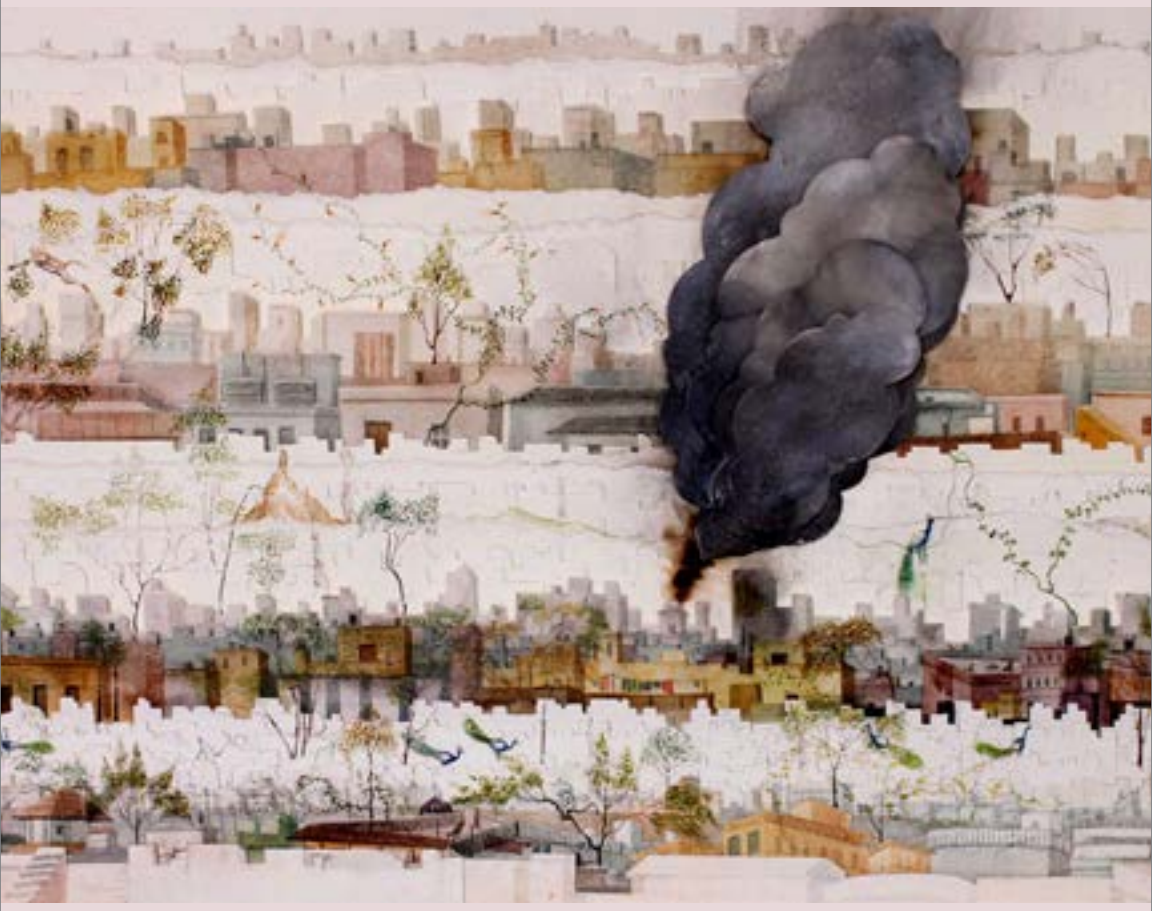
Maura Finkelstein



The Archive of Loss

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COVER ART: Digbijayee Khatua, *Locating Past and Present*.
Detail. 2015. 60 × 66 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Contents

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Finally, I dedicate this book to the Dhanraj workforce, past, present and future. In particular, to the workers I call Sushila, Manda, Raj, Sudarshan,

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A Note on *Intimate Geographies*

India, the country of my birth, has been a long-standing obsession of mine. Even though the greater portion of my life has been spent outside of its borders, it has never ceased to be a figment of fantasy, a place of epic proportions beyond facts. I had the privilege of returning to the country—living in Calcutta briefly, and then Bombay—between 2006 and 2017. It was a time that yielded a much sought after intimacy with a culture, with a place. For a self-proclaimed nomad, the time spent there meant a great deal to me. As an artist, it is the firmament upon which I stand.

The four hand-drawn illustrations in this book were specially commissioned by Maura Finkelstein. I am grateful to her for giving me free rein to interpret the four maps of India, the states of Uttar Pradesh/Bihar and Maharashtra, and the city of Bombay. Central Bombay, where much of the author's research takes place, was also the location of my most recent solo exhibition. I worked within the compound of the old textile mill central to this monograph, in one of the magnificent crumbling rooms, to produce many of the works. I can still smell the mold and visualize the old, crackling walls.

These drawings are an assimilation of my lived experience. Although I referenced nineteenth-century anatomical illustrations, I fancy the resulting marks as resembling a form of hieroglyphics. I wanted to internalize what India means to me and, undoubtedly, what it means to all those who labor for love in forgotten spaces. These are maps that reimagine political maps as the body turned inside out.

The personal is political—if you will.

—Sharmistha Ray *New York* April 2018

Introduction

The Archive of Industrial Debris

Memory is not an instrument for surveying the past but its theater. It is the medium of past experience [*Medium des Erlebten*], just as the earth is the medium in which dead cities lie buried. He who seeks to approach his own buried past must conduct himself like a man digging.—WALTER BENJAMIN, "Excavation and Memory," 1932 (in *Selected Writings*, 2005)

What is a ruin, after all? It is a human construction abandoned to nature, and one of the allures of ruins in the city is that of wilderness: a place full of the promise of the unknown with all its epiphanies and dangers. Cities are built by men (and to a lesser extent, women), but they decay by nature, from earthquakes and hurricanes to the incremental processes of rot, erosion, rust, the microbial breakdown of concrete, stone, wood, and brick, the return of plants and animals making their own complex order that further dismantles the simple order of men.—REBECCA SOLNIT, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, 2005

I have been digging: both through memory and through ruins. This digging is a practice of time travel, and it moves me between two overlapping habitations of the present. When I stand at the gate of Dhanraj Spinning and Weaving, Ltd., one of the last privately owned textile mills operating in Mumbai, I feel an eerie sense of disconnect. Along Ambedkar Road, under the flyover (overpass) construction, thick with the ringing and honking of traffic, I am in the urban present. Here, the air is heavy with smog, and the streets smell of exhaust and frying oil from the *dhabas* (roadside restau-

FIGURE 1.1. The gate to Dhanraj Spinning and Weaving, Ltd.

rants) and chai stalls. People rush by on their way to work. Others move slowly as they carry heavy burdens on tired legs. A double-decker bus swings by and slows down; masses of people jump off and leap on. There is ongoing motion and a sense of urgency on the street.

