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Missing Cities and Missing Bodies in Indian Metropolis

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Abstract:

The present paper makes a synthesis of different perspectives on the body at the intersection with the urban space and visual culture, with a focus on Lefebvre's notion of the "triad of space" shaped due to historical transformations. I advance a novel approach to the concepts of *city* and *corporeal self*, reading the metropolis as a structure made of multiple city-units. In relation to these factors, I argue that a metropolis incorporates many forms of cities, with each of these varieties inhabited by an analogous type of body. I make the main distinction between the *modern* city (whose mirror image would be the *faux city*), as well as the *rustic city* and the *missing city*. The mobile bodies occupying the spaces corresponding to these kinds of co-existent cities could then be distinguished as the *modern body*, the *rustic body*, the *missing body* and the (advertised) *ersatz body* entities.

Key words: Indian culture, corporeal self, urban space, Lefebvre, identities, metropolis, advertising, film

Introduction

Through its spaces and architectonics, an Indian metropolis can serve as a place for re-interpreting existing theories and discourses on urbanity, visual culture and the corporeal self. This can both refresh our *experience* and the *understanding* of our experience of the city, as well as our conceptualizing of the city space and expectations from the urban environment. Our perceptions of our own bodies, their location and movement within the urban matrix influence the structure of the metropolis as a cognitive and empirical unit with specific features. The present study focuses on an empirical exploration of the Indian metropolis through a tri-dimensional perspective: the urban space, the visual dynamics and the human corporeal self both as the 'walking' body and its 'faux' publicized double.

I will argue that the Indian metropolis, in many ways a postmodern city, exists in fact as a complex structure, developing on multiple levels comprising many city-units – *rustic city*, *missing city*, *faux city*, *modern* and *exclusivist* city. The *modern* and *exclusivist* cities constitute the main loci where the 'walking body' performs a certain unconscious antagonism with 'its double' – the advertised/ cinematic *ersatz body*¹ – and the entire logic behind this opposition functions in line with the logic of the consumerist market and viewer's expectations. The *corporeal self* becomes the point of reference, both in the *modern* city and the *faux* city within which the (publicized) *ersatz body* resides, while the other *city units* contain and manifest the 'corporeal self' in its distinct parameters closer to the 'real' – *rustic* body, *missing* body etc. At the same time these constitute highly heterogeneous overlapping categories, where their features blend into new sets of id/entities. Through the architectonics of this nexus – city-units and bodily-

selves – I will embark on rendering in words, integrating in theory (and beyond theory), the concept of Indian urban space and experiences of it, both from an outsider’s and an insider’s perspective. Through the symphony of the metropolis, I check the symphony of ‘being’ *in* and *beyond* the existing theory.

1. The City in Theory

I. *Some Perspectives*

In today’s world, the urban sites become points of focus in the analysis of emerging types of communities, policies and economic networks, which involve dialectical relations concerning the ‘local’ and the ‘global’, the individual and the community etc. Urbanity refers to the quality of being urbane, that is, polite and courteous, in a smooth, polished way and a highly cultivated individual.² This description brings to mind the absence of the other side, the opposite – crudeness, unpolished manners, unrefined character and *rusti(c)-city*. The urban space implies more control, though apparently invisible, more intricacies both inside and outside the individual who hovers in a space of uncertainties fed by capitalist ideologies.

Capitalism has produced, in the philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) view, “abstract space, which includes the ‘world of commodities’, its ‘logic’ and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state” (53). He defines space as “social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure”; it’s a space “apparently ‘neutral’, ‘objective’, fixed,... or indifferent, implies more than the convenient establishment of an inoperative system of knowledge, more than an error that can be avoided by evoking the ‘environment’, ecology, nature and anti-nature, culture”; there is a “whole set of errors” that can make us forget that there is “a total subject which acts continually to maintain and reproduce its own conditions of existence, namely the state” (Lefebvre 1991: 93-94). Lefebvre puts an emphasis on the importance of space over time and views the capitalist “false consciousness” – called by Antonio Gramsci “cultural hegemony” – as the false consciousness of space and not of time. Through this prism, he makes an interesting distinction between three types of spaces, according to the historical transformation of space: “absolute space” – the natural space populated by political/ administrative forces, rites and ceremonies that survived as the basis of historical space and representational spaces (religious and political symbolisms), “abstract space” – the space of bourgeoisie and capitalism, and “differential space” – dominated by “users”, the space of minorities and marginal, with some degree of pluralism and characterized by non-labour. The ‘absolute space’ is characteristic of the pre-modern city; the ‘abstract space’ characterizes the modern city, while the ‘differential space’ describes the post-modern informational city (Grönlund 1997). The social space, essential to the understanding of social actions and subjects “who suffer and who act”, has in Lefebvre’s optics three dimensions: *spatial practice* – perceived space; *representations of space* – conceived space; *representational spaces* – lived space (“*l’espace perçu, conçu, vécu*”). For Lefebvre (1991), the body plays an important role in the understanding of the social space triad:

