'Assembling the Field':

Literary Journalism about marginalised subjects by Indian writers

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Maitrayee Basu

Supervised by Dr. James Graham

Middlesex University

The Department of Media, Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries

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<u>Acknowledgments</u>

The thesis was my story for the last five years. It took me close to accepting that my writing will never be perfect. That I will never find the most perfect story to tell.

The thesis takes a lot of pounding. It is being constantly written and re-written. It bears the weight of my expectations and imperfections. It is the story I tell of myself to others.

To imagine a world in which I don't have it is unthinkable. It's a world without a map.
Without my thesis what else will I use to orient myself?

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Abstract

The increasing economic and cultural influence of an English speaking, inquisitive, middle class has been a spur to a growth in non-fiction writing in India (Jack, I. in an interview, 2015). The new *Granta* India issue, edited by Jack and celebrating this trend, carries longform or narrative journalism works written by journalists like Aman Sethi, Samanth Subramaniam, Katherine Boo. Gupta (2009: 163) and Brouillette (2007: 37) both contribute a diversification of new genres in India to be an effect of the globalisation of the publishing industry. In spite of the pervasiveness of this form of writing in India in recent times, it is still quite a new genre; and the field of production it involves is therefore still in the process of being solidified.

One of the processes involved in the concretization or solidification of the field is the struggle to define the dominating *illusio*, or the underpinning ideology, in the field. This thesis explores this struggle using conceptual tools from Bourdieusian field theory in the context of literary journalism writing about marginalised subjects. It draws on various contemporary works, article-length, book-length, photojournalistic, etc. from online and print platforms thus representing the heterogeneity of the genre in India. In this thesis, therefore, I pose the question of how the authority to represent the marginalised is assembled by these journalist-writers in a field where relations of power are still quite fluid and not yet concretized. More specifically, it questions which institutions or ideologies these writers look to align themselves with or against in their self-positioning and struggles of legitimacy.

This thesis examines the reflexivity the writers exhibit textually and discursively through their engagement with political and social issues, and other sociotechnical elements of the public space, such as social media. By doing so my thesis describes how these writers negotiate the neoliberal expectations of their middle class audience and their own *illusio,* which consists of a feeling of responsibility to represent the voices of the subaltern to transnational audiences. Three case studies are used to illustrate and critically engage with some of these issues: Sonia Faleiro's *Beautiful Thing*, Aman Sethi's *A Free Man,* and a longitudinal study of the Twitter posts and conversations of three writers - Sonia Faleiro, Shivam Vij and Neha Dixit*.* For each of these case studies I look at some of the linguistic, narrative and discursive strategies the writers use to position themselves firstly, on social media platforms like blogs or Twitter, secondly, within the narrative and around the discussions regarding their book or other literary journalistic writing, and lastly, in their engagement with global and local public issues and politics.

Chapter 1

Introduction

So what I wish from this book is that people will see a certain kind of person differently. Because seeing is the first step towards understanding.

- Sonia Faleiro, author of *Beautiful Thing,* in an interview in *The Hindu*, 24th Nov, 2010.

This thesis enquires into the emergence of a particular form of narrative non-fiction from India in the transnational media and literary circuits since 2010, that I refer to as 'literary journalism'. The title of the thesis, *Assembling the Field: Literary journalism about marginalised subjects by Indian writers*, encapsulates the overall approach taken to discuss literary journalism in India; in this dissertation I attempt to analyse the various ways in which legitimacy and authority are assembled by actors who are involved in the production and circulation of literary journalism from India. In this thesis I focus on non-fiction writings that are positioned in the media as narratives about the marginalised; some of them refer to poor people, those without homes, domestic workers, sex workers, transgender *hijras*, slum-dwellers. The citation from Faleiro above, illustrates my interest in unpacking some of the claims made in discourses surrounding these narratives that are generally intended for a transnational middlebrow audience.

This thesis employs an interdisciplinary approach which combines the strengths of different theoretical standpoints to build a methodological toolkit to conduct the analysis. The Bourdieusian lenses of power and legitimacy derived from his field theory, which I will elaborate on in a later chapter, are useful in chalking out the various relationalities between the different actors I discuss in this work. I limit my discussion in this thesis to published books and articles by those actors who are known within the transnational public spaces as Indian writers of English-language works. So although later in this chapter I quote Katherine Boo, an American literary journalist who has written a book about Mumbai slum-dwellers, to highlight the relationship between literary journalism about the marginalised and democracy, I focus my analysis exclusively upon narratives by and the construction of authorial figures of Indian writers. This choice was mainly because of the fact that the narratives and authors that I discuss in this thesis have not been represented in scholarly works. It was also my intention to explore how such actors' claims to represent the Indian marginalised subjects might differ, based on their identity as Indian writers, from that of

writers like Boo. As the struggle to accumulate legitimacy and symbolic power was central to the formulation of my research question, my choice to study these actors – whose habitus as writers not of Euro-American origins would normally render them as relative outsiders within the global field of cultural production – was natural.[1]

It is important to point out here that my use of *actors* in this thesis (rather than Bourdieusian *agents*) is deliberately made to signify the shifting nature of roles and relations within this milieu in which certain forms of power are yet to be concretised. Although concepts from Bourdieusian media sociology, like *capital, consecration* and *field* have been used to aid the analysis in this thesis, the weak and sometimes tenuous links between people and institutions described here is reminiscent of Latourian *network* of *actors* in the process of concretising certain connections while disrupting others that might have existed before. This is the manner in which I have methodologically dealt with adapting the framework of field theory to study an emerging set of relations involved in a contemporary form of literary production; however it is important to emphasise at the outset that this thesis does not employ a systematic Latourian analytical framework in its analysis. More details of these concepts and the ways in which they can be useful in understanding the relationalities in the field of literary journalism in India have been elaborated on in chapter 5.

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[1] Willig, Walthorp and Moller Hartley (2015: 3) define field thus: "(a) social space comes to work as a field when the institutions and characters that enter it are a part of and feel its stakes, values, and debates, when one cannot succeed in it without a minimum level of practical or reflexive knowledge of its internal rules and logics."

Habitus can be defined as a "...system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment or as classificatory principles as well as being the organizing principles of action." (Bourdieu, 1990 *In Other Words:* 12-13).

In 'The Forms of Capital' (1986), Bourdieu describes three types of capital. "Depending on the field in which it functions, and at the cost of the more or less expensive transformations which are the precondition for its efficacy in the field in question, capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the forms of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the forms of a title of nobility."

More importantly to the purposes of this thesis, in the essay by Bourdieu mentioned above he also discusses the significant labour that goes in converting cultural and social capital into economic capital. "The different types of capital can be derived from *economic capital*, but only at the cost of a more or less great effort of transformation, which is needed to produce the type of power effective in the field in question. For example, there are some goods and services to which economic capital gives immediate access, without secondary costs; others can be obtained only by virtue of a social capital of relationships (or social obligations) which cannot act instantaneously, at the appropriate moment, unless they have been established and maintained for a long time, *as if for their own sake*, and therefore outside their period of use, i.e., at the cost of an investment in sociability which is necessarily long-term because the time lag is one of the factors of the transmutation of a pure and simple debt into that recognition of nonspecific indebtedness which is called gratitude." (italics added for emphasis, ibid.)

The concept of "symbolic power" on the other hand stands outside Bourdieu's work on field theory; this lesser known concept in his work is useful in conceiving of the wider social space outside and around fields. Nick Couldry, whose work on meta-capital is fundamental to this thesis, and is discussed in greater depth in chapter 5, sums it up thus: some concentrations of symbolic power are so great that they dominate the whole social landscape; as a result, they seem so natural that they are misrecognised, and their underlying arbitrariness becomes difficult to see. In this way, symbolic power moves from being a merely local power (the power to construct this statement, or make this work of art) to being a general power. (Couldry, 2003: 4).

This chapter is divided into three main parts: the first section reviews the existing scholarship in the field of literary journalism studies and contextualises this dissertation within it. The second part consists of a discussion of the treatment of marginalised subjects within mainstream media platforms in India; furthermore this section introduces literary journalism's position within this ecology as a form of writing that claims to aid democracy by expanding representations of marginalised individuals and groups within narratives that comprise public discourses. The third part provides an extended overview of the approaches, methods and chapters in this dissertation.

A New Form of Writing in India: 2010 onwards

First Proof: The Penguin Book of New Writing from India is an anthology series published by Penguin Books India; the first volume was released in 2005, and was followed by annual editions until the seventh volume published in 2012. According to their description on the relevant Amazon product pages, these volumes were intended to introduce readers to "new writing and new writers, and established writers writing in a new genre". Although the Amazon pages detail that the books include "works in progress, essays, short stories, and a graphic short", it does not suggest clearly to the potential reader that the collection is mainly divided into the categories of 'fiction' and 'non-fiction'. In fact the reader can open and read the books from either the non-fiction or the fiction end, i.e., there is no textual design indication as to which side is the front or back of the book. Sonia Faleiro and Naresh Fernandes are two authors who have contributed to these volumes, and whom I will mention in relation to literary journalistic writings in India later in my thesis. This volume makes an excellent starting point in the exploration of the field of contemporary writing from India and the middlebrow literary and media networks that it consists of. Penguin is, of course, a central figure in global middlebrow literary consciousness - a recent Penguin Random House scheme in the United Kingdom, for instance, introduced sought to provide a year-long mentorship and publishing opportunities to "new writers from communities currently under-represented on the UK's bookshelves" (June 2017, Penguin Random House UK website). Each anthology contributes to the introduction of literary journalistic (as well as other new non-fiction styles in India) works by Indian authors for a transnational middlebrow audience.

Released in Winter 2015, *Granta*: 130 is a special edition focusing on new writing from India. *Granta* is a prestigious English literary magazine that was started in Cambridge in 1889 and was revived in the 1970s. This special issue is the second *Granta* issue devoted to India, the first one being in 1997 celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence. Reviewed in the in the London *Independent*, the collection's "non-fiction … really stands out", compared to its fictional entries, concluding:

Perhaps all this, together with the calibre of other non-fiction coming out of India, suggests that the golden age of reportage and essay writing from India is upon us.

Reviewer Arifa Akbar is alone in identifying the proliferation of literary non-fiction writing from India in recent years. Nilanjana Roy used an opinion piece in *Business Standard* (6 April 2011) to report on the narrative non-fiction and travel writer William Dalrymple. Dalrymple reported being excited at "what seemed to be a new trend — the slow shift towards non-fiction replacing our somewhat obsessive focus on Booker-winning novels and other fiction."