But as I cross through the gate of Dhanraj, the world begins to shift. Chandan, the elderly North Indian security guard, smiles at me with recognition and waves me across this threshold between worlds. I walk down a dirt lane flanked by tall, crumbling stone walls. Vines push through the gaps that reveal a barren field to one side and a mill chimney to the other. It is quiet on this side of the gate. The traffic is muffled, and the airy corridor carries a cool breeze. This is one of the few places in the city where I walk alone on a road, save an occasional truck that rumbles through and reminds me that I am in a bustling city. I hear birds and, in the distance, the ducks that live by the small pond behind the main compound. When I draw near to the mill building, even the sun cannot penetrate the shady pathway, and I move into shadows. The canteen beside the entrance is serving chai, and several men I know sit on the wood benches by the door, resting their sweaty backs. They nod at me and I wave back: Raj, Dilip, Bhalchand, and

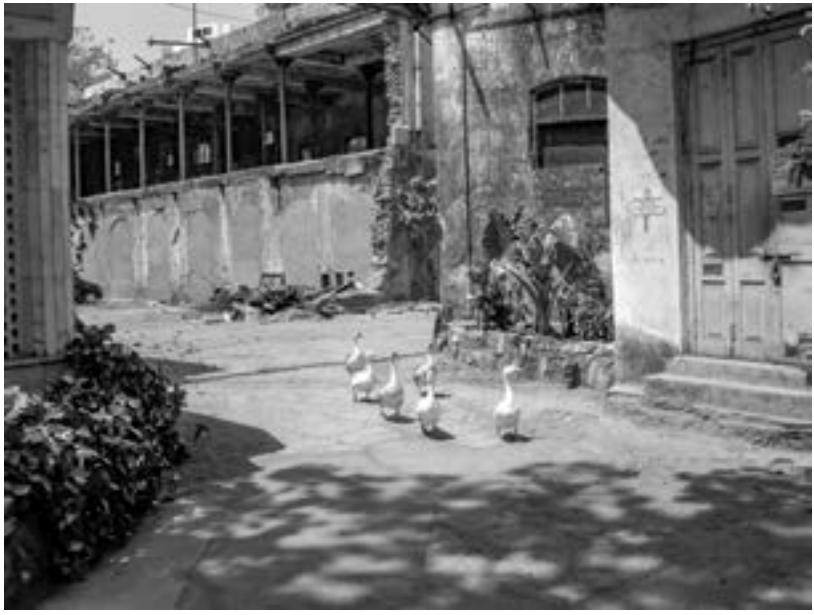

FIGURE 1.2. The Dhanraj ducks on the lane inside the mill compound.

Sudarshan. It's almost time for their shift to start: a shift at a functional textile mill in a city without functioning textile mills. They put down their cups and join me as we head up to the second floor, where the machines live. I can smell cool dirt and damp wood and old stone. I can hear the rumbling of machines above me and I climb the stairs in semidarkness. The noise draws me closer and closer as it becomes louder and louder . . .

I know this place now, but it took years before I encountered Dhanraj. I was not looking for enlivened spaces or for spaces of productivity: I was only looking for spaces of abandoned ruination, and those stories of abandoned ruination were everywhere. Down the road from Dhanraj, off the main thoroughfare of Ambedkar Road, sits the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, Mumbai's oldest museum. Built in 1872, it is a museum of the city: a grand colonial structure now dedicated to the history, culture, and art of Mumbai. Early into my fieldwork, in December 2008, Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action and Research (PUKAR, a word that also means "to call out") opens an exhibit at the City Museum entitled *Girangaon—Kal, Aaj Aur Kal* (*Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*).[1] Part of the project involves providing cameras for the children of former

FIGURE 1.3. The Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum. Photograph by Kabi Sherman.

textile mill workers—"Barefoot Researchers"—and asking them to document the central city neighborhoods they grew up in. The first time I wander through the second-floor exhibit, traces of the British Raj all around me, I marvel at the stories and pictures of loss and absence: the former industrial city, the mill land that once was, the *chawls* (tenement buildings) being torn down. The only way this exhibit can see the mill lands is as abandoned and already dead.

I walk through this exhibit feeling confused and disoriented. I was just in Dhanraj a few hours before. I was just with the workers while they ran the old machines. I just watched as they spun thread out of raw cotton. Only yesterday I sat with Manda in her chawl unit down the road and sipped chai while she told me her stories. Yet, the exhibit does not account for these pockets of productivity and vitality still scattered throughout the central city. These spaces are of the same city and of the same time: How can I reconcile the narratives displayed in the museum space and the experiences of Dhanraj workers down the street? Inside this exhibit I lose all sense of time.[2]

There is no doubt that Central Mumbai is currently undergoing deindustrialization and massive redevelopment. These are not new urban phenomena; however, while industrial decline is undoubtedly occurring at a rapid rate, low-level production continues, even as the contributions and concerns of these laborers are largely unseen by most urban residents. This book, then, emerges from an ethnographic puzzle: when I arrive in Mumbai I am told that there are no mills operating or workers working in the low-lying industrial buildings scattered through Central Mumbai's mill land neighborhoods. However, once I find Dhanraj, I also encounter a small and unrecognized community of mill workers who continue to work within Mumbai's semiformal industrial sector. The mill lands are characterized as completely abandoned because spaces like the PUKAR exhibit display only death and absence. Because of the seamlessness of these narrative spaces, the remaining mills are omitted from the many discussions and accounts of the city. This book asks what it means to be an active worker in an industry that is understood to be defunct. How do Dhanraj workers understand their identities as industrial workers in a "postindustrial" landscape? And what is achieved by denying the presence and continuing productivity of the lively ruin of Dhanraj?

The workers of Dhanraj answer these questions for me every day. Manda tells me how it feels to stand on her feet all day for years, winding thread the city believes is no longer produced in Mumbai. Sushila lays out her aches and pains, the accumulations of a lifetime of industrial bodily breakdown. Raj explains the mysterious negotiations between mill owners and union representatives—secretive meetings to determine the future of a city in flux. Sudarshan shows me how he balances mill work during the day and taxi driving at night—precarious, informal labor supplementing the once steady, now disappearing, future he bought into four decades ago. Kishan reveals how ethnicity-based tension, infusing city identity and politics, operates on the micro level of the mill. Through their storytelling, my Dhanraj informants remind me (and perhaps themselves) of the liveliness existing within spaces of perceived ruination.

