and surface portions of Manhattan had prettily caught the light, and it appeared to my gaping eyes as if a girlish island moved toward bright sisterly elements" (O'Neill 2008: 121). The description resonates with the excitement and admiration felt on catching sight of the skyline, radiant against the sky, akin to a moment of glimpsing a newly-discovered land, described in personified female terms, imbuing this visual encounter with awe and allure of. It is evident from the following passage how the above rendering of the spatial imaginary alludes to Fitzgerald's portrayal of New York in motifs, themes, and the tone of a reflective protagonist-narrator:

> Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making it a
> constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river

in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty of the world. (Fitzgerald 1995: 73)

The described play of light, luminous and playful on the unceasing procession of cars, is referenced in conjunction with the colonial commodity of sugar and promises of profit, leading to the legendary finale of the novel: "So, we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into that past" (Fitzgerald 1995: 188). The melancholic closing of the novel imparts the unreliability of Gatsby's American Dream, arising from his clinging to a delusion about the past and its inexorable loss. Directing the analytical lens again to the nostalgic last sections of *Netherland*, we are reminded of similar conceptions of the lost past in the description of Hans' Staten Island ferry ride on the occasion of his mother's visit:

> The day was darkening at the margins, but so what? A world was lighting up before us, […] a world concentrated most glamorously of all, it goes almost without saying, in the lilac acres of two amazingly high towers going up above all others, on one of which, as the boat drew us nearer, the sun began to make a brilliant yellow mess. […] I can state that I wasn't the only person on that ferry who'd seen a pink watery sunset in his time, and I can state that I wasn't the only one of us to make out and accept an extraordinary promise in what we saw–the tall approaching cape, a people risen in light. You only had to look at our faces. (O'Neill 2008: 255-56)

In this sunset scene of the ferry approaching Manhattan's skyline a range of elements are blended: the desire to revisit a pre-traumatic past, the previous descriptions of ferry rides, including that following Hans' first encounter with Chuck, the extraordinary sense of excitement and awe in observing the unscathed towers and the allusions to the hopes and ambitions vested in them as if in a heterotopia (Foucault 1989). This is a vision of New York and its inhabitants (by extension, of the nation) steeped in the visual and symbolic marvel of the cityscape, the urban landscape of capitalism, that is ultimately an illusory projection of yearning for the unattainable. As a critic remarks, the passage "also recognizes that this recollected past is profoundly imaginary, an image colored a rosy tint by nostalgic fantasy" (Snyder 2013: 483). While parallels between the novels of Fitzgerald and O'Neill abound, there are also considerable differences,

including those related to the endings. The spatial engagements of the two respective protagonists are not the same as O'Neill's Hans gazes out onto the land from the Staten Island Ferry while Fitzgerald's Nick takes in the view from land across the Long Island Sound at the ferry.

The representation of New York in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland* illuminates the city's myths and the enduring spatial imaginary for many of the city's arrivals and denizens as well as for those who have never visited it. To this end, it reconsiders traditional notions of national identity by using economic and socio-spatial coordinates to explore the sense of belonging, in part by using *The Great Gatsby* as an accompanying literary cartographic tool to expose the continuing ambiguity and beguiling dynamics of New York City. With multi-stranded narration, a broad geographical reach and layered allusiveness, *Netherland* charts a geography of migration, memories, and constructions of New York following 9/11, bringing together the transatlantic legacy of the colonial and diasporic populations, as well as the migratory drive and capital of the current economic order on a global scale.

4. Conclusion

The Spatial Imaginary of New York: A Literary and Cultural Study draws on the extensive scholarship about the geographical concepts introduced into literary studies and offers a critique of the influential field of literary studies and cultural production applying the key findings to two selected novels. Taking into account the pivotal place in the study of literature and culture the spatial turn has earned over several decades, the analysis in this volume has incorporated key approaches in which spatial categories have been (re)considered within the theoretical framework of space and place. This shift in perspective was influenced by the emergence of poststructuralist and postmodernist discourses, with a particular emphasis on the latter, marking a move towards studying real and fictional locations. In order to map the critical framework of the discussion, Chapter One of the book, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spatiality in Literature," was dedicated to the theoretical discussion regarding spatial and spatial literary studies in terms of the urban experience in fiction, recognizing the enduring allure of the city in literature and culture, as well as the connections between the two fields. Following the critical (re)consideration of a broad range of academic publications, predominantly interdisciplinary in character, it has become evident that there has been a significant shift in the conceptualization of urban space, whereby the city as both a physical and imagined location is endowed with specific complexities generated in the contemporary context of the globalized economic order and its disaffecting ramifications in the twenty-first century. In the analysis, it has been established that the urban imaginary has been a common preoccupation in American literature and, in particular, novels, with roots in the industrialization and urbanization processes. The city has always featured as a spotlight for ambitions and possibilities, a place that is vested with dreams and desires, thus reflecting the customs, values, and cultural constructs of the people living in it.