From around 2010 there seemed to be a growth in the number of publications that dedicated themselves to bringing non-fiction written by Indian writers to an Indian cosmopolitan audience. For example, *The Caravan: A Journal of Politics and Culture,* that takes pride in being "India's first long-form narrative journalism magazine" while filling "a niche in the Indian media market that has remained vacant for far too long" ('About us' section on the website). *Fountain Ink*, another "longform narrative (monthly) magazine" was started in 2011 to "give readers the opportunity to experience in-depth reportage on topics ranging from politics to culture, giving them stories that go far beyond normal news reports or op-eds". The niche that these magazines aim to cater to is described by *Caravan* ('About us' section in their website) as "one for the intellectually curious and aesthetically refined reader, who demands style and substance, and seeks reportage that is rich, nuanced, and fiercely independent." Ian Jack (31 Jan 2015) in an interview following the publication of *Granta 130: India* draws an even more direct link between the new "fashionable literary forms" and the rise in prosperity of the middle classes in India compared to "16- 17 years ago".

One of these literary forms that Jack refers to as "fashionable" and that has gained popularity in recent years is non-fiction writing by journalists who use narrative styles similar to fiction to engage their audiences. Discussing this form in contrast to a more conventional non-fiction style, a book review discussing Rohini Mohan's *The Seasons of Trouble: Life Amid the Ruins of Sri Lanka's Civil War* says (Sinha A., *Livemint* Dec 20, 2014):

Two books that are reportage from the Sri Lankan civil war were published this year… Unlike Subramanian's book (*The Divided Island*), which has to be detached in its reportage in order to take

in the big picture, Mohan's book (*The Seasons of Trouble)* necessarily requires a fictive pace and immersion. She does it effortlessly so that the stories she tells, and the stories within them, contain cliff-hangers, twists and resolutions…Rohini Mohan's book digs so deep that it touches your heart— and unsettles it.

In a published email exchange with Aman Sethi, whose authorial figure and works I analyse in chapter 3, Indian novelist Pankaj Mishra (18 May, 2015) lauds the new "mode of enquiry" that these literary journalistic works deploy. In the quote below he highlights the fact that the humanistic and immersive nature of these works differentiate them from the kinds of non-fiction narratives that came before:

the best recent books on contemporary Indian - *The Beautiful and the Damned, A Free Man, Beautiful Thing, Churning the Earth, Curfewed Night* - are those that undermine conventional perceptions and propose another mode of enquiry - they have a more complex idea of human beings, and there is no question that this is the most exciting turn in Indian non-fiction writing in English.

The books he mentions are written by Siddhartha Deb, Aman Sethi, Sonia Faleiro, Aseem Srivastava and Ashish Kothari, and Basharat Peer, respective. They have all been published in or after 2010 and, as evident from the reviewers and commentators that I have quoted so far, celebrated as a new turn within contemporary Indian writing.[2]

Therefore, there is an awareness within the networks of reception for these works that they are distinctive due to their ability to engage audiences emotionally. This review also points towards a tendency within the public spaces where these narratives circulate that this emotional engagement is morally good, democratising, and carries a potential for change in the lives of the reported marginalised. In Chapter 4 of this thesis, 'Intimate Publics and the Author in the Digital Space', I draw upon Lauren Berlant's theory of intimate publics (2008) to critique

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[2] This is not to suggest, of course, that before 2010 there were no comparable forms of non-fiction writing, either in book-length formats or investigative journalism and longform essays; an example given in this thesis is the Penguin series which started publishing in 2005. Other examples can be found in magazines like *Outlook, Frontline,* and *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (which stopped publishing in 1993). Similarly in non-fiction essays by Arundhati Roy particularly one can find evidence of a similar non-fiction style from India. However, the focus in this thesis on post-2010 versions of this form of writing is justified due to the attention the authors of these latter texts have managed to garner in transnational readership circuits quite early in their career. Stylistically, the former works are a clear precedent of the latter ones, but Faleiro and Sethi, along with other authors mentioned in this thesis, in their involvement with the global middlebrow cultural industry, have found new ways to stay relevant as actors in the mediated public spaces.

this tendency. Furthermore, in my concluding chapter I draw upon Carolyn Pedwell's (2014) critique of empathy within mainstream cultural narratives, assessing the potential of this empathetic engagement to herald long-term social and political changes.[3]

Although the case studies I have chosen in this thesis focus on the figural authorships of Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi, both of whom have written and gained recognition for book-length literary journalism, the middlebrow networks that dominate the production and reception of the social meanings around these narratives feature journalists, activists, other writers, editors, media producers, and other intermediaries. Some of these actors are writers who are interested in experimenting with forms of representing voices and people from the margins, as well as keen on engaging transnational publics on digital platforms such as blogs, Instagram and Twitter. I discuss the agency of two such intermediary actors – Shivam Vij and Neha Dixit – within this field of hybrid production in Chapter 4. Shivam Vij, whom I will talk about in more detail in this later chapter, has also authored an extremely popular 6500-word article, entitled 'The Maruti Way' for *Fountain Ink* magazine (5th September 2012), mentioned above. He later wrote an op-ed piece in an online magazine *Scroll.in*. (9th December 2014) on the opportunities provided by the internet to publish and promote pieces like 'The Maruti Way'. In it he declares:

> While the magazine's circulation was miniscule, the story went viral on the internet. Two years later, it remains the most read story on their website. It has been read nearly 2.7 lakh times, several times the circulation of *Fountain Ink*'s print edition...Some stories did appear later about the workers' narrative, and *Outlook* magazine did a cover. But 6,500 words? Go write your novel, most editors would say. A labourer whining about bad work conditions in a factory? The reader is not interested. A month after the Maruti story is out of the pages? Let's wait for the news peg to return, please.

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[3] It is important to note here that on account of the linguistic, along with socio-economic, divide between the writers who write in English and the marginalised subjects, the latter are usually not able to read the works that are written about them. Rashmi Sadana (2012:14) notes that English is spoken fluently by only 5 percent of the population in India, which means that these writings have limited, if numerically significant, circulation within India. To publish within India in English, therefore, has implications due to the status of English as a modern, urban prestige language; it also makes the texts more readily available for circulation to a transnational English-speaking audience. Due to the constraints in the scope of this thesis I do not cover the discourse around language politics in India. But Sadana's (2012: 4) observation regarding the inequalities arising from these issues is pertinent to bring up here, when discussing writing about marginalised subjects: "...this disjuncture is indicative of a larger schism in Indian society that has to do not only with language as it is spoken but with disparate thought-worlds and hierarchies of language that saturate everyday life". Writing in English about marginalised subjects, therefore, means that not only have the writers had to translate their subjects' speeches, but also their lived realities, perspectives and decision-making for their readers. As Kothari (2003: 1) puts it in her book *Translating India* : "If...culture is the silent language that members of a specific ethnic, racial or cultural group understand, entering cultures involves translating this language along with its grammar, syntax and metaphors". She further adds that "the Indian 'middle-class' inhabits a bilingual space of language and worldview"; this act of translating the life-worlds of marginalised subjects from their own nation thus gives this urban, cosmopolitan public a way to maintain a connection with their 'local' identities.

Yet, the online success of my long piece had proved all such conventional thinking wrong. The story was being shared wildly on Twitter, Facebook and other places on the internet. Many of those who shared it were owners of Maruti cars. Some said they wouldn't buy a Maruti car again. In other words, even the rich reader was interested. On a website of Indian automotive fans, called Team BHP, the thread discussing my article was endless.

Although Vij here does not refer to his writing as literary journalism, my thesis has categorised works like 'The Maruti Way' as such. This is because Vij's article, as well as other longform articles I discuss in later chapters, combine their claim to accuracy and factuality with the use of a narrative style aimed at engaging readers emotionally. An interesting characteristic that identifies this piece as literary journalistic for the purposes of this thesis is the fact that Vij cites his motivation to throw light on a Maruti worker's life as the impetus for writing his longform article. Another interesting factor to note here is that Vij is interested in the effect of his article on the owners of Maruti cars and other "rich readers". Both these factors are discussed at length in what follows as key features of the middlebrow network that defines the modality of the writings that I have termed as literary journalism. My contention is, therefore, that articles like 'The Maruti Way' cited above form part of the discursive network of middlebrow literary writing that has a transnational reach.

Later in this chapter I discuss why I prefer to use the term 'literary journalism' to refer to the non-fiction form that is being hailed as a new trend in Indian writing. However my interest in this form, and the discourse around it, stems from its utilisation by journalists to generate interest and empathy for subjects who are marginalized in mainstream media coverage. My choice of studying Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi as case studies later in the thesis stems from the fact that their relative prominence and higher prestige, each being promoted within this network as a writer of books, reveals important characteristics of the way in which power and legitimacy operates within these fields.

Main Approaches and Terminologies

In addition to Bourdieusian media sociology, there are a few other major approaches that this thesis draws on to inform the analysis in the following chapters. Arguably the most traditional way in which the questions in this thesis about legitimation of works by Indian authors within a global literary field can be looked at is to assess these formations of authorial agency through the politics of postcolonial authorship. Due to the prominence of biographical information about the authors whom I discuss in this thesis,

particularly details about their connections to the Indian nation-state, in discourses surrounding their works, frameworks provided by postcolonial literary studies were key to understanding the ways in which authority operates within the "global literary marketplace". The term "global literary marketplace" is from Sarah Brouillette's 2005 book, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace*, which has been a useful starting point in thinking about the ways in which Bourdieusian field theory intersects with postcolonial authorship. Brouillette analyses individual authors' careers to discuss ways in which they accept or reject their positionality as postcolonial authors in the global field. This work, in contrast to many other studies about postcolonial literatures (e.g. Huggan, 2001), provides a framework within which it is possible to discuss the processes that contribute to the construction of individual postcolonial author figures within the restrictions that the existing logics of the field impose on them.

Brouillette's more recent work, specifically the chapter she co-authored with Christopher Doody in 2015, titled 'The literary as a cultural industry', cites Bourdieu's treatise on cultural production. It also alludes to a more recent work by Simone Murray, whose research pertains to literary production in the digital era. In the first part of this chapter Brouillette and Doody argue that "(i)n the adaptation economy 'literary' experiences are not limited to a single platform, printed physical books, a single format, a book (even e-books), or a single audience, readers". Murray (2012) argues that contemporary cultural industries are characterised by 1) the adaptation of stories to multiple media formats, and 2) an ambiguous role for the author within this complex set of relations of production. This framework allowed my thesis to embrace the life of the nonfiction book outside the printed page, and indeed of the form of the book itself. Instead, in this thesis, books are merely considered as a part of the discursive universe that constitutes the construction of the author figure, along with the actors' digital presence, author interviews, book reviews by other actors, etc.