Where do these stories live? I argue throughout this book that the mill land neighborhoods of Central Mumbai are an ethnographic archive of the city: a semipublic space of documents, artifacts, and stories, held by the workers inhabiting these still-breathing but slowly decaying spaces.[3] An enlivened archival space that is "more fractious than cumulative, more a space of catachresis than catharsis" (Arondekar 2009, 171). I am not

the first ethnographer to invoke a concept usually reserved for historical work.[4] In utilizing "the archive," however, I am not attempting to organize and understand paper documents that sit outside a structured and curated space. Instead, I am seeking to expand the form of the archive in order to access an orientation of knowledge that has been disappeared or overlooked. Or, to borrow from the historian Antoinette Burton, I understand "archive" to be both discourse and reality, and I follow her call to read archives "ethnographically" (2003, 27). In following such a call, I push against it, as well: before I can read archives ethnographically, I must construct them ethnographically.

When the archive becomes a form of methodology, contemporary trends and phenomena emerge through alternative prisms. Central Mumbai may appear as a city in transition—the industrial making way for the postindustrial. However, through the ethnographic archive, the temporality of lively ruins pushes me to consider how the industrial still remains in the postindustrial. This is not a story of infrastructural shift; this is instead a story of embodied time and place. When we encounter global cities only through structural trends, we miss the liveliness of living *in* the global city. This book is an intervention and a challenge to this zoomed-out urban narrative: the challenge is to become lost in the city, lost in the experience of loss, and lost in the lives lived despite trends and expectations. It is an intervention made by swapping out the lens currently used in writing urban anthropology and instead beginning from the space of the ethnographic archive.

And so this book is an ethnographic archive of loss and life in the mill land neighborhoods of Mumbai: an exploration of lively ruination and anachronistic vitality. In archiving loss, this project emerges from both histories *of* loss and histories that *are* lost.[5] Through this "archive of loss," I call for the soothsaying potentiality of the archive, located in its absences or losses. In this way, I am not simply looking to fill gaps or produce a lost whole but instead emphasize the power of loss as generative and critical. At the same time, I am also invested in making certain people and places and stories more visible than others. These two moves are not necessarily contradictory when I operate within the analytic of the archive. I do not attempt to replace one story with another. I simply acknowledge the existence of multiple stories and reveal the power that positions them in uneven ways.[6]

Throughout this book I will act as an ethnographer-archivist, taking you, the reader, through the archives I have chosen. Like *Girangaon—Kal,*

Aaj Aur Kal, these archives are curated through interpretation.[7] They are incomplete—limited by my placement, my perspective, my positionality. The archive holds power through these limitations. There is no way to know what has been lost and there is no way to know what was never there. The archive is a realm of secrets, and only some of these secrets can be told.[8] But among these accessible secrets are stories of vitality, of survival, of presence: of life lived within and around the lively ruins of mill land Mumbai.

The Museum of Mill Land Mumbai: Notes on Narrative

I could not persuade her that a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one's imagination.—AMITAV GHOSH, *The Shadow Lines*, 1988

This book begins with the claim that official histories and master narratives, like *Girangaon—Kal, Aaj Aur Kal*, are straightforward and simplistic. This does not (necessarily) make them wrong, but it does make them intentional and strategic. Their goal is to produce stories that are easily circulated and seamlessly consumed. In claiming that visible histories of mill land Mumbai are akin to a museum, I argue that spaces like Dhanraj, then, are reflective of the archive—messy and chaotic lives and documents and records and spaces that contradict, expand, and interrupt the narrative of the museum. Throughout this ethnography I use the space of Dhanraj as both a challenge to and an expansion of the official museum history. The archive is a disruption. But these spaces of disruption are often unseen, and this lack of visibility allows museum stories to blanket the entrances to spaces where archives might be encountered. This ethnography is an exploration of these unseen histories of mill land Mumbai: the archives of a museum of loss.

But the basement archives lack the power of response if they are not first entered through the museum. And so here I present the standard (abridged) history of mill land development and the current crisis facing Dhanraj, as told through the framing of a museum. It tells several visible stories: these stories are the ones I interpret as "official," "accepted," and "understood." I am not—in any way—attempting to *rewrite* this master narrative. It is important, it is well thought out, it helps us understand critical phenomena across the landscapes of our lives. But this is not the only way of seeing, engaging with, and understanding these landscapes, and this master narrative is incapable of illuminating the lively ruination of unseen, overlooked spaces. Museum narratives are necessarily simple. They are

FIGURE 1.4. Sharmistha Ray, *Intimate Geographies (Mapping India)*, 11-¾ × 12-¾ inches, porous point black ink pen on Fabriano paper, 2018.

clear. They are accessible. But the archives tell additional stories: the ones that would muddy the museum. The ones that would throw the gallery exhibit into chaos and confusion. The ones that challenge not only the materials of the museum but also the very foundation of museum constructions.

For an outsider with an untrained eye, walking through the mill lands of Mumbai is an exercise in confusion: How do I *see* this area, seemingly so chaotic and unplanned? Spatially, Central Mumbai's neighborhoods stand beneath the shadows of the city's numerous flyovers and are barely visible from the highway. Because of this, it is possible to drive between downtown and the northern suburbs without ever seeing the mills, except for an occasional chimney jutting above the low-lying industrial mill compounds. In thinking about this cloistered spatiality, mapping the mill lands must also become an intentional and embodied engagement in place-making. Sharmistha Ray's maps, *Intimate Geographies*, are one such remapping exercise. This book is also a practice of remapping: remapping histories, remapping experience, remapping space. A practice of remapping that which is no longer visible.

FIGURE I.5.
Sharmistha Ray, *Intimate Geographies (Mapping Bombay)*, 11-¾ × 12-¾ inches, porous point black ink pen on Fabriano paper, 2018.

But the industry once had global visibility: the first textile mill, the Bombay Spinning Mill, was set up in 1854 in response to Britain's demand for cotton textiles.[9] Wealthy Indian merchant families, who made fortunes trading with the British, were able to acquire mills on low-cost land leases (ranging from 100 to 999 years) from the colonial government, transforming the city from a trade hub into a major manufacturing center. By the 1930s, half the city's population was economically dependent on the industry, which continued to grow (Surve 2011).