Representations of the body derive from accumulated scientific knowledge, disseminated with an admixture of ideology: from knowledge of anatomy, physiology, of sickness and its cure, and of the body's relations with nature and its surroundings or 'milieu'. Bodily *lived* experience, the 'heart' as *lived*, is strangely different from the heart as *thought* and *perceived* (40).

The 'perceived-conceived-lived' triad loses all force if it is dealt with as an abstract 'model'. There is the 'logical necessity' that "the lived, conceived and perceived realms should be interconnected, so that the 'subject', the individual member of a given social group, may move from one to another with no confusion" (Lefebvre 40). The society of abstract space, as Lefebvre notes, comprises the visual elements, architectural, geometric ingredients and the *phallic* verticality, which is based on consensus, a sort of tacit agreement of non-violence circulated via capitalist ideology concerned with "the 'silence' of the 'users'" of this space; the "visual space of transparency and readability" has a content that is designated to conceal "the phallic realm of (supposed) virility".³ These 'traits' of the social space attach to the 'pure' mental form of space, in the capitalist era and the post-modern city the distinction between the two becoming almost undistinguishable. In this sense, Lefebvre argued that "middle class is the new 'subject' of everyday life but is not autonomous from the rule of capital. It may dissent, but only on 'issues,' not on the mode of life. The middle classes in their complexity are not prepared to revolt since, taken as a whole, it perceives itself to be within, and not against, the system" (Aronowitz, 2007: 153).

In Indian culture the 'citizens' *have* possibilities to make judgments and "dissent on issues", yet these remain largely unexploited, perhaps due to indifference, ignorance or inertia in their everyday life. The everyday is characterised by monotony, repetitive actions inscribed onto a 'rational' or linear axis, and obsessions and fears as part of a cyclical movement dominant in nature. The 'surface of everyday' is modernity; everydayness and modernity "constitute a deep structure" (Lefebvre and Levich 1978: 7-11).⁴ On the other hand, in Michel de Certeau's theory (1984) of everyday practices and lived space, the city is mapped by the pedestrians' countless steps, each of them characterized by "a style of tactile apprehension and kinaesthetic appropriation..... Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces" and "weave places together." (97) He views the act of walking as a speech act, thus characterized by "the present, the discrete, the *phatic*", plus styles, uses of language and modalities, as "walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects etc. the trajectories it 'speaks'" (De Certeau 1984: 97-99). These ideas concerning urbanity and urban space in the 20th century will be helpful to some degree for understanding the Indian metropolis. As none of them can explain fully the situation of the urban sites in the so-called, developing countries, it is important to bring other perspectives into play.

II. *Another City – Another Outlook*

The Indian city must be understood from other points of view. Weber (1921) for instance, noted that in the past, "the cities of India were royal seats or official centres of royal administration as well as fortresses and market places" and the caste system "with its ritualistic segregation of the professions excluded the emergence of citizenry" (159). This

state of things has slightly changed after the Independence (1947), though almost seven decades later the Indian 'citizen' is still an abstract model, imagined by the State as the 'ideal citizen' that does not match the actual people of India.

In such a milieu, I conceive of contemporary Indian metropolis (possibly like other cities in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America), as a 'construction' at various levels. The first level, developing on a syntagmatic axis, incorporates the *modern city*, the *rustic city*⁵ and the *exclusivist city* – the posh residential areas built at the fringes or within the metropolis, forming a sort of 'enclave' catering to the needs of the rich to escape the urban chaos. The second level, the paradigmatic axis, is constituted of the 'imaginary city' and the 'faux city'. At the point of intersection between the two axes I identify the locus of 'missing city' that relatively draws its sap from both planes. The syntagmatic axis refers to a diachronic evolution of the cities as concrete, physical existence in a chain of simultaneous 'structures'. The paradigmatic axis refers to a vertical sequence of city 'structures' that may replace in our *mental representation* or our *life experience* other units from the syntagmatic axis. The 'structures' of the paradigmatic level comprise abstract features and the combination of these two dimensions give us a sense of the cities we inhabit. This level can be seen as a vertical line of power and ideological forces influencing the 'cities'. The vertical axis is thus 'more' conceptual and the horizontal axis is 'more' concrete. For a better understanding of the metropolis, these two dimensions add up to a third one – represented by Lefebvre's triad of space, whose features actually appear in the other two axis of the city. The *real city* might be located within the segment of overlap between *all* these. The 'real' mainly refers to the sense of 'not imagined', concrete, though the notion of 'real' (city) is complex enough to demand more attention. Nevertheless, one could see the 'missing city' as the *Real city*, in the sense of Lacanian Real, and the 'missing body' as the *Real bodily-self*. Certainly, the concepts and categories I look at cannot be exhaustive or only black and white; they overlap in many ways and feature high complexities.