Also central to the methodological framework are concepts from Driscoll (2014) on the 'literary middlebrow', especially from her study of the digital platform, Twitter. The primary contribution to my thesis of this theoretical approach, which is based upon Bourdieu's concepts of distinction in cultural production is that it is useful in conceptualising the emotional – specifically, the sentimental – aspects of discursive engagement with literary journalism. Driscoll claims that the "central goal of middlebrow reading is emotional engagement" (32), and that "(t)he emotional reading of the middlebrow covers a range of engagements: sentimentality, intense affective immersion, empathy, a sense of shared intimacy and therapy" (35). Furthermore, Berlant (1999) helps to extend this idea of the role of sentimentality within the mediatised "political public sphere" (49), by connecting the narratives about postcolonial marginalised subjects within

this public space to narratives that consolidate the nation and the citizens that are privileged to belong to it and receive protection from it. This is helpful in thinking about the role of these works of literary journalism about marginalised subjects. It throws light on the power structures implicit in the ways in which literary journalism is legitimised, both from the perspective of a marketplace, and as narratives that provide a discursive basis for certain public spaces. It is important to clarify here my use of 'public space' in this dissertation, as well as what I mean when referring to as transnational public space. An article on the internet as a virtual public sphere defines this term rather neatly:

> ...a new public space is not synonymous with a new public sphere. As public space, the internet provides yet another forum for political deliberation. As public sphere, the internet could facilitate discussion that promotes a democratic exchange of ideas and opinions. A virtual space enhances discussion; a virtual sphere enhances democracy. (Papacharissi, 2002: 11)

It is my contention in this thesis that these narratives do more than just utilise these old structures and relationships within these new public spaces. Following Papacharissi's discussion of affective publics on social media and political change (2015: 32), I would echo the claim that "it is these stories, collaboratively networked together through platforms like Twitter, that form structures of feeling. And it is these soft structures of feeling that may potentially sustain and mediate the feelings of democracy." Authors of these narratives, the literary journalists in this case, are key figures around which these structures of affective politics are formed. These authorial figures are often referred to as 'literary', and their works aspire to embody universal values which is a trait characteristic of literary works as opposed to journalistic ones. Yet they are not seen as disaffected or distant personalities; rather their role within this network of affect is to be relatable to the audience as well as to provide an anchor of emotional authenticity in the discourse surrounding these popular narratives. The role that these narratives play within this public space augmented with digital technology is that of bringing together people from different geographic and cultural backgrounds who have formed an emotional connection to the issues these stories highlight. In the following chapters, when referring to readership or audiences, I have in mind the people who occupy this transnational public space; my contention is that despite the differences in class, ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds, by virtue of participating in this middlebrow cultural network characterised by affect these individuals share certain commonalities in taste and lifestyle. They may or may not belong to

the vague socio-category of the "middle classes"[4], but this audience is "assumed to be able to afford furniture clothes, reading material and other amenities, and each is assumed to have leisure time in which to enjoy them" (Scott, A.O., 1st Aug, 2014). As Papacharrissi concludes, "The virtual sphere reflects the dynamics of new social movements that struggle on a cultural, rather than a traditionally political terrain. It is a vision, but not yet a reality." (2002: 23)

Literary Journalism: a review of existing scholarship

The development of 'literary journalism' in India has followed a different pattern to that in the Anglophone world. Introduced in this chapter as a new form of non-fiction writing for India, that I refer to as 'literary journalism' in this thesis, it has not been genrified in India to the extent to which it has gained a uniform name or features that characterise it. While some authors of this form, like Aman Sethi, are happy to just characterise it as "non-fiction", and not delve into distinguishing it any further from other forms of factual writing (Unrecorded interview with me, May 2015), in this section I discuss the inter-disciplinary and international scholarship that has emerged in the last couple of decades around literary and journalistic forms that share some characteristics of these texts. Roggenkamp (2005: xv) notes that disciplinary boundaries within academia prevented the "study of newspapers as literary" and states that within literary studies, only the journalistic writings of literature's canonical writers, like Mark Twain, received scholarly treatment . She goes on to argue for the relevance of studying narrative styles in journalistic works from the late nineteenth-century, when newspapers were beginning to be deemed as an essential platform to represent and understand a society that was changing at a very rapid pace. To tackle the challenges of communicating such massive political and cultural shifts, "reporters manufactured … something that looked a lot like fiction, read like fiction but that was ultimately they argued better than fiction because it was after all 'real'" (xvi).

Roggenkamp's argument regarding the incapacity of modernist disciplinary boundaries to study narrative styles of reporting, like "new journalism", is echoed by numerous scholars of such styles. Many such scholars have in recent years come together to form the *International Association of Literary Journalism Studies* (IALJS), holding annual conferences, and both publishing quarterly newsletters and the journal *Lit-*

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[4] In this thesis I have refrained from using the category middle-class as the exact definition of this term would differ between different nations. Moreover, as this thesis does not claim to conduct audience research, I felt that the use of middlebrow literature or culture was more appropriate as it signifies taste as well as modality of cultural production, without making general claims about the socio-economic conditions of the audience members.

erary Journalism Studies. The Association, founded in 2006, defines 'literary journalism' or 'literary reportage' as "journalism that is literature"; its journal aspires to cover "theory, history and pedagogy of literary journalism throughout the world" from all scholarly disciplines ('About us' section on website, www.ialjs.com). This attempt to bring together a cross-disciplinary community of scholars to study narrative reporting seems to address the epistemic limitation that Roggenkamp raises. As a former association member, I have used its scholarly approaches – and the theoretical underpinnings of the scholarship by members – to orientate my own understanding of the term 'literary journalism', its affordances and shortcomings. However, the approach taken in this thesis also addresses and fills some of the gaps within this scholarship.

One of the most widespread trends within the papers published in *Literary Journalism Studies*, as well as in other studies about literary journalism more widely, is to conduct comparative analyses of the differing traditions, styles and practices of literary journalism in two countries. An example from an early volume of the journal is a 2009 paper by Beate Josephi and Christine Muller titled *Differently Drawn Boundaries of the Permissible in German and Australian Literary Journalism.* In this paper the authors claim that the "German notion of what can be written about in literary reportage is relatively narrower than in Australia and more broadly in the Anglosphere" (75). An overwhelming majority of such studies analyse a non-Anglophone country in comparison and contrast with an Anglophone one, mainly the United States or United Kingdom. Some studies like Hartsock (2009) compare the North American tradition of literary journalism with that arising from the United Kingdom. There are two main problems with taking such an approach. Firstly, it sets North American literary journalism writing, which has been heavily theorised and formalised within the academy, as a standard against which to organise and understand the writings of narrative reportage or non-fiction by journalists outside the Euro-American centre. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly for the arguments in my thesis, this approach does not allow for the potential that such writing has in subverting the understanding of the public space as being homologous to the space where the democratic discourses within the nation-state take place. In this thesis, therefore, I diverge from the understanding of Indian literary journalism as being bounded within a tradition of uniquely Indian stylistic and methodological tradition. In fact, as this introductory chapter will later touch upon, the definitive quality of the literary journalistic works I am focusing on here is distinctively cosmopolitan, and influenced heavily by literary and journalistic imaginaries from various other global cosmopolitan centres.

Whilst still acknowledging the importance of studying the North American tradition of literary journalism, a handful of other scholars (and practitioners of such journalism) have diverged from this in their work. Joseph (2015), also published in the journal *Literary Journalism Studies,* is a great exception. She argues that "the determination to find a label (for various forms of book-length and long-form journalism) has its genesis within the academy" (102). Likewise, my thesis too makes no attempt to fix the works under discrete labels to fit what Joseph refers to as "Northern Hemisphere specificities for the genre", especially given that none of the authors whose works I studied refer to themselves as 'literary journalists'. Rather my use of the term 'literary journalist' in this thesis is as an acknowledgement of my own theoretical orientation, as well as to align this thesis to a certain relevant body of scholarship. I use the term 'literary journalism' as opposed to 'longform' and 'new journalism' – both of which have some purchase amongst the writers and scholars who produce this work – for the same reason that Mary Clare Fischer (2013) gives in *American Journalism Review*, namely that despite 'new journalism' being "longform with a literary twist", and this term being appropriate for most longform writing, longform has "evolved since the days of Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote and to give it the label 'new journalism' would be misleading".

So, despite the usage of a specific term 'literary journalism', this thesis aims to move away from modernist classifications of authors and their work, and focuses instead on analysing the role of the journalist as an author-figure within the current cultural industries. However, within the IALJS, there are many scholars who are interested in studying such works from a genre studies perspective. An example of this is an article by William Roberts and Fiona Giles (2014) in *Literary Journalism Studies* that provides a framework to map non-fiction narratives based on the degree of subjectivity versus objectivity in the stories. Such theoretical approaches tend to focus on the technical devices within the writing, such as the multimodality of literary journalistic works. There are also works focusing on the technology that contemporary narrative non-fiction forms depend upon, as well as the socio-technical ecology surrounding it. A recent article written by Cornelia Wolf and Alexander Godulla (2016) surveys the potentials of digital longform in journalism. Their study takes into account mobile devices with internet capabilities and online modes of payment. Theoretical works originating from very diverse fields of scholarship have informed the methodological approach of this thesis.

Within the current body of scholarship on literary journalism, perhaps the topic that this thesis has the most affinity with is an exploration of the relationship between the form and the creation of empathy with the marginalised 'Other'. Cecilia Aare's (2016) narratological study of how journalists can use voice and point

of view to create empathy with the Other is a good example of this approach. Likewise, Holly Schreiber's conference paper at the tenth annual IALJS meeting in Minneapolis in 2015 also examined Katherine Boo's book-length narrative non-fiction *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* to discuss the potential of literary journalism to make poverty and associated problems accessible to a cosmopolitan elite audience, particularly to those situated in Western metropoles. These articles provide a solid foundation for the analysis in this thesis focusing on literary journalism works which report on the lives and experiences of the Indian marginalised Others for a transnational cosmopolitan audience.

Literary Journalism, Writing about the Marginalised, and Democracy

In conjunction with narratives about India's 'booming economy', as well as its rising importance in the global economic stage, there has been a growth in a global critical public discourse concerned with the country's media sector. The ins-and-outs of its workings, as well as the potentials and challenges that it faces, have been the focus of both scholarly as well as public scrutiny. An example of a scholarly research publication that does this is a study published by The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at The University of Oxford. Edited by James Painter, it comprises of contributions by working Indian journalists during their fellowship at the institute ("India's Media Boom: The Good News and the Bad", 2013, xi). Introducing the collection, Painter writes:

> The positive side of this media explosion has been a diverse, muscular, and largely free press, noisily holding power to account and exposing its faults and inadequacies…Along with the boundless energy of the media come several downsides, and particularly corruption, paid news, and a narrow editorial agenda aimed at the preferences and prejudices of India's largely and booming middle class.