By the early 1960s, the city had fifty-eight cotton textile mills employing more than 600,000 workers. But increasing international cotton production (primarily from Japanese-controlled, China-based mills) led to a decline in the demand placed on the Indian market. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, the city's mill owners cut jobs and wages to keep up with this newly unstable market, and the textile industry found itself in crisis.[10] This resulted in a massive, industry-wide strike from 1982 to 1983, known

as the Great Textile Strike. Most mills never recovered from the economic devastation of those years.[11]

While the 1980s were known as a time of crisis, the 1990s became a decade of confusion. As much of the city's textile production came to a near standstill, the development laws lingering from colonial zoning legislation created a situation of stagnation. As it turned out, the mill land was "locked" and unavailable for any other manufacturing activities and future development. This situation grew into an urban planning dilemma for the city. First, the mill lands occupied six hundred conjoined acres in the middle of the city. This extensive patch of underutilized land created an obstacle for development in the heart of Mumbai. Second, the lack of access to the mill lands produced exorbitant property values in the city that discouraged investment and development. Third, development in Mumbai was limited by the city's location on a peninsula. Because of this, new businesses and other developments needed to be built to the north of the locked land. A lawyer representing the Bombay Environmental Action Group (BEAG) put the consequences of these factors into perspective for me:

> What was unusual [about the industry] was that you had your prime economic activity within the heart of a city—so clearly not suitable from a planning perspective, but because cities in India are not planned in any organized way (they instead grow organically) you have these mill lands. And that's probably what gives them the kind of significance—even today, one hundred years later—is because of their location. We're not talking about industries on the periphery of a city, which is now being developed commercially. We're talking about industries in the heart of a city. And we're not talking about one plot or two plots. We're talking about six hundred acres of mill lands. . . . When Bombay grew as a city in the twentieth century, it grew around this industrial activity.

Eventually, these factors burdened Mumbai's development such that the government of India changed its position and acknowledged the need to free up the locked land, but how to unlock the land for development was controversial and involved two rounds of litigation.

The sale of mill land was and still is enmeshed in social and political controversy. Issues of lost labor, worker rights, environmental conservation, and the desire for open space complicated the ways in which development can (and will) take place. This crisis was first addressed among the various

structural adjustment changes occurring across India in 1991.[12] Emerging from these changes were the Development Control Rules (DCRs), specifically DCR-58, commonly known as the "one-third plan." The original rule (DCR-58) stated that two-thirds of the land area must be turned over to the state (one-third for open space and one-third for low-income housing). The remaining one-third could be retained by owners and developers and used as they saw fit. However, both the government-controlled National Textile Corporation mills and private mill owners argued that this formula, when properly employed, applied only to *unused* land, free from industrial structures. This interpretation implied that, if any of the mill land was presently built upon, that land would be excluded from the formula and retained by the owner. Under this interpretation, the land available for open space and low-income housing was insignificant because mills were typically low-lying structures occupying a substantial part of the land area in question. To put it simply, open space essentially didn't exist in the congested mill lands. If this formula were applied only to those few pockets of open land, there would be no real public purpose that could be served, either for green space or for public housing. The next decade resulted in several major court cases and virtually no substantial development.

In 2001, following several rounds of litigation, the city government finally amended the rule: DCR-58 became DCR-58 (I), which stated: "Only land that is vacant on mill properties—that is with no built-up structure—would be divided by the one-third formula." Following this alteration, mill owners could retain the majority of their land, as the area claimed by the city and former workers was limited to 6 to 10 percent, as opposed to two-thirds, of the mill land. This defeat was doubly devastating for the petitioners in favor of the one-third formula, as the plan was believed to be the salvation for a city often understood as dangerously overcrowded and completely lacking in open space. At a roundtable organized for World Health Day, Pankaj Joshi of the Urban Development and Research Institute explained: "Only 6 percent of the total land in the city [of Mumbai] is made up of open public spaces. Out of this, 45 percent is partially or completely encroached upon. A citizen of Mumbai gets 1.95 square meters of open space against the international standard of 11 square meters per person." In one of the most congested areas of the world, the one-third plan had the potential to alleviate the density, pollution, and infrastructural strain placed on the central city. And yet private interests got in the way.

A lawyer representing the BEAG explained to me:

> I think what really brought the matter to life for us was knowing what could have been, had the result been the other way. And we knew it firsthand because we met with them [the planners], we saw their blueprints, we saw their reports. And if those blue prints of potential urban planning of the mill lands had been put into effect and implemented, it really would have made a difference to that part of Bombay, which is otherwise extremely congested, very chaotic, and—because it's in such a strategic location—could have really provided solutions to infrastructure problems that Bombay, as a city, faces. Transportation issues, but also most importantly, parks and green space. And that is the potential that the mill lands had for the city. And therefore, having had an insight, when we lost, we knew that it was not just losing a legal argument, but also a potential would be lost for all times to come.

This sense of colossal loss was shared unanimously by those engaged in defending the one-third plan, whether from the perspective of environmental concerns, working-class housing issues, or the loss of architectural heritage. In many ways, this ruling was seen as the beginning of the end for the possible creation of a more sustainable city.

By 2003, a combination of rising real estate costs and the supposed stability of DCR-58 (I) placed mill owners in a prime position to sell their land for enormous profits. However, a decade of court cases and ambiguous legal interpretations resulted in dramatic uncertainty as to the actual status of the land and the risk involved in selling, renovating, razing, and rebuilding mill lands.[13] This ambiguity stalled the activity of some landowners hoping to turn major profits in the wake of industry's decline.

For Dhanraj, this story is particularly complicated.[14] The owners of Dhanraj, the Lal family, entered into a partnership with the development company Mahindra Lifespaces in 1995.[15] However, Mahindra then outwardly claimed that its dedication to transparency and hyperlegality did not allow it to engage in extralegal business, which was common in the mill land district. This led to Mahindra stalling development of the compound and Dhanraj attempting to extricate itself from any legal partnership in court. At the end of my long-term fieldwork, in 2012, the company was locked in a court battle with Dhanraj; as a result, no development could proceed until all the workers retired and were paid sizable settlements.[16] This situation resulted in a skeleton workforce running a seemingly de-

cayed and unproductive mill. From the bustling sidewalk running along Ambedkar Road, Dhanraj looks like just another boarded-up, abandoned mill, awaiting the development plans of Mahindra Lifespaces.

An Archive of Lively Ruination: Notes on Time

People are collecting found objects snatched off the literal or metaphorical side of the road. Things that have dropped out of the loop or have been left sagging somewhere are dragged home as if they are literal residues of past dreaming practices.