The 'missing city' is not the imaginary city, nor a 'lost' city. The imaginary city, by virtue of being an 'imagined entity', exists as a mental representation. In one aspect, the *missing city* consists of all those objects, corners, areas, houses, that is to say, physical bodies, and people, which we never know, or experience, in any way. These are absent from our 'lives', or if they exist at a subliminal level via common knowledge, they border on ignorance or total neglect. For each of us there is an 'omitted' side of the city we inhabit, both in Western societies and in countries like India. I see it as a more intricate phenomenon in India, where the caste system and social mores have given a stronger existence to the 'missing' city due to the difficulty of moving from the space of the low caste towards the higher caste spaces, and the reverse. The 'missing city', which exists in its physicality often in our close neighbourhood, is the un-experienced or 'unseen' city, though it is a unit that evolves at the same pace with us and the world – it may be a space of utter poverty (i.e. a 'slum' areas), or an 'untouchable centres' (i.e. red light) etc. It is something like a 'matrix' of which we are ignorant but which is part of our existence. I would go further and say that in India the 'supreme inhabitants' of this missing city are the homeless, the disabled, the 'untouchables', the ones whom most people do not 'see', though other people may also reside in this space. This space is not homogeneous, but rather highly heterogeneous in nature. I emphasize here that the 'missing city' has both abstract and concrete dimensions, being an entity whose tentacles

are spread throughout the metropolitan structure. Thus the *missing* city can be found within the other types of 'cities' constituting the metropolis. It exists as long as it remains outside the limited content of our consciousness, outside our experience and 'sight', or if it has the slightest mental representation, then it is *ignored*. The moment it is experienced, manifested and *integrated* in the 'palpable' urban and *personal* spaces, it disappears from the realm of 'missing' city.

The '*rustic* city' exists basically as that 'formation' which, though it is an integral component of the body of metropolis, has also its own rules, many of them 'unwritten', and practices that, once submitted to the inspection of the state's laws, would be probably passed as illegal. It is constituted by the areas and the quarters of the poor – those considered "residual categories" for most of the historians, and the lower middle class, who make up the majority in the Indian society (Kumar 1991). It is mainly a very congested space of the masses that produce and support what Ashis Nandy calls "low-brow" culture. The '*rustic* city' resembles Lefebvre's *absolute* space in the sense that it sticks to the rites, ceremonies, superstitions and nature. It is a secondary political space that functions in subordination to the first political space or state power, while simultaneously having a logic of its own. This city shares some features with Lefebvre's *differential* space too – although the two spaces, *absolute* and *differential*, correspond to two different stages of historical evolution. The '*rustic* city' is characterized by a tendency towards minimum (organised) labour or, in Lefebvre's notion – "non-labour" and it is a place with a high density of squatter communities, newcomers from village areas or smaller towns.⁶ This is also the place where those categorized by Indian society as 'untouchable' or outcast and low-caste 'feel' more 'at home' – a common trait of the *missing* and *rustic* cities. This type of dense urban space, with its 'population', is more tangible, yet not entirely so, if we consider the large sphere of connotations, ideas and discourses that it puts in motion. At a more political level, this is the space where clan formation and conservatism have stronger currency. Thus, the '*rustic* city' is more a material entity – it is more visible. The *missing* city has both physical and abstract dimensions, so its physical components can be encountered in the *rustic* city too.