These fellowships are examples of academic departments harnessing the knowledge and expertise of journalists based in India. However, they also represent an institutional legitimation of these agents and their voices at a global scale, which they can then leverage for their own purposes. Of note is the fact that a recurring theme in the most widespread complaints directed at Indian media ecology concerns the overwhelming attention it accords to urban middle class interests, thus leaving unfulfilled its role in the facilitation of a democratic public space that is inclusive of the lower and marginalised classes.

Discussions regarding the Indian media and its role in promoting and protecting the world's largest democracy have often been mediated through media platforms based in Western cosmopolitan centres, for example the UK-based news organisation, *The Guardian*. When discussing issues around reporting about Indian marginalised groups these articles have often focused on the latest trends in citizen journalism that have allowed members of these groups to report their own stories. An article published, for instance, in the 'Global Development' section of *The Guardian* "in New Delhi" informs the readers about the initiative Video Volunteers, set up by Jessica Mayberry (KumKum Dasgupta, 2013). This organisation raises funds to train members of marginalised communities in India in video reporting on stories that are important to them. The article contextualises the importance of this initiative thus: "Initiatives like VV are also important because, although 70% of the country's population lives in villages, the mainstream media is seldom interested in non-urban stories." The article also mentions two other similar initiatives – CGNet Swara and Gaon Connection. VV founder Mayberry also drew attention to her organisation in an article which appeared at the *The Huffington Post* blog in 2015 ("Will the marginalised ever get into the mainstream media?"). In it she declares "what news are you and I getting? Are we hearing what is happening in the lives of a majority of the citizens of India? Are we hearing at all, the stories from the most marginalized communities of the world?". To sum up, these articles illustrate a prominent narrative in the global public sphere about Indian media, i.e., a critique of its 'mainstream media' houses, led mainly by the charge that it neglects to tell stories reliably about the marginalised majority within the nation.

Within India, this trend is also prevalent, as alternative platforms, mainly digital, like *The Caravan,* publish articles by journalists critiquing the shortcomings of the mainstream media. Many such articles are written as longform pieces, as the format allows the writer to veer away firstly from the inverted pyramid structure of mainstream reporting, and secondly to tell complicated stories about subjects and circumstances that the audiences are not familiar with. For example, Samanth Subramanian's 2012 *Caravan* article, "Supreme Being: how Samir Jain created the modern Indian newspaper industry", narrates the history of the Indian print media industry since the 1990s and how it was shaped by the vice-president of the publisher of India's biggest English-language newspaper, *The Times of India*[5]. The article draws a picture of Jain as

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[5] Samir Jain is the current Vice-President of the biggest media group in India, Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., which owns the daily *Times of India.*

profit-oriented and intent on focusing on marketing news as much "as a cake of soap" rather than improving the quality of news-making. Long-form journalism, therefore, has emerged as a format that journalists who choose to critique mainstream media practices and institutions utilise to engage audiences. This is not just due to the greater length the format affords them; the narrative structure affords empathy. This is even truer for stories that point out the inequalities in reporting about the marginalised. One research article compares the ability of narrative and non-narrative forms to produce more compassion towards the individuals in a story, and finds that the former style of writing results in more empathetic engagement (Oliver et al., 2012).

The downside of writing longform articles about marginalised individuals is also however discussed by some practitioners. Luke Mogelson, a popular American longform and fiction writer, questions the ethical standpoints of being a journalist writing immersive literary non-fiction in an article published in the online literary magazine, *Literary Hub* ("The Dark Side Of Longform Journalism: Waiting for the bad to happen", 2016). He draws a distinction between investigative reporting which might influence policy changes and narrative longform reporting that has as its aim humanising individuals who appear in mainstream media as stereotypes and statistics. He says that when researching individuals' lives for longform journalism, the subjects invariably have an expectation that the finished piece will have the effect of bettering their lives in some way. Furthermore he muses:

> a truly candid disclaimer would require me to inform the subject that helping him is not even my objective to start with. Influencing policy is not my objective…an awful word that Western media folk sometimes use to describe my kind of journalism that's meant to be flattering but always makes me cringe precisely because it expresses so well this gap between audience and subject, and the conflict therein. The word is "humanizing." By my own standards, if my article has succeeded, if I've done what I set out to do, I have to some degree "humanized" a situation—a conflict, a crisis—for the reader. But of course the subject doesn't feel any more human for the experience; the subject, in most cases, doesn't even realize he's been made more human in the eyes of the subscribers to the *New Yorker* and the *New York Times Magazine*. (ibid.)

Similar sentiments have been expressed by Katherine Boo, a journalist and author of *Behind the Beautiful Forevers,* a work of reportage set in a Mumbai slum, in an interview with a *Guernica* correspondent (2012):

> Anyone with a conscience who does this work grapples with that reality, and if they don't, I'd worry. I lie awake at night, and I think, "Am I exploiting them? Am I a vulture?" All of the terrible names anyone could call me, I've called myself worse.

However, in the same interview Boo also justifies her work saying that the lack of avenues that the subjects she writes about have to tell their own stories means that the alternative to having her tell their stories is that they are never told, that is, they go down the "memory hole". She says:

> What it comes down to is, the only thing worse than being a poverty reporter is if no one ever wrote about it at all. My work, I hope, helps people understand how much gets lost between the intellection of how to get people out of poverty and how it's actually experienced. (ibid.)

Mogelson (2016) also believes similarly about the importance of not losing these stories, voices and perspectives. His solution is to write fiction informed by his experiences in the field to avoid "tacit contacts with real subjects" and any "ethical awkwardness" these may entail. His views echo the stream of practitioners and scholars who interrogate literary journalism from an ethical standpoint. In contrast, my thesis will focus specifically upon the importance placed upon representing the stories of marginalised subjects within public spheres, and what this suggests about the nature of these spaces and how the authority of literary journalists is constructed therein. I discuss these issues further in the following chapters, offering case studies of these narratives and the authorial discourses surrounding them that take place within these public spaces. Timothy Brennan's critical assessment of the structures and values behind 'cosmopolitanism' within cultural industries is derived from the field of postcolonial literary studies research. It might be useful as a starting point in linking these public narratives and discourses to ideas of enriching and extending democracy. These literary writings, and the actors involved in their production and circulation, can be said to be overwhelmingly cosmopolitan in nature.

> The cosmopolitans also model themselves on a nostalgia for "democracy" as a vision of pluralist inclusion, a diversity in unity, a global progress based on the Enlightenment. The vision is deeply and warmly humanistic, yet the people are "they" to the cosmopolitan "we" in the arena of literature. (Brennan, 1997: 38-39)

To conclude this introductory chapter it is worth drawing the reader's attention to the attractive ideal of a pluralistic and cosmopolitan unity of purpose and vision that these writings afford to those who are participants in its production. However, I also diverge from Brennan's critical view slightly by proposing that by virtue of participating in "elevating experiences" that surround the consumption and circulation of these works, the reader networks, or publics that can access these discourses, also feel included as well as instrumental in the workings of this "warmly humanistic" vision. I showcase later in this thesis (in Chapter 4) how the evolution of this genre has given rise to a digital coterie that comprise of a middle-class cosmopolitan public who are committed to ideas of social justice and democracy. To sum up, the centrality of authors of literary journalism in these transnational public discourses, and the field-theory based mechanisms that can be utilised to explain the processes resultant in their accumulation of cultural and political capital in order to legitimate this position, form the principle subject matter of the analyses in the chapters that follow.

Rashmi Sadana's 2012 book *English Heart, Hindi Heartland* throws some light on these issues in the contemporary Indian context. She illustrates the tension between the "cosmopolitan secular" discourse in India which has been "about the rights of minorities and the definition of minority groups" (57), and the fact that Indian English language writing that emerges from and shapes these discourses are now "seen as being less political and more of a multicultural literary phenomenon that almost comes from nowhere" (156).

In maintaining its focus on the construction of the author-figures in this thesis, I seek to address one of the issues that Jaffe (2015: 17) points out in attempting to understand literary celebrity and authorship:

> The critical problem at stake in the work of modernism in an age of celebrity is not detecting "influence" internalised as a hidden mechanism in the dual creation of literary artifacts

and authorial egos. Rather it involves noticing the ubiquitous and all too conscious material-ity of imprimaturs in scenes of reading and promotion.

Jaffe's work is only one amongst many influential contributions to the broader field of authorship studies from the lens of authorial celebrity or authors' public influence. Marlon Ross's chapter in *The Construc-tion of Authorship* (1994: 231), an edited collection that examines the social and legal processes that un-derpin our conceptualisation of the author in contemporary times, for example, examines the connection between authenticity and authority of authors in the public space. He claims that what differentiates an or-dinary writer from an author is the latter's ability to "transmute" and "transport" knowledge to a public space, thus "transversing" the distance between the self and the other. Such knowledge or experience is then rendered "knowable, shareable and answerable". In the analyses in the following chapters I explore some of the ways in which Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi are constructed as authors who are privy to knowledge about the lives of Indian marginalised subjects that their national and international readers are unaware of. They are also positioned within the mediated public spaces as being successful in bridging the gap between their subjects and themselves, and tasked with having an 'authentic' personality that their readers can relate to, interact with, and in some ways hold to account. A majority of existing studies about literary celebrity tend to focus on the figures of modernist authors like Shelley, London, (Glass, 2004) and Byron (Mole, 2007). This thesis, especially with its focus on micro-celebrity and middlebrow reading practices, showcases some of the characteristics of literary celebrity in the postmodern cultural sphere, and its purported significance to upholding the cosmopolitan values of plurality, social justice and democracy.

The scholarly discourse around authorship is of course not limited to questions of celebrity. Since the pub-lication of Roland Barthes' (1977: 143) essay 'The Death of the Author', published in 1967, which argued against the "powerful sway of the Author" in literary criticism, the role of the author has been under ques-tion in the field. Michel Foucault's essay response titled 'What is an Author?', published in 1969, delves further into the socio-technical means through which the author figure of printed texts is constructed since the eighteenth century. Sean Burke, in his 1992 book *The Death and Return of the Author,* however cri-tiques Barthes for "seeking to dethrone the author" for in doing so he "is led to an apotheosis of authorship that vastly outpaces anything to be found in critical history he takes arms against" (27). He hints at the kind of fluidity that postmodern digital spaces like Twitter affords to readers when he proclaims that: "Yet

might we not venture that the birth of the reader is not achieved at the cost of the death of the author, but rather at that of showing how the critic too became an author?"