Thanks to the latest theoretical reinvigoration of spatial literary studies about various approaches to and practices of spatiality and literature, led by Robert Tally, new methodologies have emerged from the spatial turn, resulting in spatial categories that have facilitated a deeper understanding of the effect of space on social relations, supporting the constructed nature of space. Those which proved highly valuable for this volume were the concepts of "spatio-temporal events" (Massey 2005), "imaginative geography" (Said 1994), "ethnoscape" Appadurai (1996), the conceptualization of spaces of difference as hybrid space or Thirdspace (Bhabha 2001), and "post-space" (Upstone 2009) designating the significant interstitial spaces, characterized by their liminal, hybrid and changing nature and their relevance in representing space in urban environments. Conceptions of "postmetropolis" (Soja 2000) and "cosmopolis" (Soja 2009) were also important for this research in order to explore diverse urban experiences in all their manifold possibilities for contesting and claiming space.

The present volume has also reaffirmed urban space as a constant in American Studies, owing to its significance in the construction of US identities, manifested in the national imaginary and culture of the United States. As a key paradigm of the American imagination, the city has a specific and conflicting role in the socio-spatial order and metanarrative of US development and the notion of exceptionalism. Within the context of the multiple contestations sparked by the global economic order, the contemporary city has become of special interest and concern as the focal point of competing discourses (e.g., Harvey 1989), and the associated processes influencing the construction of "a global sense of place" (Massey 1997), of a shifting, hybrid and contending nature. Among the global cities at the core of globalization, brimming with spatial contradictions (Sassen 1996; 1991), New York has come to the fore as an example of corporate globalization and taken a central position with its prominence as the embodiment of the modern urban age, fostering multiple diversities. A noticeably overimagined city, New York stands for the sense of belonging to a global(ized) world and for its symbolic capital and cultural processes of the post-millennium. In this vein, fictional representations of New York draw on a rich history of portraying the city as the realm of endless possibilities,

rooted in a discourse of the urban space as being endowed with a dynamic, open-minded and transformative capacity.

Chapter Two argued that Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss* offers a literary critique of New York City using concepts such as "placeness" (Ferguson 2009) as the multifaceted human engagement with a location, along with "non-place" (Augé 1995) in the representation of New York embodied in the character of Biju who experiences a lack of connectedness. The deflated myth of New York as a desired destination, offering innumerable opportunities for economic, social and other types of empowerment, interweaves with the portrayal of the cityscape signifying uprootedness, inequity, and loneliness. The protagonist's sense of loss is equated with his migration experience and the precarity of labor in the context of neoliberal global capitalism, while also reflecting Desai's approach to globalization grounded in the colonial inheritance and neo-colonial aspects.

Chapter Three focused on Joseph O'Neill's novel *Netherland* that portrays different characters in New York and the construction of identity following the attacks of September 11, 2001. Functioning as a fictional reflection of the ramifications of 9/11 while avoiding any direct descriptions of the shocking event, the novel is a literary articulation of how the rather detached and nostalgic narrator Hans copes with these traumatic experiences. His exploration and understanding of New York, largely through his sensorial perceptions, thoughts, impressions, and sense of place, are heavily informed by his professional corporate affiliation in the globalized world economy as well as his background of cosmopolitan and transnational complexity. The analysis has established that in the novel New York's special positioning in the American national narrative as the immigration gateway to freedom and upward social mobility is evoked against the colonial legacy of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, firmly rooted in international trade networks and multiple hegemony, precursors of the modern-day incorporation of America. The urban spatiality of New York thus seems to signify a New West, integral to the American Dream of individualism, reinvention, and potential for prosperity.

The novels analyzed here share common traits in their portrayals of New York's urban imaginary: it is predominantly negatively intoned,

constantly changing and challenging the existing traditions, habits and moral values of its new inhabitants. The descriptions of the city's neighborhoods, skylines and waterscapes typically intimate the characters' isolation, loneliness, and rootlessness, leading them to ponder their sense of self and belonging. Their alienated state is frequently a result of their experiences of New York that both lures and rejects, incites and degrades, thus mirroring the fractured, hybrid cultural identities of its dwellers.

Kiran Desai's novel addresses geographic displacement and the stark reality of oppression through characters such as Biju, reduced to joining the economic and spatial precariat of nomadic migrant workers, eking out an existence from one temporary job to another in New York's basement kitchens and other places characterized by labor exploitation and spatial inequality. Desai's acerbic tone in the representation of New York's toiling shadow class contributes to the literary exposure of neoliberal global capitalism, but equally important is her critique of British colonialism in India, offering a broader outlook on the issues of postcolonial communities and the globalized world with its new systems of extracting profit. While the pursuit of mobility in a city such as New York, with its projected boundless possibilities and energy, may seem an inviting and liberating experience, for Biju the negotiation of the cityscape serves only to deepen his sense of isolation, marginalization and alienation. Both novels engage in the examination of humanity amidst the challenges of urban spatiality in New York and its captivating, yet often alienating forces that impact the characters' attachments to the city and other people. The impact of New York's urban imaginary on the protagonists in both novels reflects their ambiguous or contested relationship with the city, that is unreliable, at times even harmful, in terms of their sense of belonging and self-worth. To this end, the analysis of both novels infers that the representation of New York relies on sensory reactions, especially in the case of Desai's protagonist Biju, whose emotional responses demonstrate his sense of struggle. *The Inheritance of Loss* thus relies on exposing the incessant pressure of the global economy, which demands high productivity from cheap, often nomadic labor. The urban environment is depicted in naturalistic and hellish terms as a contemporary distortion of the American western frontier, that turns New York into a metropolitan pandemonium where "the other half" struggles