The snatching practice mixes a longing for a real world (or something) with the consumer's little dream of spying a gem or tripping over a bargain. And in the mix, all kinds of other things are happening, too.—KATHLEEN STEWART, *Ordinary Affects*, 2007

According to the museum narrative, Dhanraj industrial production is no more. But Dhanraj industrial production is *not* over, even if the museum narrative has convinced the city that it is. Walking through the gate to the mill compound is like crossing over into another time: life in the mill moves slowly in dimly lit spaces, seemingly unaware of the fast pace and bright lights of the city around it. But the mill is not a relic from the past: while Dhanraj may invoke a sense of pastness, this orientation toward ruin forecloses our ability to engage it as a lively and vital space of modernity.[17] This is a crisis of temporality: at the gate of Dhanraj, diverse planes of time and space merge in a single moment and place, shaping the meaning of work and life that unfolds within the mill compound. This ruinous space is an allegory for our present moment, which appears industrial and post-industrial, simultaneously—an alternative "now," in contrast to shifting economies and skylines outside the compound gate.[18]

I can *see* this collision of alternative times.

If I choose to pay attention. . . .

So how does an ethnographer-archivist pay attention? From the street, Dhanraj appears to be nothing more than a semi-abandoned textile mill, in the process of demolition and redevelopment. But once inside its walls, I find myself in a crucible of temporal reimagining. This mill, in its ruination, is an uncanny space and—if we (you as my reader, me as your ethnographer-archivist) listen—it has much to tell us about the present and the future. Dhanraj is an uncanny ruin because it is both a (seeming) leftover of modernity and its counterpart (a production *of* modernity)—the mill is a collision of multiple modernities.[19] Throughout this ethnogra-

phy, I show how Dhanraj is a lens through which to challenge, reimagine, and alter how the present moment we *think* we find ourselves in speaks to the future. But in order to take such a thought experiment seriously, we must reimagine how we can see the world. It is difficult to see zombified economic and social spaces such as Dhanraj because they defy our expectations of progress, of time, of modernity. They lie outside what we think we know of the world.

Economic history is usually narrated by eras: industrial capitalism and postindustrial capitalism, liberalism and the age of the neoliberal.[20] One gives way to another, and the world changes through acts of assigning labels as a practice of movement. But does this temporal progression actually map onto the materiality of the everyday? There is a disconnect between the naming of time and the mapping of time-names onto the material, enlivened world. This practice makes it very difficult to see (and then to narrate, to make sense of) anachronistic spaces like Dhanraj.

As both a place and an idea, Dhanraj is *present*: I have been there, I return often as a reminder. It is and continues to be *real*. But it is also dying: an ongoing and incomplete process of decay and transformation.

There is a double anachronism here:

Dhanraj is alive, but it will die soon.
Also Dhanraj is already dead.

Therefore, Dhanraj is a sort of death that is deeply alive: a space of alternative life, a life outside of language. What do we do with this zombified place, both alive and undead? Both decaying and vital, ruinous and lively? A location where the past becomes alive because it *is* still alive? Instead of thinking about liveliness as generative, I propose a form of lively ruination and anachronistic vitality. Life exists on multiple planes, and in the mill lands, life and loss envelop each other in a nonlinear form. Therefore, Dhanraj is a dialectical space of life and loss; I thus employ a wider lens through which to grapple with this world I find myself in because while I write this ethnography in the time of the "postindustrial," I simultaneously attend to what this means for people still living industrial lives.

I propose Dhanraj provides a nonlinear timeline of decay: while deindustrial narratives show that the global collapse of industrial production has already happened, attention paid to spaces of local-level industrial production (like Dhanraj) reveals a discordant collision of time and production. Narratives of collapse and practices of local-level production

collide in spaces where the aftershocks of peak industrialization are still playing out on a local scale. Recently there has been a surge in the field of "ruin studies," particularly in anthropology, archaeology, history, and cultural studies. My work is indebted to this conversation, as the materiality of decay and abandonment is central to my framing of Mumbai's mill lands (Edensor 2005; DeSilvey 2006; Stoler 2008; Yablon 2009; Bennett 2010; Hell and Schönle 2010; Gabrys 2013; Gordillo 2014). Even as this scholarship provides a platform from which my work takes off, this book engages with the spaces of ruins in very different ways, since my ruins are still *alive*. They have not yet been abandoned, even if they are overlooked. And they have much to tell us if we focus both on their ongoing vitality and on what it means to live within this process of collapse. By taking Dhanraj seriously as a lively ruin, I theorize how this decay occurs, what it looks like as a process, and what messianic messages for the future are embedded in its rubble. Ruins are both remainders and reminders (Boym 2008a): my goal as an ethnographer-archivist is to trace and interpret the stories these ruins are trying to tell.[21]

Methodologically, this ethnography is driven by an engagement with attention: social practices (such as the writing of history; the reporting of news; the development of infrastructure and the identities placed upon spaces through naming) can temporally displace communities, rendering them "out of time." Displacement from the current moment leads to a social inability to *see* those who have been temporally displaced. Once spaces and communities are erased from our social vision, we must relearn how to see what exists but has been rendered invisible. Through this method of attention, a series of interconnected questions emerge: What does it mean to inhabit a dying space? What does it mean to inhabit a dying way of life? Dhanraj keeps shrinking, and yet it also remains alive. It is dying as it is living. It is decaying, and yet it does not disintegrate. What does it mean to attend to these processes of decay, and what might be learned about potential practices of regeneration in doing so? How do I slow down my conceptions and experiences of the passage of time in order to inhabit the worlds of my informants? These processes and practices reveal alternative modernities, but they also demand a willingness to engage elegiac practices: Dhanraj workers are mourning a dying city, a dying way of life. And they are also mourning themselves, their communities, their bodies. These spaces of lively ruination are speaking: What meanings emerge through listening?

While these questions emerge from the specific ethnographic space of Dhanraj, they also speak to a state of global crisis: the crisis of modernity and labor.[22] The space of Dhanraj offers up answers to such a current crisis, but in unexpected ways. The liveliness of ruins draws attention to patterns of decay and regeneration inaccessible through standard economic projections. But this vitality must first be seen before it can teach lessons of justice and imagination.

This form of seeing, I find, is very difficult to do.

In the Darkroom of Fieldwork: Notes on Methodology

> The past is hidden outside the realm of our intelligence and beyond its reach, in some material object (in the sensation that this material object would give us) which we do not suspect. It depends on chance whether we encounter this object before we die, or do not encounter it. —MARCEL PROUST, *Swann's Way*, (1913) 2002

The lively ruins of Central Mumbai are palimpsests, and much gets concealed through this layering. History and memory are embedded in this industrial debris, dwelling alongside future prophecies. Ethnography offers the opportunity to encounter both this past and this future, while theory (through the philosophy embedded in *all* literature) offers up tools for analysis. In Renee Gladman's uncanny novel, *Event Factory*, an unnamed linguist-traveler arrives in the fictional city-state of "Ravicka." The traveler, a linguist competent in the language but still unable to truly communicate, attempts to move through a space that is at once foreign, at once familiar. This is a story of failure: her failure to record, to understand, to inhabit. The failure of fluency. But this is also a story about the potentials that emerge from and sit alongside this failure.