Of course, research around Twitter and authority suggests that the gap between the reader and the author persists, even if trends in the rise of micro-celebrity have complicated the traditional relationship between the mainstream framing of celebrities by cultural industries and their influence on reading publics (Tufecki, 2013). These issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4; but here it is sufficient to raise the point that the construction and framing of these literary journalists in the dispersed public spaces can be characterised as middlebrow authorship. Anne Juggles Gere's book chapter (1994: 388) on nineteenth century women's clubs throws some light on similar reading practices in an era before the proliferation of public spaces mediated by social media:

> Rather than interacting with a text in isolation, club members shared responses, frequently inverting their own voices into the reading. They interrogated the texts, laughed at them, and felt free to disagree with them. Dominated by a combination of historical and philological approaches, the study of literature in schools and colleges allowed little room for affective responses and multiple interpretations.

This thesis, on the other hand, pays a significant amount of attention to questions of affect. As important as a study of "audience responses and multiple interpretations" is to the construction and circulation of authorial subjectivity in contemporary times, I find it useful to revert back to the self-conscious, albeit sometimes less than voluntary, enactment of authorial agency and self-positioning by contemporary Indian literary journalists. Perhaps this is because, as Streeter (1994: 325) suggests, "(t)he discourse of the corporate individual allows a simulation of the individual author-owner". Upon fixing on the author-figure as a stable point of analysis, I am definitely not reverting to conceptualising the Romantic ideal of the individual author genius. Rather it is because, as Glass (2004: 4) eloquently expresses it,

> The enormous scale and scope of the corporate culture industries in relation to any discrete individual makes it easy to conceive of the celebrity as the product of an impersonal system that responds to the needs of an equally vast and amorphous audience. Writers, on the other hand, have sustained an ethos of individual creative production

over and against the rise of these culture industries in which they nevertheless have had to participate. The individual authorial consciousness…stubbornly persists as something more than an empty structure, complicating the easy dismissal of the celebrity's subjectivity in so much recent celebrity theory.

This ethos that Glass refers to is probably the symbolic capital associated with literary journalists as authors within the public spaces. Their authority and legitimacy, when speaking about marginalised subjects, arises, at least partly, from their status as actors who seek fame not (just) for their own sake, but to draw public attention to social problems and injustices. Thus, similar to performing "authorial machismo" for modernist writers, writing about such subjects for a transnational audience, and the performance of empathy for the same, works "both as a marketing strategy and a way of configuring resistance to the market" (Glass, 2004: 18). The authors whom I discuss in the following chapters are journalists who have emerged, through a combination of self-positioning and media framing, as authoritative translators of the experiences of Indian marginalised subjects for a middle-class cosmopolitan audience.

Theoretical and Methods Toolbox: analysis of case studies

This thesis is structured in a way that leads the reader through the empirical analyses of the case studies and related literature before discussing the broader and theoretical and methodological questions that these explorations lead to or can be conceptualised using. This section, therefore, is aimed towards providing a short introduction to the theories and methods that underpin the narrative and discourse analysis in the next two chapters.

Authorship as Authority: Meta-capital's Toolbox

The two chapters following this introduction attempt to conceptualise the ways in which Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi have occupied various positions in the global cultural marketplace throughout their careers. When referring to the cultural marketplace, I am drawing upon Brouillette (2007) which provides a solid framework for a Bourdieusian field theory analysis of figural authorship and self-positioning of postcolonial authors even while they are incorporated within a "global literary marketplace". However, as the biographies of Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi rendered in the next two chapters will reveal, their position in cultural sphere cannot exclusively be attributed to the global literary marketplace. In fact, as discussions in chapters following will reveal, their influence spills into the politically charged public sphere as well. The questions

these chapters tackle, therefore, is how to identify the mechanisms and centres of consecration for an author in a postmodern, digital media age? More specifically, how do Faleiro and Sethi assemble the authority to speak *about* and perhaps also *for* the Indian marginalised?

Anthea Garman (2007) has pioneered the use of the concept of "meta-capital", first coined by theorist Nick Couldry (2003), to examine South African poet Antjie Krog's relationship to the media and her status as a 'public figure' authorised to speak for South Africans internationally. 'Meta-capital' following Garman (2007, 2014) and Couldry (2003), can be understood as a form of currency which has the power to influence what counts as capital in multiple fields, thus implying that it has a definitional power in relation to dominant ideologies in those fields. Garman's (2007) analysis shows how an actor with her roots in one field can be said to accumulate meta-capital and thus go on to influence other fields, as well as the larger social space as well. Media meta-capital, therefore, would theoretically have an influence over the entire social space, as the representations it produces have a "general circulation" (Couldry, 2003: 25).

The concept of meta-capital helps us understand the processes of consecration, via a theoretical framework that combines media theory and pertains to news values and framing. However, in the next two chapters, I am also interested in exploring the position of literary journalism in India, and the effect Faleiro's as well as Sethi's self-positioning as prominent authors practicing such writing on the dominant discourses has towards shaping it. In addition to the 'mainstream media', that Couldry and Garman concentrate on, such self-positioning or construction of authorship, especially in recent times, takes place in multiple sites or platforms, where actors operate in slightly different ways depending on the logic and limitations of the platform. The analysis in my thesis concentrates on three such sites: literary journalists and their activities on the social media platform, Twitter; their journalistic articles as well as books; and finally in the public engagements where they are invited to speak about social issues affecting public life. I have assumed the last site to also include literary festivals where some questions tend to focus on topics of general significance, i.e., outside the realm of books.

Such an investigative focus addresses two questions raised in the concluding paragraphs in Couldry's article. Firstly, since writers like Faleiro publicly identify as being 'Indian' even while residing abroad and write exclusively about the Indian marginalised in publications with a global reach, the analyses in the following chapters will examine "whether the key social fields of contestation are operating on other than a

national level" (Couldry, 2003: 32) and if so, how. Secondly, by examining sites which are not 'mainstream' in the style of television or daily newspapers (although which probably have more reach amongst the global elite), it also looks at the less centralised means of producing authorial meaning and the accumulation of media meta-capital. Finally, my analysis will highlight internal competition within the media field and the way this is carried out in less mainstream sites of meaning production.

Affect and Authority: Sentimental Reading (and Writing)

Although the investigation in the following case study analyses is influenced by Garman's (2014) understanding of the way a writer emerges as a media focus and then through points in their career enjoy consecration (which she takes to mean an almost ritualistic accordance of authority from agents and institutions of consecration to the consecrated), this thesis considers authority and consecration to also be influenced by affect. This is mostly because of the emphasis on "authenticity" and the necessary attempts to establish it that exists in the discourse surrounding literary journalism about the marginalised. In fact, based on the analysis in Chapters 2 and 3, it is my contention that for authorial constructions that involve digital media, and involve "less centralised means of media production and distribution" (Couldry, 2003: 32), sentimental engagement with the readership, or the solicitation of what Berlant (1999: 53) calls "affective identification and empathy" on behalf of the marginalised subjects, as well as its deployment in the sphere of "sentimental politics" are key in understanding how these writers gain 'consecration'.

Here I draw from Driscoll (2014), which uses the Bourdieusian theoretical model of cultural production to address the literary middlebrow. Since the work that writers like Faleiro produce is not merely critically acclaimed but is also seen to have gained popular acclaim (Faleiro in conversation with William Dalrymple, 1 Nov, 2010), these narratives about the marginalised can be said to be written for middlebrow consumption. However, the concepts Driscoll uses to elaborate her characterisation of the literary middlebrow reading habits are those found in Bourdieu's earlier works, like *Distinction*, and do not address the theoretical gap which Couldry (2003: 18) points out that field theory does not explain:

> …because many or most of those over whom hegemony is assumed to be exercised are not members of the fields in question; they may be professionals who belong to other fields or people who belong to no field at all.

Meta-capital, therefore, is a concept that can be used to explain how these kinds of readers, defined by their empathy and desire for affective identification, can become subjects over whom the struggles of competition for hegemony can be exercised.

In his 1986 essay on the forms of capital, Bourdieu discusses how specific forms of capital can be transmitted or converted.

> Because the question of the arbitrariness of appropriation arises most sharply in the process of transmission – particularly at the time of succession, a critical moment for all power – every reproduction strategy is at the same time a legitimation strategy aimed at consecrating both an exclusive appropriation and its reproduction.

As discussed in the last section, in this thesis I have conceived of meta-capital as being accumulated by actors in order to gain entry and influence fields outside their field of origin. It might be also useful to emphasise here that the ways in which symbolic power gained by authors in the public space has been conceptualised in this thesis follows the same logic and process of transmission as other forms of field-specific capital. Hence the focus of the analyses in the following chapters, particularly in chapter 4, is given to strategies for legitimating literary journalists as author-figures.

Narratorial Involvement and Subjectivity

Throughout their writing careers, Faleiro and Sethi have both written on and for a very diverse range of topics, platforms, publicatons, and formats, both while employed by media organisations and as freelancers. However, their success as writers who possesses sufficient symbolic capital to not just have their writing featured in prestigious global publications like *Granta* and *The New York Times,* but also be invited to speak about the marginalised in India, and about their experiences writing about them, in national and international literary festivals, is testimony to their having successfully carried over capital accumulated in the Indian journalistic field to the literary field. Therefore, it is important to conceptualise their article-length journalistic articles, their opinion articles, throughout their career, as well as their books, as contributing to their symbolic capital as an author.

Berning (2011) argues that since "reportage" is a genre that combines features of literary fiction and journalism, its "narrative potential" can be studied using narratological categories generally applicable to literary works. More importantly to my contentions in this chapter, this genre, as Berning sums up in the abstract to her book (ibid.), also "challenges the notion that journalism and literature have different communicative goals" in every case. Therefore, in the analyses in Chapters 2 and 3 I have utilised tools from narratological analysis (Fludernik, 2009) to conduct comparative studies of texts with characteristics ranging from hard news objective style reporting to narrative non-fiction. I have limited the scope of narratological analysis in this thesis; in what follows I only study the texts using concepts of focalisation, narratorial involvement and interpellative subject making.