The *modern* city within Indian metropolis is configured of the proper inner-city and suburban areas. It is the space where multiplexes emerge, shopping malls flourish, around which the exclusivist city with its luxury quarters of high middle class and rich citizens are built. Simultaneously the '*modern* city' and Lefebvre's '*abstract* space' combine into a quasi-dialectical association, where the two are homogeneous at one stage and heterogeneous at another. The modern city forms the space where postcolonial discourses, dialogues between public/ private or modern/ traditional are performed, circulated and questioned. I would note that the *exclusivist* and the *modern* cities are the main loci where the modern 'walking body' and its 'double' – (publicised) *ersatz* body, are located. The 'walking body' is 'real' in as much as it is alive and moving; it is a quasi-referent for 'human body' while the '*ersatz* body' turns out to be a reflection, a made up, false image of human body (chiefly the '*modern* body'). The Indian 'citizen' becomes a micro-entity in which the tussle between modernity and tradition is reflected and marked up on the human self and body that acts as the membrane through which the two forces are diffused – the probability of their equilibrium being near 0. I locate the identity crisis precisely in this disequilibrium. These forces become visible in issues regarding dress codes, symbols painted or adorning the body, behavioural patterns and

body language ‘allowed’ in public spaces etc. Each type of these cities co-existing within the Indian metropolis is experienced differently by individuals. Thus, the metropolis is a ‘living’ and ‘lived’ entity constituted concurrently by many *missing cities* and *missing bodies*, many *modern cities* and *modern bodies*, many *rustic cities* and *rustic bodies*, *faux cities* and *false bodies*, all of them in a continuous process of achieving completeness.

2. The Walking Body

The contemporary human body functions differently according to spaces and contexts: the human body inhabiting the *rustic city* is subject to a more ritualistic agency, manifest through superstitions, auspicious ‘decorations’ of the body, a certain construction of identity based on community ties and a common ideology. Therefore, in line with the above outlook of the Indian city, I now bring under examination: the *modern body*, the *imaginary body*, *rustic body*, the *ersatz (false) body* and the *missing body* that includes the homeless body, the ‘laboured’ body, the differently-abled body, overall, the ‘marginalized’ and outcast body. The walking body residing in the modern city becomes the object of transformation marked by *new* types of *ritualistic* practice such as exhibitionism and consumerism.

In the city, the walking “bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it” (De Certeau 1984: 92-93). Walking in the streets – the meaningless network of lines and curves that discreetly imprints our existence everyday through the consequential encounter of space and time – is an experience characterised by contradictory feelings, ambiguity and abstractness; it is an act of paradoxical alienation of an individual in the middle of the crowd, an act of grasping desperately the ‘reality’ when one falls into an existential crisis, a reality that can be apparently *felt* by ‘clinging’ with all one’s senses to any visuals, sounds or moving people around the city. Thus the ‘walker’ thinks that s/he is real, because all that s/he senses is real. The *modern city* becomes, all at once, the poison and the cure for the struggling individual, a space of freedom and a prison enclosed by invisible walls for ‘single units’ (individuals) and masses alike. Interestingly, Meyerson notes that “as an abstraction, ‘the city’ has no conscience. As a collection of persons ... the city is composed of many consciences” (1970: ix). These ‘consciences’ form distinct social groups whose boundaries are more or less mobile and each group is “itself the product and the expression of a social structure and of its laws of transformation” (Castells 1997: 223).

Further, the social structure contributes to the trans/formation of one’s identity. An individual’s *Identity* is at one level a creation that is linguistically based on the multiplicity of ‘impressions’ the others around that individual extract/ construct, then circulate in/ through language in the ‘lived’ space. I conceive this to imply the existence of a multiplicity of ‘external’ identities (in the others’ discourses) that may or may not match the multiplicity of ‘internal’ identities of an individual, and an evolution of these types of identities in parallel, in each economic and cultural environment. The post-modern era, with its claims of ‘newness’ circulated on a *carousel* basis creates, as Langman (2003) notes, “fantastic identities available at a price”: “Identities as self-referential cultural narratives and integral moments of self are articulated in the routine presentations and performances that embodied subjects enact in the quotidian, but so