Halfway through the novel, the unnamed linguist-traveler discovers something critical about her new location, and yet is unable to articulate and access, through language, her discovery. She explains: "Most of us believed that in that duration I had been exposed to the truth about Ravicka, yet, perhaps for some reason innate to being an outsider, I had not recognized it" (Gladman 2010, 88). For years I have been writing about the misrecognition of Central Mumbai's textile industry, obsessed as I was and am with the fact that—even as the industry persists—the city denies this reality.

Or, to be more generous, that there is a misrecognition of presence for absence.

And yet for years I also never really paused to consider, with any great detail or care, the consistent continuation of my *own* misrecognition, so deeply rooted in the ethnographic encounter. In *Mimesis and Alterity*, Michael Taussig proposes that writing—particularly ethnographic writing—may be a form of magic, harnessed through the "sensuous sense of the real, mimetically at one with what it attempts to represent" (1993, 16). What if the magic Taussig writes of is not of re-creating the power of the original in the copy but of seeing the negative before it becomes a photograph?

There is a photograph of Central Mumbai that I took in the winter of 2009: I managed to talk my way onto the roof of a nearby apartment building, providing myself the first bird's-eye view of the area by which I felt enveloped for so long. With my digital camera in hand, I attempted to capture the feeling of a shifting perspective, of seeing from above what I had only ever seen from below, from within. I tried to capture with my camera's eye what appeared to me as visual markers of presence. I saw the mill, I saw low-lying industrial buildings: other mills and nearby chawls. I saw emerging skyscrapers in the distance, alongside cranes enabling their emergence above and beyond the urban skyline. I saw quite a number of trees, not so surprising even considering the lack of greenery throughout the city, as most mills had a water source of some sort. I knew Dhanraj had a small human-made lake populated by geese, even if I couldn't see it from my perch. I saw smog. I saw roads. I thought about all the things I couldn't see. I thought about shadows. I thought about cities beneath other cities. Burial sites and subterranean life and what it means to be invisible. These are the photographic negatives of the city's gallery of memory. Everything present but unseen (fig. 1.6).

When I utilize the digital there are no negatives, there are no darkrooms. I can immediately look at this digital image appearing on my camera or phone and assume that this representation is "real." That it is a fluent translation of the skyline. Without negatives, where are my ghostly images? Where are the traces that haunt the photograph? In this particular image I miss all that is absent, all that is unseen. All that is no longer there or was never there or is hidden and waiting to appear.

After wandering for many days, Gladman's unnamed linguist-traveler finds herself atop an elevated plane, looking down on the city of Ravicka. She finds that she cannot see anything: no people, no houses. None of the elusive skyscrapers she searches for, in hopes of discovering where the

FIGURE 1.6. The photographic negative of the city's gallery of memory.

"real" city lies. She reflects: "Local life is inscrutable if you are too far out of it, or above it in the way I was. And this, I acknowledged, had become my new problem. My wanderings began to lead me repeatedly to the same predicament: standing in relation to something I could not see. But, I reasoned from that elevated place, my time here had proved that what one 'couldn't see' was not always what was there" (Gladman 2010, 108).

What does it mean to stand in relation to something we cannot see? I read in Gladman's allegory a sense of the world aligned with what I know to be this ethnographic crisis: I have, for too long, been attempting to tell a story that does not take account of all the absences and ashes and shadows and ghosts that make up the photographic negatives of a life.[23] While we can tell some stories through the social life of the structures that contain us, just as important are the stories that cannot be encased in steel and stone, that cannot be articulated and translated. That elude our attempts at ethnographic fluency and are always emerging horizons of "maybe not there."

It has been years since I worked with film, watching ghostly images emerge from the dark, taking over with first their shadows, then their lines and forms. Now I have only this digital photograph, no negatives to

return to. But somehow the frame has shifted: maybe the digital photograph has become the negative, the city skyline has become the photograph. Over time I return to this image, I push myself to see things emerge from the shadows of misrecognition, previously unnoticed or misunderstood. I find that the way I see these images changes over time. Some previously unseen traces emerge now, but were not noticeable then. But then I might have seen things that I no longer notice now. The unseen traces, these "ghostly matters," are both what is missing and what must be addressed.[24] I am looking for my particular ghostly matters, both in photographs that only "sort of" capture the landscape and in words that only "sort of" capture a life.

And so this book is an experiment with time and word-images: ephemeral ethnographic matter that disrupts the time-world I first create and then believe to be natural, real. My methodology places at its center a continual (but never complete) search for the meanings (always shifting) in the negatives of ethnography. To understand how "what one 'couldn't see' was not always what was there." Perhaps this is the continual return to the darkroom of fieldwork, of revisiting the process of chemical exposure in an attempt to access shapes emerging through contact with light. And then a set of questions emerge from these shadows: What do our anthropological darkrooms look like? Where are our ethnographic archives? Where do we go to draw meaning from recorded words and sentences and conversations made from speech words and sentences and conversations, rooted in place but disrupted through our note taking, our recording, our interpretations? Our misrecognition of (ethnographic) competence for (anthropological) fluency. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) has suggested that an ethnographer must be the "clerk of the records," but what do we do when we realize we do not (and cannot) possess all the files? What if we are not in search of a complete collection at all?

Ethnographic note taking (like the notes of this introduction) follows the process of developing film in a dark room—a frame encloses a space, the negatives capture shadows and light, and the photograph makes sense of what can be processed. Similarly, our field notes are not simply a collection of observations. They are also the suggestions of ghostly matter, lingering at the edges of language and sight. When I look back through my files of field notes, how do I remember what that ephemeral matter looks like? Sounds like? Feels like? How do I account for what it means to stand in relation to something I cannot see?

From this question two interconnected threads of engagement emerge: First, the question of material. What do I use, both theoretically and ethnographically, to account for the lively ruin of the mill? Second, the question of method: What methodology can account for the ghostly matter of lives lived among the debris of lively ruination? Throughout this book I show how affective traces provide my material and the theoretical form of the archive provides my methodology. The archive, then, is also the darkroom, littered with all the negatives left over after the photographs are developed and hung in the museum. Or overlooked in corners, yet to become photographs. Or lost or destroyed or torn or buried. I have been collecting some of these negatives: traces of places, of bodies, of events, of time. These traces stand in the shadows of more solid photographic narratives, but that does not diminish their power of prophecy.