Overview of the Chapters

In the chapters immediately following this introduction, chapters 2 and 3, I utilise the theoretical and methods outlined above to conduct a narrative and discourse analysis of these writings to understand the ways in which these are successful in evoking a sentimental reaction from its globally dispersed audiences. The subjects whose marginalisation and exclusion these literary journalistic writings seek to address are often not fluent enough in English to read and write in the language, whereas the writers themselves write exclusively in English. So when Sinha's review of Mohan's book (2014) mentions the affective nature of her writing ("Mohan's book...touches your heart - and unsettles it"), it can be assumed that, due to the language it is written in, a global audience can empathise with the subjects she writes about. In most such literary journalistic writings that are published, this global reach is not incidental but strategic: *Fountain Ink*, for example, on its 'About Us' page asserts that it "has published much-acclaimed pieces on issues of national and international interest". In Chapters 2 and 3 I utilise the methods toolkit outlined above to conduct a narrative and discourse analysis of these writings to understand the ways in which these are successful in evoking a sentimental reaction from its globally dispersed audiences. Moreover, in these chapters I also explore how the writers of these texts accumulate the cultural capital to write with authority about the Indian marginalised, as well as their strategic positioning within the contemporary global cultural marketplace. In so doing I highlight the role and mechanisms of affect, as it is discursively constructed, in the formation of a transnational public sphere.

In Chapter 4, I utilise a comparative case study on Twitter to explore the centrality of the author figure, and its discursive performance, in the construction of this transnational space comprising of networks of affect. The Indian literary journalist as an author of writings about marginalised subjects is a good starting point

to analyse the key elements that comprise this authorial performance within a transnational public space, and how it is successful in engaging culturally disparate and geographically dispersed audiences. Keeping in mind the audiences for the Indian and non-Indian publications where these English-language literary journalism appears, the publics these representations serve to inform and engage are cosmopolitan, urban and overwhelmingly middle class. They are also typically fragmented and dispersed across the globe. It is, therefore, transnational in nature. Also, a cardinal feature of these publics is that they are also digitally net-worked, and so these stories are mediated as well by other platforms, for example, social media platforms. Regarding journalism's relationship with social media platforms, one research paper states that the practi-tioners within the industry negotiate complex and conflicting set of changes to tell news stories: "the growth of a networked public sphere in India, the maintenance of existing divisions (linguistic, economic and social) in access to public discourse, and new relationships with time and space for the country's small but growing number of social media users" (Belair-Gagnon et.al, 2013: 14).

In this digitally networked scenario Sarah Brouillette and Christopher Doody (2015) have shown how the 'literary' is now a kind of cultural industry in its own right. Correspondingly I show how the works of In-dian journalists "in this environment can be seen as 'an engine' for the generation of conversation about an important but neglected topic" (Brouillette and Doody, 2015). Brouillette and Doody also add that "'liter-ary' in this context is often a shorthand for these elevating experiences which can be targeted not just at book readers but also TV viewers, internet users, filmgoers, etc." I hypothesise that these elevating experi-ences in the case of audiences who are engaging with these narratives about the marginalised arguably re-sult from the feeling that they are finally able to look beyond the stereotypes propagated by the structures that subjugate these marginalised individuals and groups and relate to them as fellow human-beings. In a sentiment echoed by many writers in this milieu, Aman Sethi, the author of *A Free Man,* responds to an in-terview question probing him about his motivations for writing about the life of the casual labourer or *maz-door* by saying that "It's a book that just tries to understand" (Interview with *NewsLaundry*, 10 Aug, 2012).

But to delve even deeper into the exact nature of the sentiments that are best defined as 'elevating' within the particular context of the writers and their authorial discourses I discuss in this thesis, Timothy Brennan's work on cosmopolitan writing provides an important critical counterpoint. For Brennan, "writing about the marginalised has a sort of moralism attached as it is seen to be constitutionally op-posed to capitalism and state power" (Brennan, 1997). Relatedly, Lauren Berlant – whose discussion of

sentimental politics has greatly influenced my thesis – proposes that these painful feelings in the public sphere that centralize "interpersonal identification and empathy…serve as proleptic shields, as ethically uncontestable legitimating devices for sustaining the hegemonic field" (1999: 54). More importantly still to the development of my arguments, she also claims that partaking in these discourses of suffering, injustices, pain and empathy "gives citizens something to do in response to overwhelming structural violence" (ibid.). Both Brennan and Berlant in these discussions link middlebrow writings about marginalised subjects to the ways in which citizenship and belonging are imagined, experienced and realised by middle-class transnational publics who are their intended audiences. Chapter 4 discusses this contention in more detail and aided by an empirical study of Twitter audiences and the role of literary journalistic narratives within this sphere.

Chapter 5, the penultimate chapter of this thesis, provides a summary discussion of the overarching theoretical frameworks that ground this thesis, namely how Bourdieusian concepts of field theory can be utilised and extended to conceptualise the rise in prominence of authors like Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi. The concepts discussed in this chapter are based on the analyses in chapters 2,3 and 4; the theoretical elements of this thesis, thus, are built up from the empirical work that precedes it. The structure of the thesis is meant to guide the reader through the key themes that emerged from a close reading of the case studies before delving into the theoretical frameworks that I have used to conceptualise the findings. The concluding chapter sums up the main takeaways as well as further ways to develop this study. I assert that the findings of this study are germane to some important areas of scholarship within media, literary and cultural studies disciplines.

Chapter 2

Sonia Faleiro: From Beautiful Beginnings to Complicated Stories

Some complicated stories should be written in a way that shows that the world is a tough

place that's hard to understand.

They are complicated, because they talk about things that most of us have no familiarity with.

That level of poverty and deprivation, the loneliness.

- Faleiro in an interview in *Columbia Journalism Review* (29th Apr, 2015).

Introduction

Sonia Faleiro is best known internationally as the author of *Beautiful Thing*, an award winning book-length work of narrative non-fiction about Mumbai's dance bars which has been translated into several Indian and non-Indian languages and has been published by major publishing houses in India (Penguin/Hamish Hamilton, 2010), the UK (Canongate, 2011), the US (Grove, 2012) and Australia (Black Inc., 2011). She has also become known in recent years as one of the founding members of the international longform journalism collective, Deca. She published an e-book single, *13-Men,* with Deca in 2015. Faleiro previously authored a novel, *The Girl,* published by Viking in 2006. Her website introduces her as an "award winning writer" and author of the aforementioned works. Moreover, Faleiro has also contributed fiction and non-fiction pieces to anthologies, which are also listed under the tab 'Books' on her website.

The title of this chapter is derived from both the title of her first work of non-fiction, *Beautiful Thing*, and from a quote from her in an interview (see above) about the kind of stories Deca publishes that followed the publication of *13-Men.* Faleiro is, however, also an award-winning journalist. This chapter therefore attempts to situate her as an author who straddles the literary and the journalistic fields in her work, as well as an actor whose influence transcends both these fields as she speaks out about experiences of being marginalised due to gender, caste, class and sexuality in India to a global audience via social media, events and related promotional discourses. A postcolonial writer currently living in the West – she relocated to San Francisco before the publication of *Beautiful Thing* and now resides in London – who writes exclusively about the Indian marginalised and commits herself to writing "complicated stories" to represent their experiences, she has accumulated a significant amount of symbolic capital throughout her career.

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Of her own career as a journalist in an interview following the release of her first book, *The Girl,* she says: "I've worked in several areas of journalism since I was in school. Documentary filmmaking, radio, Internet, and now print. My writing has appeared in *India Today*, *The Hindustan Times*, *The Indian Express* and now in *Tehelka*, where I'm writer-at-large." (Interview with Satarupa Roy, Oxford University Bookstore, undated). While working in *Tehelka*, in 2004, where she was initially a feature writer, she became interested in reporting about marginalised subjects. This change in focus in her writing, she says, was motivated by a phenomenal increase in farmer suicides in the rural area of Vidarbha, and her drive to get "a view from the inside" (Faleiro's talk at 5x15, Oct, 2011). She also wrote journalistic pieces about the urban poor and marginalised communities – "hijras, sex workers, pimps…rag pickers, domestic workers, kids who didn't have enough to eat. People whose lives (she) wanted the privileged minority to understand". After the publication of *Beautiful Thing* she continued writing about the Indian marginalised in *The New York Times*, *Granta, The Guardian, Foreign Policy, Guernica, The International Herald Tribune, Vogue UK*. These latter journalistic articles are listed under the tab "Writing" on her website.

The website seems to be an author's website, by which I mean that it focuses on Faleiro as a writer of books as opposed to a journalist with a portfolio of articles. The "About" section, as mentioned before, refers to her as such; the "News" tab is dominated by coverage of her two non-fiction books; the "Events" section lists her appearances in literary festivals and other author appearances around the world. Although her most recent journalistic works are present on the website, they seem to contribute to her credentials as a writer of non-fiction books (as well as a writer who specialises in marginalised subjects), rather than presenting her as a writer who is first and foremost a reporter. This is mirrored in her Twitter profile, where her bio reads "Wrote BEAUTIFUL THING (Sunday Times Travel Book of the Year) & co-founded @decastories. Latest: e-single 13 MEN" (as seen on 25th August, 2015). However, other sites where Faleiro appears as a cultural producer, her professional identity as a journalist is highlighted. For example, in various interviews about *Beautiful Thing* and *13-Men,* she is referred to as an "award winning journalist" (*The Hindu*, 24th November, 2010; *Reuters*, 25th November, 2010) and "journalist" (*NPR Books*, 22nd March, 2015; *Columbia Journalism Review*, 29th April, 2015).

This emphasis is probably related to the status of books and being a writer of books in the cultural sphere. In Bourdieu's model of literary production (1996), he postulates that journalism occupies the heteronomous extreme of writing as a cultural practice due to its greater dependence on economic forces, and writing of avant-garde novels as being the most autonomous. Although Faleiro's book, which is a work of reportage, probably exists between these poles, as a writer she has definitely gained far more symbolic

capital since the publication of *Beautiful Thing*. Her journalistic article-length works have travelled further, she has appeared in more interviews, her work has been discussed more in the form of book reviews and by renowned Indian authors, like Amitav Ghosh (who referred to Faleiro as an "excellent young (Indian) writer" in an interview with *Hindustan Times*, 8th June, 2015), been invited to speak at literary festivals internationally, as well as had her opinions solicited on current, often political, events. Moreover, she has also gained a wider platform to discuss the state of journalism and writing, especially about the marginalised. A quote by Faleiro from a recorded conversation (2015) with prominent professional journalists and editors, *New Journalism in India,* sums this up well:

> When I was working at a mainstream publication that prided itself on doing in-depth stories I was actively discouraged from doing them and the only way I could do an investigation that was meaningful to me and I think to other people was by writing a book and once I wrote my book I was able to write longform journalism independently.