certain submerged identities are also realized in various liminal sites”, in the anti-structures of “resistance, inversion and repudiation where social norms can be safely flaunted” (223-246). Langman develops the notion of the body in relation to ritual, identity, culture with a focus on carnival, sports and extreme body modifications, which she views as “body rituals that provide otherwise forbidden pleasures celebrating distinctly different expressions of identity”; for her “such ludic identities stand apart from the quotidian since they celebrate fantastic escapes in encapsulated ‘dream worlds’, or they openly reject modernity by simulating a return to pre-modern life” (224-247). Thus, in contemporary society the body becomes a mere ‘representation’ of the human body, an ‘object’ marked by symbols of anxiety, idiosyncrasies, class or social groups. If certain festivals enable, albeit temporarily, a display of behavior otherwise considered outside the social norms, as Langman showed, then the individuals must discover other means of expression of their inner conflicts, desires and frustrations for the rest of time. The ‘open live museum’ of metropolis momentarily assuages these conflicts, through the activation of the individual’s ‘oblivion’ and his/her enchantment with illusory realities. As De Cetreau remarked, the acts of walking, wandering or ‘window-shopping’ are “transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line on the map... These fixations constitute procedures for forgetting” (1984: 97). In the ever-changing city-scapes, window-shopping triggers people’s desire for new distractions. The individual needs to immerse oneself into the river of images flowing around, in order to find one’s existential definition and to recover the ‘assurance’ that s/he is ‘real’.

The entire city ‘spectacle’ turns into an addiction meant to cover up the ‘Real’ and to nurture an illusion of reality – of the city and of the self. The spectacle itself converts into “a social relation among people mediated by images”; for Debord (1999), this *society of spectacle* is “the heart of unrealism of the real society” and “the opposite of dialogue”, the “material reconstruction of the religious illusion”, the “technical realization of the exile of human powers into a beyond; it is separation perfected within the interior of man” (95-97). The *modern city* facilitates both cultural displays and relationships between personal identities and ‘property’, where the individual’s economic power, the things/ goods one buys and possesses define a certain status, personality and areas of social influence.

Most of the accounts on body that theorists have formulated to date focus on middle class, modern bodies. But what about the homeless, the disabled, the ‘laboured’ people, those residents of rustic *cities* and *missing cities* of the metropolis? In this sense, Watson (2000) reviewed some issues on the women and the homeless bodies, noting that “homeless women’s bodies represent a challenge to the feminine body, the mother or wife located in the home” and “by her presence [the homeless woman] becomes a reminder to all women of what they might become if they step out of line”. Also, “by bringing her bed and body into the street, she is... starkly disrupting the public/ private boundary” (68). Researchers such as Zufferey and Kerr (2004) and others argue that “people who have experienced homelessness have diverse and shifting identities”, but such diversities are “invisible to service providers and community members. The experience of homelessness is not homogenous, because the stories of individual lives offer a multiplicity of interrelated, contradictory and changing meanings” (351).

In Indian culture, the body politics is inscribed in a specific paradigm, where apart from discourses of class, other discourses concerning manifold ethnic communities,

languages and the caste system, map the urban space in particular modes. The National Sample Survey Organization's data sadly prove that "caste is alive and well *today*, a half-century after its official abolition" (Deshpande 2003). The lower caste and outcast people are alive, living among us, yet they are *invisible* because they live in a 'space' which for many of us does not have a mental representation/ experience. Such low caste, outcast and disabled bodies belong mostly to the *missing* body realm, a space that is, paradoxically, both concrete and 'non-existent', a space within, yet outside culture, caught in a network of struggles for survival. In the case of those differently-abled, "not only are their bodies altered, but their ways of thinking about themselves and about the external world have become profoundly transformed" (Murphy 2009:130-131). In such instances, the social eye condemns disability as traumatizing, and the easiest way to deal with traumas is mostly to ignore them, to render them somehow 'invisible' to the everyday life.

In Indian society men clearly have a 'better position' than women, even if their disability is the same. Anita Ghai (2009) affirms that in India "notwithstanding some small steps toward inclusion, the lives of disabled people remain mired in inhumane patterns of helpless cynicism, political inertia and resistance to social innovation", such people having "to contend with cultural constructions marked by negativity and stigmatization" (411-431). Society associates to their image, the images of evil, of suffering for their past misdeeds, "the images of dependency thereby reinforcing the charity/ pity model"; thus any charitable gestures are not due to any "commitment to the issue of disability but as a response to a cultural expectation to do one's *dharmik* (religious) duty toward the needy" (413-414). Ghai reminds us the myth of the beautiful body defining the impaired female body as unacceptable, rooted in mythology: when the Shurpanakha, sister of King Ravana shows interest in Lakshmana, he cuts off her nose – "that Lakshmana can only respond to what he considers unacceptable behavior by disabling the 'ugly female' indicates how disability and de-sexing are equated in the Indian psyche" (419). Such inquiries into the subject of disability/ untouchability support the idea that the possibilities of dealing with these issues are ignored. The more seeing such people in the streets becomes a matter of habit, the more 'un-disturbing' and 'invisible' they become. Like the homeless and even the differently-gendered, they are 'assigned' a conceptual (and physical) space where they cause neither much disturbance, nor many identity upheavals in the 'normal' (possessing all physical abilities) segment of Indian population. This assignment of 'their space' is as tacit and insidious as the assignment of the women's space during the nationalist movement. Thus the *missing body* in Indian culture is an entity as abstract and concrete as the *missing city* it inhabits.