for survival, much in keeping with its urban history and, at the same time, countering the construction of "The City That Never Sleeps" as an empowering and emancipating setting. Therefore, the urban imaginary in Desai's novel demonstrates a sense of struggle and the feeling of becoming trapped in the disconnect between the projected promise of the American Dream and the materiality of New York's daily grind.

While both novels exude a rich sense of place and illustrate the city's religious, ethnic and cultural diversity, the affective dimensions of dislocation experienced by the respective protagonists differ in terms of their causes and implications. Accordingly, O'Neill's *Netherland* largely builds the narrative and cartography of New York around the autodiegetic narrator Hans, a contemporary cosmopolitan nomad, and his ability to cope both with personal and collective traumatization due to a family crisis triggered by 9/11. His corporate profession in the globalized economy allows for the illumination of the dominating and deterritorializing role of capital in the urban landscape embodied by the World Trade Center and Manhattan. Simultaneously, the topophrenic quality of his attitude to New York is closely connected to his recollections of navigating the city against the backdrop of the dominant skyline representing a physical and symbolic desire for economic and social mobility. The prevailing socio-spatial organization of New York, envisioned as advancing economic opportunities, emancipatory practices, and cross-cultural and transnational exchanges is deconstructed through the fragmented impressions and frenetic pace experienced by the characters. The spectacle of the cityscape vested in the globalized economy and migratory ambition ties in with the colonial and transatlantic past exchanges that lie at the heart of New York's development as a global city. Whereas in Desai's novel New York signifies the economic order that festers on the global precariat, relegated to deplorable labor exploitation and spatial othering, O'Neill's New York is experienced through the narrator-cum-protagonist Hans, who embodies the privileged financial experts, capitalizing on the intertwined urban space and capital grounded in the urban imaginary of New York as a "cosmopolis." While both Biju and Hans are deprived of any profound and liberatory interactions with their environment due to certain, albeit differing levels of, emotional hardship and other challenges, Biju's fate is heavily burdened by his

physical adversity and economic struggle, rendering him profoundly lonely and lost.

Although both novels are set in post-9/11 New York, the narration eschews describing the attack and collapse of the Twin Towers and concentrates instead on the way the characters' lives were changed, reflected in their unpleasant sensorial reactions and a particular sense of place, frequently that of disorientation and non-belonging, highlighted by personification and irony. The impossibility to express the shock of the event in words is evident in O'Neill's novel, explored in this book as a "spatial anxiety" (Tally 2019) embedded in human experience, and an apprehensive "place-mindedness" (Tally 2019). The mapping of New York in the two literary texts exposes the differences: Hans explores the city, with a vague sauntering curiosity, in stark opposition to Biju's otherized cartography of an undocumented worker, hindering his positive emotional response to New York. Both protagonists navigate the socio-cultural and psychological experience of non-spaces (Augé 1995), exemplified also with stark and personified descriptions of Manhattan's skyscrapers, signifying Hans's association with the global capital and New York as its financescape, i.e. the close connection between spatial categories and the neoliberal economy that enables him as an affluent white financial analyst to engage and advance his interaction with New York while Biju is reduced to a state of non-belonging and disorientation. Another conclusion is that both novels make implicit references to F.S. Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. The intertextual link with this novel is particularly pronounced in *Netherland*, that evokes the imagery of New York in Fitzgerald's novel, but with ironic overtones.

As a place of enterprising attitudes and grand gestures, New York embodies a clamor of contrasts, captured in a broad range of cultural practices and literary texts centered on or associated with this city. The methodology, sources, and novelistic examples provided here are by no means exhaustive or comprehensive, but are shaped by my own personal experiences, scholarly pursuits, academic interests, and defensible scientific and critical rationale. Today as we continue, perhaps more than ever, to observe the importance of US urban spatiality in processes that are fraught with displacement, clustering and conflicted relations, especially

those based on race, the present work strove to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multiple meanings of American culture and society in a global context through the lens of New York's cityscape. Thus the present book capitalized on space and geography as key theoretical positions yielding new perspectives and inciting innovative possibilities for critical inquiry in the humanities. By bringing the spatio-social categories and practices to bear on the research, this volume sought to facilitate new pathways of analyzing the selected novels against the existing cultural implications of spatiality and the urban lore of New York.

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