In an interview which appears on the website of Oxford Bookstore (which was probably published first in 2006), Faleiro mentioned that she is now committed to covering "human interest stories" like the farmer suicides. Since then her writing has increasingly moved from feature writing about "books and art" towards specialising in stories about marginalised subjects in India. "By then", she says, referring to the point in her career in 2004 when she started covering stories about farmer suicides, "I was very clear about what I wanted to do with my writing career. I wanted to write about people who didn't have to look around them to understand that there was a significant unevenness in our economic and social development." (5x15, Oct, 2011). She has spoken extensively in interviews, literary festivals talks, and other media forums about her interest in covering these social issues, as well as the importance of focusing on stories about the marginalised. She introduces herself to an international audience in her TEDxAmsterdam Women talk in 2011 by saying:

> I am going to talk to you about writing about the margins which is what I do. I am a reporter. I was born and have lived all my life in India. I live in San Francisco now. And what I write about is people of subcultures that live outside of the mainstream.

Faleiro further changed the way she situates herself over the course of her writing career. Compare the interview published on the Oxford Bookstore website in 2006, where she mentions that she would like to

write some more fiction after her novel *The Girl* and "definitely some non-fiction" to a 2011 interview with a blog run by "book enthusiasts". With *Curious Book Fans,* she replies to a question about future plans to write fiction by saying, "I'm afraid not. I'm committed to the experience and process of non-fiction." While clearly not against new media formats, given that she is an active Twitter user who blogged until recently – and who publishes most of her work in digital formats – she is quick to point out in interviews the advantages of print journalism, offering depth in the coverage of stories which no other medium can offer (Oxford University Bookstore, undated). In an interview with *The Hindu* (27th March 2015) she says "I believe in deeply reported, in-depth stories and that's what I read and write every single day."

As the aim of this chapter is to investigate the ways authority is assembled to speak about the marginalised, I am limiting my analysis in this section to her articles, op-eds and books featuring 'marginalised subjects'. For this analysis I conducted a qualitative analysis of 46 article-length pieces, her book *Beautiful Thing*, and her 15,000-word e-single *13-Men*. The analysis employed tools like focalisation, point of view and voice, and narratorial involvement from narratological methodologies developed by Bal, Gennette, and Lanser (as explained in Berning, 2011 and Goran, 2002) and discursive tools like interpellation and some rhetorical and linguistic analysis (mainly free indirect discourse analysis). Because the analysis takes account of the discursive level as well, it situates authorial subjectivity in relation to the marginalised subjectivities she writes about (the 'characters') and the subjectivities of the imagined audience. As Faleiro mentions in an interview:

> I have two responsibilities as a reporter. One, towards my subject, to portray them accurately on the terms discussed with them at the onset. And two, towards my readers. I must honour both responsibilities, and the way to do so is to be a careful observer, but one whose presence does not in any significant way change what would otherwise have been. (Interview with Anjana Rajan in *The Hindu*, 24th November 2010).

In this section, where relevant, I also draw upon interviews with Faleiro and her public speeches to supplement this analysis, in keeping with the investigative focus in this thesis which attempts to study authorial agency within and outside the borders of the text (or narrative level). Below I detail how three series of articles about the marginalised written by Faleiro, and her subsequent engagement with the characters and events reported in them, is derived from and has contributed to an accumulation of meta-capital that accords her the position she occupies in global literary and public spaces.

The first of these series, titled "The lives of Mumbai's Bar Girls: The dying of the evening stars" consists of 6 articles (1500-2000 words each) and was published over the months of October and November in 2005 in the Indian magazine *Tehelka*, best known for its sting operations and investigative sensationalist content. The articles have since been archived and can be accessed online. Since being archived, it is difficult to reconstruct many of the paratextual elements, like which tabs or columns these articles were written for, which might have provided further clues to determine their communicative context or role. Published before Faleiro's first non-fiction book *Beautiful Thing* was released in 2010, these articles precede her forays into the literary space and establishment as a 'literary' journalist. However, these articles were clearly a precursor to *Beautiful Thing*, a longform work of reportage about Mumbai bar dancers, which is said to have been researched and written in 5 years (Faleiro, 2010: 224), assumedly between 2005 and 2009.

The second series was also published in *Tehelka* "The Other Half: The Lives of Mumbai's Domestic Workers". Similar to the first series it consists of 6 articles that are 1500- 2000 words long, appears over a period of about month (February – March) in 2006, and have now been archived. These articles provide intimate portraits of the lives of some domestic workers in Mumbai. On 30th September 2006, nine days before the ban against the employment of children under 14 in India came into effect, Faleiro wrote another article that appeared in *Tehelka* on the subject of children who work as domestic help ("Condemned to Childhood"). Whereas the 'lead' of the articles in "The Other Half" series declare their aim to be to "follow" ("Sole Provider, Lonely Warrior"), to "track" ("Driven by Dreams, Fighting the Odds"), or "to put a face to" ("Between Alcohol and Soap, a Rebellion") the lives of domestic workers, the latter article "examines the gnarled riddle of domestic work in India".

More recently, Faleiro authored a series of 13 articles, entitled "The Other India: Exploring subcultures and forgotten communities", over the period of a year between 21st September 2011 and 27th October 2012. These articles appear online in the 'India Ink' column of *New York Times*, which describes itself as the publication's "first country-specific site for news, information, culture and conversation". Faleiro started contributing to it soon after it launched in early September 2011 and, although her last article for this column was published in October 2012, *India Ink* continued to publish India-centric articles by other journalists until it was merged with the 'Asia' section of the news publication on 30th June, 2014. In this series, Faleiro looks at a variety of marginalised lives, and tackles various issues facing them, in both urban and rural localities in India. Whereas the first two series of articles have a tighter focus both in terms of location

(Mumbai) as well as a specific theme or profile of individuals, this one covers more varied grounds both geographically (although still within India) and thematically (which is still regarding marginalised lives). Moreover, being published in a more globally renowned publication, it also presumably reaches more (and a much more international) audience. These facts point toward the comparatively more influential position Faleiro holds now in the global cultural market, as well as the niche that she occupies within it. The quotation by Faleiro in the introduction to this chapter indicates that she sees this position as offering her greater choice to explore subjects of interest. Along with the increased reach of her works, her shifting ambitions can be attributed to the publication and success of *Beautiful Thing.* Tracing the positioning of her authorial subjectivity within this corpus throws more light on the trajectory of Faleiro's increasing symbolic capital in the literary and journalistic spaces which she can capitalise upon to, firstly, comment on the state of writing and journalism, and secondly, to attempt to redefine it while staking a claim for the autonomy of her particular form of writing.

Reporting on lives of "The Other Half": Writings on Domestic Workers – 2006

The series of six articles, "The Other Half: The lives of Mumbai's domestic workers", was, as mentioned above, followed by an op-ed article written by Faleiro a few months later in the same publication. Although the latter article makes no mention of the former series of articles, it's not a coincidence that Faleiro (rather than another staff writer), with her experience of writing about this particular marginalised 'group' or 'class', and her contacts within the National Domestic Workers Movement[6], was tasked with writing the op-ed before the new law prohibiting children under 14 from working as domestic labour came into effect in 2006. Moreover, there are themes and characters from the first series of articles that Faleiro revisits in the latter article, albeit within a different narrative focus and frame. The analysis of authorial positioning and perception through an examination of narratological devices is very important at this stage of Faleiro's career (before *Beautiful Thing*) as not many interviews of her, or texts reflecting on her own position in the cultural field, exist in the public domain. In this section, therefore, I explore the similarities and differences between these two instances of journalistic coverage to trace the trajectory of Faleiro gaining more symbolic capital within the field of journalism in India.

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[6] Formed in 1985, and based in Mumbai, NDWM has been organising domestic workers and promoting for their rights. It is now currently working in 17 states all over India. It further established National Domestic Workers Federation (NDWF) in 2013 to get domestic workers more organised into trade union structure.

"The Other Half" series provides a glimpse into the lives of a diverse group of individuals based in Mumbai who are all employed as domestic workers. The 'lead' of the first article in the series mentions that the context of the series being published is that at the wake of National Domestic Workers Movement gaining momentum. It is not clear from the articles themselves what the NGO was mobilising for at that time. But the law banning children under 14 from working as domestic help (previously this law was only applicable to factories) being passed later that year provides more of a context for these articles. The articles, however, do not focus exclusively on children engaged in this occupation; in fact, only one article in the series "Age of innocence, burdened lives" has this focus. The op-ed is even more complicated in terms of its focus. Although its headline reads "Condemned to Childhood", and the lead paragraph and the picture framing the story indicates a focus on children, Faleiro does not even introduce child workers until the fifth paragraph. The opening paragraph features an 86 year-old domestic worker whose hopes of retirement are non-existent. The next few paragraphs in the op-ed provide a clue regarding Faleiro's narratorial choice of not focalising the article entirely on children. Giving an account of the "utter powerlessness" of "an estimated 20 million domestic workers in India" and their "history of servitude", she reframes the discourse about the law regarding children to also include a view into the intergenerational poverty which forces many of the children to join the workforce. In the fifth paragraph, Faleiro introduces the issue of children engaged in domestic work thus:

> The less a domestic worker earns, the more likely she is to mortgage the future of her children to ensure that begging or borrowing money that cannot be repaid is not the next step. As a result, boys and girls as young as five mimic adult ways, wearing mother's salwar kameez and father's rolled-up grey pants, performing adult work for an upper class determined that their children's childhood continues as long as possible.

This interest in challenging the discourse dictated by the news cycle, and covering stories that might lie beyond what is considered 'newsworthy', is foreshadowed in the series of articles "The Other Half". In the first article, "Flaming Hope, Dreams in Dust", Faleiro mentions the "circle of servitude" which the Gaekwads have been caught up in since they left their ancestral village to live in Mumbai, and which, unless their daughter, Kalpana, succeeds in breaking out of it by getting a job as a nurse, they will continue to live in. Faleiro also opens the fourth article in the series, "Driven by dreams, fighting the odds", with the line, "The ecosystem in which domestic workers labour and survive, is headed by the driver." There is, therefore, a tendency on her part to conceptualise the marginalised subjects she writes about as existing in a sort

of life-world which most of her readers might not be familiar with; the nuances and the complexities in these worlds is what she aims to forefront in her writing. This ambition is what has led her, in more recent years, to situate herself as a proponent of "complicated stories".