3. The Body and Its Visual Double

The body has been a point of focus in Indian culture since ancient times: it's been represented in sculptures, paintings, bazaar calendars, later in films, advertisement photos and other visual media, and brought under disciplinary control by philosophical (*Tantra*, *Yoga*, *Bhagavad-Gita* etc.) and socio-political discourses alike. The female body has usually 'enjoyed' the central place in these debates.⁷ Apart from the myths of Sitā and Pārvatī that subscribe to the "*Theology of Subordination of the feminine*", *Śākta Tantras* offer another perspective on women, where some ideas "challenge the very nature of

phallogocentric discourse” promoting women’s autonomy (Khanna 2002: 35-59). Later, the female body came to be assimilated into the image of Indian geographical space, as a nationalist icon in popular culture. Ramaswamy’s analysis of the cartographic representation of India in the 20th century reveals that the “bodyscapes” of Bharat Mata (a hegemonic figure) and Tamilttay (Tamil nationalist icon), “erupt within the interstices of a nationalist discourse where the erotic, the patriotic and the cartographic converge in imagining the nation as an entity worth living, and dying, for” (2007: 49). Such representations belong to an ideological paradigm that projects the image of a homogeneous, complete Hindu nation, consequently overlooking other ethnic communities. Thus, the ‘marginal’ body, the low caste and ‘untouchable’ people belong to *nowhere*. Paradoxically this ‘nowhere’ is right within the cultural/ national borders, but outside the dominant classes’ interest and vision span.

In relation to the Indian body depictions, both Christopher Pinney and Tapati Guha-Thakurta note that “image is a field over which contentions over cultural memories and values take place”, while one can speak of a “corporetics” that refers to embodied corporeal aesthetics “through which images can be understood as “compressed performances” that bring the viewer and the viewed into dynamic social relationships” (Sinha 2007: 187-220). This dynamics of social relationship between viewer and viewed is constantly reinstated by the famous Indian cinema industry. The Indian films have often created a contrast between the female and male characters, women and their bodies falling in two categories: one to be exploited, one to be respected, while men are either the exploiter or the courteous characters. The environment in which these filmic personages are set defines their *diegetic* social status and contributes to the subliminal prescription of how social spheres and people ‘may’ be perceived.

The *faux city* is created and foregrounded in India, via advertisement, films and other visual media, in images and icons circulated as *The City*. Surely, between the *false* city and the existing (lived/ living) city there is a relation of analogy, but the *false* city often goes beyond the simple representation of the city in order to trigger, through *ideological make-up*, the dimension of ‘perfection’. The *faux city* appears as the ‘city’s *Ideal Ego*’, a standard that has to be achieved through ‘collective’ striving. This high standard of cities is in fact extremely exclusivist in nature, targeting the middle and high classes, who are encouraged to have higher aspirations for comfort. This becomes a circuit where the market managers craft certain ad images of the city and individuals, then project them as the ‘real’ city and ‘citizens’, thus conditioning through subliminal messages the modern individuals of the *modern city* to engage in a ‘chase’ for those ideals. New desires are stimulated via exciting offers of both products and the financial means to acquire them. In this sense, Adorno and Horkheimer view culture in the capitalist era as “a paradoxical commodity” and advertising as “its elixir of life”; in culture industry the individuality does nothing else than to reinforce ideology (1995: 120-167). The consumerist system creates the illusion of a character’s uniqueness, in order to provide him/ her with exactly what s/he needs, cultivating in people “false needs”. Any advertisement plays with the factors of emotion, difference, value and symbols, organized as cultural displays. These displays, in Dicks’ opinion (2003), weave together symbols of tradition and modernity into a homogeneous textile of a new order, a new modernity: cultural display celebrates tradition and identity through their production as “displays – aimed at mobile, (post)modern, gazing consumers. For world-inhabitants who are gazed

upon,... the geographical fixity of being 'local', especially in places of economic decline..., is painfully underlined by the proliferation of sites displaying a spectacular 'elsewhere' (39-40). The body itself becomes a board of display, where traces of belonging to a certain culture, community, affiliation to a certain social group, combine with symbols of the consumer market to create a new identity and body, but also a certain pattern of looking at the body. Within the tourism plan, the body is de-contextualized from its environment to become temporarily a part of a foreign spatial and cultural context, where it is subjected to different 'scopic regimes' and new discourses. Dicks (2003) illustrates that "being a woman traveller in virtually every culture carries the added potential of sexual harassment" and "images of a country's 'attractions' may be styled around stereotypes about the sexual availability of its women, particularly through myths of exoticism in the East" (51-52).