At least half my files are ghostly. They are maybe not there, or perhaps I haven't yet encountered them, or possibly I did already and I either knew it or I didn't know it but it doesn't matter because they have disappeared.[25]

For now, I am haunted by ghosts: they are trying to tell me what is missing.

Missing from the city and from the photograph.

Missing from stories of structure, of interests, of history.

Missing in the shadows of photographic negatives and in the pauses between spoken words.

There is power and promise in the incompleteness of this archive, with and among the ghosts of "maybe not there."

Why Infrastructure Tells Us Nothing of What It Means to Feel in the World: Notes on Alternate Urbanisms

The paved road is a story and a poem.—RENEE GLADMAN, *The Ravickians*, 2011

The cityscape of Central Mumbai appears to be a construction site: cranes jut out and over a once low-lying landscape, writing the prologue of a new city. Skyscrapers emerge from holes in the ground that were once sprawling mill compounds, buried beneath the tree line. This transformation evokes a story of infrastructural shift—architects, planners, developers, and engineers have stories to tell about this fluctuating cityscape, but they are not the only ones. The stories I hear in Dhanraj are not ones of "infrastructural expertise," but they are stories of expertise, all the same. My mill

FIGURE 1.7. The cityscape of Central Mumbai.

worker informants "feel" the changing atmosphere and shifting landscape of Mumbai. However, this "feeling" is not (just) the sensations of the body in a phenomenological sense, but instead echoes, resonances, ephemeral sensations that come and go and tell us just as much (if not more) about time and space as they do about bodily sensations.[26] Therefore, this tension in scale—in terms of how the story of a city can be "told"—can be read as a battle between affect and structure.[27] I am invested in the "affectsphere" of Central Mumbai's mill lands, which encompasses the emerging worlds that cut across hegemonic temporal and spatial frames.[28]

The affectsphere undermines hegemonic infrastructure. In constructing the affectsphere of Central Mumbai, I challenge traditional engagements with infrastructure, present in recent urban scholarship. By examining the tensions between my informants and the city of Mumbai, I present this ethnography as an intervention in the growing subfield of "infrastructure studies" within the anthropology of capitalism and neoliberalism.[29] My work is indebted to these engagements, which have generated new openings through which we approach ethnographies of urban space,

capital accumulation, and uneven systems of power. Much of this work focuses on how systems, resources, and technologies help us understand the construction and habitation of space. While I would consider my work in conversation with this, I draw attention to the ways in which "infrastructure studies" often decenters the experiences of our informants.[30] Instead, this book is invested in how my informants *experience* infrastructure and ruination. We cannot understand one without the other.

Throughout this book, ethnographic stories of mill work and chawl habitation are at once deeply structural *and* deeply sensorial: indeed, I argue that the collection of ephemera through the methodology of the archive destabilizes our understanding of knowledge, of history, and of truth and, instead, allows new forms of knowing to emerge. This pushes at deeper issues that recent work on systems and structures seems to avoid in terms of what ethnography can do and what our anthropological approach can bring to a *sense* of the world. I argue—ethnographically—throughout this text that there is a creativity and sense of imagination in lived experiences that activates and unleashes the ambience of everyday urban life.

Brian Larkin frames infrastructure as a way in which to "generate the ambient environment of everyday life" (2013, 328). I am invested in this ambience: I choose not to explore in detail how development is working (or not working) in Mumbai.[31] Instead, I focus on what it feels like to live in the shadows of this development. My informants tell me stories of the fear, anxiety, and sadness in watching industrial buildings give way to glass and steel skyscrapers. I argue that feelings about and engagements with infrastructure are just as critical as an exploration of how these buildings come to be. To suggest that systems and structures must somehow be explained before they can be experienced threatens the foundation of ethnography's promise: the potential to understand the world in ways it has never been understood before by engaging the impressions, experiences, and affects of our informants as forms of critical expertise.

Keller Easterling has described infrastructure as the "operating system" of the city (2014, 12). As a person absolutely *convinced* that my computer runs on magic, I find that my ignorance of its operating system rarely gets in the way of my ability to engage it in a day-to-day manner (after all, there are magicians to fix it when it breaks down). Similarly, I see structure and affect as inextricably linked: to *feel* infrastructure may not be to "know" it (in the sense of engineering), but in focusing on affect, my work challenges this framing of expertise and draws urban anthropology away from city

planning and back to ethnography. As an ethnographer-archivist, I search for ways to capture how my informants experience the lively ruins in which they live. What does Sudarshan *see* when he drives his taxi through the transforming mill lands? How does Sushila *feel* when she stands on her aching feet all day? What does Manda *say* to the looming skyscrapers when she walks through her Lower Parel neighborhood? What does Raj *hear* in the dark, deafening space of the mill? While I cannot fully access the experiences of my informants (nor can I adequately translate that limited access through language), I argue that returning to experience-as-aspiration is critical nonetheless.[32] "Knowing" the legal loopholes of mill land development, the economic benefits of industrial fire, or the future trends of city planning cannot allow one to answer these questions of mill worker experience. And it is this issue of archiving Central Mumbai's affectsphere that drives my ethnography.

The collision of affect and infrastructure transforms Central Mumbai into a haunted city. Work on temporality and memory has opened up critical avenues for exploring the politicization of heritage and the impact of spatial histories on the construction and reconstruction of identities.[33] Central Mumbai—as a site of memory production and consumption—reveals how the past is still present; ghosts inhabit the everyday spaces of the living; and topographies of space can be re-understood in ways that challenge established trends of urban transformation. The historian Gillian Tindall writes: "In Bombay . . . the past continues not only to be but also thrive, coexisting chaotically but apparently profitably with more recent developments" (1982, 2). This past, at least as it is framed within the former textile mill districts, becomes—in the words of Denis Byrne—a "signature of loss in the landscape" of Central Mumbai (2007, 59).

So as I stand in the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum on that December afternoon in 2008, I am struck by the stories being told.[34] The museum exhibit I stand within is thoughtfully and intentionally curated: it is "both a place and a practice" (Taylor 2003, 66). Yet, I am less interested in what is included—my attention turns to what is discarded, relegated to the museum archives.

The remainders. The outliers.

The files and folders and boxes that do not fit within the exhibit as planned: the negatives of the museum photographs.

As I walk through PUKAR's exhibit of loss, I think about these basement archives, still present and yet also somehow not visible. Accessible

yet overlooked: "orphaned collections" awaiting attention (B. Voss 2012). I have always been more interested in these hidden, subterranean spaces.

Spaces like Dhanraj: archives of loss.