I would like to stress that 'mysterious women' are sold by their own countries (tourism managers) as *images with an exotic aura*, meant to improve the tourism business. While advertising its 'marvels', each country turns itself 'exotic' in the eyes of the 'other' in order to have a stronger appeal to foreigners; this becomes an ideology that gets so embedded in the foreigners' unconscious that it cannot separate itself from the real 'image' of that particular country, unless an actual experience occurs. For instance, Indian tourism publicizes an "Incredible India" abundant in traditional arts, dances of beautiful seductive women and exotic flawless landscapes. Indian 'culture industry' indulges in foregrounding itself as the 'exotic and spiritual world of wonders' as long as it brings financial benefits. I highlight here that Eastern women are represented as 'exotic' for the Western men the same way as the Western women are 'exotic' in Eastern men's imagination (which may be considered 'fallacies of frustrated minds'). The main difference is that the Asian male mind allots to all white women, a complete set of negative images and signifiers, due to ignorance and uncritical absorption of ideas picked up mainly from American cinema. Like Indian commercial cinema, Hollywood films are meant for entertainment, the relation between actual life and cinematic representation being arbitrary and not entirely faithful to reality. If in any Bollywood film the character of the belly-dancer or 'loose' woman is indispensable for the entertaining effect, one cannot say that the mentioned character is predominant in India's *lived space*, though such persons do exist. Similarly, Hollywood films employ such characters, but they are not turned, like in Hindi commercial films, into a 'spectacle', an object confined to a 'marginal' space by the social gaze; rather they get integrated into the democratic 'whole' of the nation. Western cinema does not *fear* to represent within the same female body all aspects of female nature: the woman as virtuous mother, but also the woman as lover, seducer, friend, partner and so on. This cannot happen in Hindi film, where the heroine generally embodies 'virtues' and the other female animating the 'spectacle' stands for the 'non-virtues' of the Indian society and its lower strata: the bar dancer/ 'loose' woman persona symbolizing the 'negative' features of women, is in 'real' life mainly the *missing body* of the *missing city* – which nonetheless, is tacitly 'known' and 'desired' by the males of the society.⁸ The film "Born into Brothels" (2004) by Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman powerfully explored one such environment. Through photography and moving images, it rendered visible some angles of the exploitation that generations of Kolkata red-light women and their daughters have endured, the violence, disease, as well as their

ignorance about any means of changing their conditions of living, on the one hand, and their resistance to change on the other.

But the advertisement industry with its biased tendency negates any possibilities of such characters' representation. In ads, except those sponsored by NGOs and other institutions meant to draw awareness to social issues, the woman stands for an exemplary look and attitude. Both men and women in glamour industries belong to the *modern* and *exclusivist* spaces of the society, even when they portray lower middle class characters. In such framework, Srivatsan (2000) describes "caste as something that inheres in the process of imaging", "an architecture of visibility", or "a primary condition of visibility, a condition that is itself invisible", where the type of the advertising woman had important functions in the discourses of "modernization, the forging of a cultural consensus and a redefinition of family space" (Srivatsan 93-97). The stereotype of the advertising 'model', be it woman or man, doesn't accommodate traits of the oppressed categories. Low caste women have been generally considered "an unpleasant counterpoint to the beauty and seamliness of the world depicted" in the ads (Srivatsan 103). The advertised woman (*ersatz* body) has developed in parallel to the advertised new home in the *faux city*, but what were "designated as the wife and the real home by the [ad images] were clearly untrammelled universalizations of upper-caste desires" (Srivatsan 101-103). If in the sixties, as Srivatsan observed, the advertisement "privileges a femininity that is dependent and domesticated", providing "an aesthetic foundation for a hegemony of upper-caste masculinity" (100-103), the contemporary advertising female appears as an independent, educated and responsible woman.

In their analysis of the male body in advertisement, Schroeder and Zwick (2004) argued that "advertising imagery constitutes ubiquitous and influential bodily representations in public space, incorporating exercises of power, surveillance normativity within the consumer spectacle" (21-52). I would note that the advertised bodies are *re-productions* of the body and its features through a certain (audio) visual *language* to the point where the advertised body and the human body are not really the same. In the process of re-production, the body functions as an 'immediate constituent' in the whole syntactical structure of the advertisement. This occurs as a spiral circuit of vertical inter-production, where the human body constructs the advertised body which in turn influences and 'produces' the human body and so forth – like a *mirrored mirror image*. Thus, the (human) body and the advertised body function as two different discourses developing analogously in two distinct spaces.

The individual's desire for an athletic and well-shaped body gets constant nourishment from the advertised male body. Interestingly, the Indian man in ads is premised on different landmarks than the male in Hindi films. If the *modern* body appearing in ads as the *ersatz body* generally appears handsome, with a well-built body and elegant postures, overall Indian cinema still centers on the male heroes that have an 'average' look. Kesavan (2008) underlined that in Hindi cinema "it is a rule ... that the heroine will be both good-looking and sexy but the hero will be neither" (15). In his explanation, the "Indian heroes look the way they do because those desperate male audiences pay money to watch men like themselves succeed with beautiful women", while Hindi cinema – "unfairly dismissed as escapism is, in fact, a great reality machine designed to remind Indian men of their good fortune and to reconcile Indian women to their fate" (Kesavan 17). However, I would say that Hindi films combine escapist and

reality elements in a skilful make-believe world. Though the *missing* body is not part of the advertisement sphere (unless related to any NGO work), there are cases where these types appear in films, mainly as supporters of the leading characters: *i.e.* Ramesh Sippy's *Shaan* (1980) presents a person named Abdul who moves around Mumbai in a wheel chair, becoming the eyes of the main hero and the knowledge keeper; other films like Rabindra Dharmaraj's *Chakra* (1981) and Sudhir Mishra's *Dharavi* (1991) depict slum dwellers and their life.

In *conclusion*, advertising works on the principle of 'naturalization,' where certain ideologies, prescriptive about body politics and power relations – in other words about 'how things should be' – are translated into the language of *normality*. The constant atomization of the body alongside the emergence of uncountable products designed for each atom and cell of the human body (and mind!) leads to an *actual* shattering of our bodies/ minds, manifested at manifold levels: identity crisis, neurosis, distrust in one's abilities (to succeed), deviational behaviour etc. As shown, the (Indian) metropolis incorporates many forms of cities, each of these varieties being inhabited by an analogous type of body. The concept of urban space varies according to diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical bases involved in the analysis. However, it is difficult to have a complete perspective on the body politics in India unless approached from all possible angles. Considering its limitations, this paper introduced a new approach to and some views on metropolis and human body in relation to a variety of social contexts and visual culture. Further research is necessary for a better understanding of the role, functions and effects the human body has within and on the society in which 'it' lives, as well as in relation to the flood of signs surrounding people, especially in the context of Non-Western countries.

¹ Throughout the paper I use the terms 'false', 'faux' and 'ersatz' interchangeably mainly while referring to the bodily self, and 'false/ faux' in relation to the city.

² The definition is given for the words 'urbanity'/ 'urbane' in *Webster's New World Dictionary (CD)*, 1995.

³ Henri Lefebvre, "Plan of the Present Work", 49-52; "Social Space", 141-147; "From Absolute Space to Abstract Space", 261-262 and 282-288. For Lefebvre, the 'vertical' skyscrapers and office towers represent the metaphoric embodiment of masculinity, bureaucracy and political power. These 'phallic' forms occupy the abstract space where the representation of a thing takes the place of the thing itself (e.g. the image of the phallus replaces masculinity).

⁴ The two are interrelated: everydayness implies repetitiveness, stereotype gestures, behaviors, while modernity covers this monotony with its new art, events and spectacular displays, thus inter-constituting each other.

⁵ I use the term 'rustic' with no pejorative connotations.

⁶ The term 'non-labour' refers to the state in which some people – such as Lefebvre's 'users' of the differential space – do not work under the industrial system of production; they perform sporadically some 'work' that does not fit into the capitalist *organized* mode of working, but resembles more a pre-industrial state.

⁷ See Ceciu, "The *Architectonics* of Corporeal and Textual Selves: From Durga via Banalata Sen to the *Virtual Indian Woman*", on visual representations of women in relation to society, literature, modernity etc.

⁸ This would be something like Sonagachi, the red-light district of Kolkata, whose location many people pretend to not really know, and which circulates like a 'myth' surrounded by both attraction and repulsion; this area contains thousands of minor and adult women, from India, Nepal and Bangladesh, that have been forced into prostitution.

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