Mapping the Archive of Loss: Notes on Form

> Here we have a man whose job it is to pick up the day's rubbish in the capital. He collects and catalogues everything that the great city has cast off, everything it has lost, and discarded, and broken, he goes though the archives of debauchery, and the jumbled array of refuse. He makes a selection, an intelligent choice; like a miser hoarding treasure, he collects the garbage that will become objects of utility or pleasure when refurbished by Industrial magic.—CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, "Du Vin et du haschisch," *Oeuvres*, vol. 1, in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 1999

This book is a collection of five archives—the archive of the mill, of the worker, of the chawl, of the great textile strike, of industrial fire. In drawing on the concept of "the archive," my book pushes against the notion that "the archive" is a place, a location.[35] Or *just* a place, a location. There are archival places here, yes. But the archive is also about time, events, and bodies. I theorize the archive beyond boundedness, and in doing so, I reveal how conceptions of time transform *ideas* into places, just as maps, names, borders, and boundaries transform spaces into places.[36] Events and bodies can be archives, just like spatial locations.

I draw on the archive-optic as a tool through which memory, nostalgia, and experience—often understood as linkages to the past—can be temporally reframed as future-focused. Here I am influenced by William Mazzarella's (2017) framing of "the mimetic archive": the conscious and unconscious ways we access collective experiences across space and time. This framing of the mimetic archive challenges a superficial rendering of nostalgia and complicates ways of engaging the past in the present moment, like echoes in a shared chamber of memory and experience. Instead of returning to the memory archive as (just) a space of storage, I instead understand the ethnographic archive as a repository of resonances, available as resources through which the contemporary moment can be understood. The past has much to tell us about the present and future, as the process of interpretation (conducted by both ethnographer and informant) is filtered through the immediacy of the now.[37] Throughout these archival spaces I search out resonances: echoes of intertwined history, experience, and expectation.[38] These resonances are archives of emotion, experience,

feeling, memory, connection: residue that ties together "unseen things" (Lepselter 2016).[39]

I offer this book as an accidental archive, divided into five smaller archive-chapters. Like the rubbish of Baudelaire's ragpicker, my archival collection is composed of material that has been cast off but, similarly, has been refurbished with industrial magic. These archives lie buried beneath three layers: first, the Mumbai mill lands as mythological creations; second, the mill lands as temporal ruptures in the history of Mumbai; and third, Dhanraj mill workers as anachronistic subjects. In uncovering these layers, I make visible the promises and possibilities present in spaces of lively ruination. Each archive takes as its central question the traces of industrial production and livelihood still present in Central Mumbai and, in doing so, foregrounds unruly and contradictory ethnographic material.

Chapter 1, "The Archive of the Mill," is centered on "nonrecognition" (Hansen 2012) as archival material and practices of "unseeing" (Miéville 2009) as the mode through which such nonrecognition comes to be. I argue that—through the circulation of narratives of industrial finality—nonrecognition turns the liveliness of Dhanraj into an absent place, and this resulting mythology of absence and finality renders current mill workers "unvisible." This unvisibility is an active way of "unseeing" and "unhearing" inconvenient urban lives. By replacing "invisible" with "unvisible" and "misrecognition" with "nonrecognition," I argue that what we cannot see and hear is a form of practice enforced by infrastructure, not an accident naturally occurring in space and time.

Chapter 2, "The Archive of the Worker," is an archive of bodily pain and considers the discontinuities and continuities between scales of experience. Through narratives of embodiment (pain, illness, exhaustion, injury), this chapter pushes beyond a phenomenological sense of the body and instead considers how these narratives of bodily pain reveal the decay of an industrial cyborg body: older bodies, fused and infused with industrial possibility, are becoming both unusable and unwanted. This archive explores the meaning of inhabiting broken and decaying bodies, no longer modern and productive but once central and vital for the health of both the local and the global economy. In doing so, it asks how bodies are understood to be both "in" time and "of" time.

Chapter 3, "The Archive of the Chawl," is an archive of "queer time." Beyond the space of Dhanraj, this archive engages mill worker chawls as additional spaces of vital ruination. These structures, framed as danger-

ously uninhabitable in popular urban imagination, are lively places of history, memory, and possibility. However, they are also places that do not engage with accepted and assumed forms of temporal progression: they defy the nuclear family, they defy capitalist productivity, and they defy the laws of development through complicated zoning and ownership laws. Therefore, the queerness of this "chawl time" resists the forward march of "modernity" and instead allows for a mode of living "elliptically" (Berlant 2012) as a form of temporal resistance.

Chapter 4, "The Archive of the Strike," is an archive of "untruths": through memories of the Great Textile Strike of 1982–1983, this archive reveals how the "fictions" told by Dhanraj workers have much to tell about what it means to live precariously in a space of ruination. Through "untrue" stories, I engage the notion of an impossible subject and explore the crisis of an impossible story: what do anthropologists do with informant testimonies we know to be factually incorrect? How do we collect, interpret, and use informant lies, manipulations, and untruths as critical archival material? I argue that, through Theodor Adorno's negative dialectic, untruths in Dhanraj reveal a crisis of identity for minority (North Indian) workers, who have been cast as "other," both in the city and in the mill. Through a negative dialectic, "untruth" and "nonidentity" resist this othering and create an alternative being-in-the-world.

Chapter 5, "The Archive of the Fire," expands the notion of untruth to understand how and why Dhanraj workers circulate rumors in the wake of the 2009 industrial fire. This chapter-archive shows how—through rumor—workers make sense of the continued survival and vitality of a mill that lives on and functions through decades of decline and death. This ongoing regeneration of Dhanraj as zombified mill draws attention to the survival of spaces, economies, and individuals commonly understood to disappear through shifting socioeconomic eras.

The book's epilogue, "The Archive of Futures Lost," concludes with a return to Dhanraj in December 2016 through January 2017. A majority of the land has been sold to an international development company, but the mill, still operating with a skeletal workforce of fifty, occupies a small home on the edge of the retained property. While bulldozers clear the sold land and make way for luxury high-rises, Dhanraj workers continue to spin cotton thread. When the union contracts of local workers expire, the mill will eventually shift to Silvassa, an industrial hub three hours north of Mumbai. However, the next few years will involve the continuation of

industrial production in Mumbai, unseen and unacknowledged by the city at large. In this way, the five archives of loss come together as spokes on a wheel that allow for the economic center vampirically to survive off the blood of downwardly mobile unvisible industrial labor. I end the book with a call to think seriously about how we frame narratives about urban futures and how these narratives impact the lives of the remainders of past urban moments. In doing so, I make an argument for the messianic potentiality of lively ruination. This will only be possible if we can learn to see what still remains.