Although the statistics which appear in bold, attention-grabbing font within the text of the op-ed article pertain to child domestic workers based in Delhi, the rest of the article does not particularly focus on Delhi. In fact, of the three cases of child workers mentioned in the article, two of them are based in Mumbai and West Bengal respectively. (The third, Baby Halder, who wrote an autobiography which was later translated in English, is only one of the three to be based in Delhi). Naina Baburao Ingole, the domestic worker from Mumbai Faleiro first wrote about in the fifth article in "The Other Half" series, also makes an appearance in the op-ed. Only the fifth article, "Age of innocence, burdened lives", in "The Other Half" series feature child workers; the article draws attention to the "blueprint of despair" which two Mumbai young girls, ages 14 and 11, working as domestic workers can't seem to escape. Prompted by a question by Faleiro about what the girls want to become when they grow up, Nagina, 14, replies: "What will I become? I'm a servant". Her life, as well as that of 11 year-old Naina Baburao Ingole, seems to be the blueprint which Faleiro sees reproduced in the adult-like responsibilities forced upon young children who are driven by their families' poverty into domestic work. The girls are forbidden from attending school by their parents. Naina is portrayed as a child "who wakes early, sleeps late, is a cleaner, cook and nanny; an agglomeration of adult qualities and concerns squeezed into and out of a child's body". However, the other families in featured in the series of articles seem to hold out a desperate but bright hope about their future and the future of their children.

In the first article, "Flaming Hope, Dreams in Dust", mother Kalpana is quoted as saying "Main ghasi to ghasi, magar yeh log nahin ghasi. If I have to wash floors I will, but they (her children) should never have to do that." Her daughter, Kamal, started cleaning houses only after finishing school in order to pay her way through nursing school. Furthermore, in the third article in the series, "Sole Provider, Lonely Warrior", Satpute, who was forced to take up domestic work after leaving school in eighth grade, expresses her resolve to never push her children into working in others' houses.

> Unlike their mother and despite the palpable financial pressure, it appears that Satpute's children will never be compelled into domestic work. Reshma studies commerce at Kirti College, Thane and wants a part time job when she starts her degree. Pooja and Prasad are

meritorious students at their school in Sion…Pooja, dressed in black pants and a red t-shirt, says casually, "I haven't thought about a career, I have years before I graduate. But whatever I do, I doubt I'll be cleaning houses."

This hope, however, is not represented in the op-ed, which focuses on instances of humiliation and rape of girls who work as domestic workers by employers, as well as child trafficking.

Instances of humiliation and exploitation are also reported in the series of articles. In the third article, "Sole Provider", for example, Faleiro mentions that "Satpute hasn't been offered a paid holiday in eight years". Moreover, there are details of Kamal being unable to retaliate even when hit by her employer's children in the first article, "Flaming Hope". Furthermore, although the domestic workers express hopes of improvement for themselves or for their children in "The Other Half" series, Faleiro's narratorial point of view which frames the articles seems to be in alignment with her focalizing viewpoint in the op-ed – she views these individuals as being part of an ecosystem sustained by uneven relationships between upper class householders and those who clean their houses out of desperation and poverty. Therefore, Kamal's hope for social betterment is seen as a "fragile rebellion", and the article ends on a grim note: "Unless Kalpana succeeds, there is an inevitability to Kamal's life. Labour until she can no more." This focalisation does not allow upper class Indian readers the satisfaction of feeling that with the efforts of NGOs like National Domestic Workers Movement which allows girls like Kamal to pursue vocational training, or the government passing a law banning children from engaging in domestic work, spares them from taking on any responsibility. Rather it allows Faleiro to interpellate[7] her readers as sympathetic, if disinterested, citizens, and calls upon them to see the domestic workers in their employment as fellow humans capable of suffering and despairing. In the op-ed, she writes:

> Prabodh Kumar, who employs Baby Halder and encouraged her to write, occupies one end of the spectrum of employers. Criminals, like Mohammed who raped Sakina, occupy the other. But between the two are the majority of us, who though not unkind are disinterested, or patronizing, viewing domestic workers as a necessary evil. Necessary because we believe we

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[7] Here, and in some later instances in this thesis, I have used the concept of interpellation to signify that through these textual means the author is able to position the reader as a subject with a certain identity, with a certain set of background, worldview, opinions and reactions. With the usage of this concept I suggest that these texts are central in bringing together a disparate group of individuals as intimate publics, a claim I elaborate more fully in chapter 4.

have neither the time not the tools, as in the West, to clean our own homes or that it is be-
neath us to do so, and evil because, dealing with human beings, we are forced to contend with
human concerns – illness, the desire for an occasional holiday, and a poverty that even if not
articulated is only too obvious.

This focalisation also allows her to argue for the importance of Unorganised Workers Sectors Bill (2004)
which organisations like National Domestic Workers Movement are also campaigning for. She ends the op-
ed by putting forth an appeal in its favour, "for once the parameters of what is acceptable are set by law,
many employers could perhaps feel compelled to do the right thing". The readers are, therefore, first called
upon to contend with the suspension of humaneness involved in their everyday contact with the domestic
workers, following which they are then sentimentally engaged in the public discourse around the movement
for the Bill.

To sum up, the access based on the network of contacts Faleiro had built up while covering stories in "The
Other Half", especially within the NGO organisations like NDWM and Bal Hakk Abhiyan, contributed to
her gaining enough organisational prestige within *Tehelka* as an expert or a specialist of issues affecting a
particular marginalised group, domestic workers. However, the authorship of the op-ed implies that she was
beginning to gather a greater symbolic capital which allowed her the privilege to extend her viewpoint
about her subjects (which takes an historical view of her subjects as products of intergenerational poverty as
well as part of a greater ecosystem where certain relations are reproduced) to contextualise the news event
of October 2005's upcoming ban. The trajectory of her career, as the following sections will show, springs
from an attempt to gain more freedom to explore further this view of social reality in the writing she pro-
duces. The affective element in her writing which she utilises to engage the readers' subjectivities becomes
more pronounced as her agency in the journalistic field gains more symbolic power; this increased symbolic
power allows her to perceive and also construct her own role in the Indian cultural field as a social com-
mentator.

Beginning with Mumbai's Bar Dancers – 2005-2010

In the epilogue and acknowledgement section of *Beautiful Thing* (2010: 224), Faleiro mentions that she
conducted hundreds of interviews across Mumbai "to understand the world of the bar dancers". The series
of articles in *Tehelka* seems to feature profiles drawn from these interviews and research that eventually

resulted in the book that came out five years later. The profiles feature the lives of people who were affected by the 2005 ban on Mumbai's dance bars[8]. Although the ban and the political discourses surrounding it are not discussed explicitly in the articles, as in the book (157-160), previous knowledge about the ban is assumed, as the articles were penned while the topic still occupied popular news discourse. What started as an interest in the "complex, layered, and hierarchical subculture that is the world of Bombay's dance bars" (interview in Reuters, 25th November, 2010) resulted in Faleiro's resolve to write a book. This can be seen from another interview (in *The Noe Valley Voice*, June 2012) where she mentions that she "didn't want us to ever forget what we'd done to these women". Following the publication of *Beautiful* Thing, the series of articles in *Tehelka*, and her other works on sex workers are mentioned in almost every interview and talk as evidence of her knowledge about the topic of the book. Faleiro also contributed an essay, "Maarne Ka Bhagaane Ka", about the life of a floating sex worker to the collection, *AIDS Sutra* (2008), which received praise in *The Guardian* and *The Wall Street Journal*, a fact mentioned on her website. A report following the publication of this essay profiles Faleiro as an "author" who has "spent years chronicling the lives of the city's sex workers" (Gomes-Gupta, 12th August, 2008). The articles, moreover, serve to establish her continued passion and interest in the subjects who occupy the margins of India.

The profiles are quite diverse, capturing the complexity of the "subculture" in and around Mumbai's dance bars, and the personalities whose lives were involved in it prior to the ban. They also show the various ways in which these lives gravitated towards the bars and how they have been affected by the ban. What unites this varied array of individuals is that they have all faced sexual violence at an early stage of their lives, faced immense hardships, have been either been personally involved in or, as in the case of Laxminarayan Tripathi ("Come, I am your lucky chance dance", 5th November, 2005), through others they know closely, connected to prostitution. Faleiro's. intention in focusing on such stories is expressed in an interview with *The Hindu*: "It's self-evident that I was deeply moved by everything I saw, and that I, like anyone in my position, suffered feelings of hopelessness and helplessness…what I wish from this book is that people will see a certain kind of person differently. Because seeing is the first step towards understanding."

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[8] On August 15, 2005, the state government of Maharashtra imposed a ban on Mumbai bars with dancing girls to "prevent immoral activities, trafficking of women and to ensure the safety of women in general". At the time when this controversial ban took action it is estimated that around 75,000 women were employed as dancing girls in Mumbai, who lost their livelihood. (Srivastava, 2016). In 2013 the ban was overturned by the Supreme Court of India and bars were able to re-apply for licenses.

A recent sociological study of Mumbai's dance bars conducted by Anna Morcom (2014), however, forwards the claim that these articles, as well as the book focusing on Leela's hardships, "enters into a frame of sensationalism". Morcom (2014: 63) claims that Faleiro's works on bar dancers, similar to other representations in the media and literature, focus on "larger than life bar girls" from "dysfunctional and unhappy families" who lead "engagingly crazy and chaotic lives". Her focalisation on Lata's point of view, for example, rather than Shalini's, in the first article "The circus girl lost in a dance bar", substantiates Morcom's argument. Lata and Shalini are sisters from a village in Kerala who, according to the article, ran away together to Mumbai to join the dance bar. Once there, Shalini caught the bar owner's eye, and got married to him, but Lata was then left alone to fend for herself and her handicapped son. In *Beautiful Thing*, Leela and Priya constantly talk about their romantic dream of being whisked away from the bar life by a man. Leela also has a relationship with the owner of the bar she dances at, and calls him her 'husband', although he is married and has no intention of leaving his wife for Leela. Given the fact that Shalini's re-entry into mainstream society is not explored further, therefore, it is questionable how representative of *all* bar dancers' experiences these narratives are.

But although *Beautiful Thing* might be seen as an "authoritative account of bar girls" (Morcom, 2014: 64) in the global cultural and intellectual space, Faleiro might not have started with the same communicative aim as Morcom, whose work seeks to represent "sociological reality". Faleiro certainly makes no secret of being attracted to Leela for her larger than life personality in interviews ("The first thing I noticed about Leela was that she took over the entire room", Faleiro, 2011) as well as in the text of the book. I discuss below in more detail the important role Leela serves in constructing the authority *Beautiful Thing* commands within the public sphere, but it is important to note here that Morcom's critique, while quite valid as I pointed out above in the example involving Lata and Shalini, can be seen as an exercise of symbolic domination of the field of sociology over that of journalism (Bourdieu, 2005: 31). However, it does point to the fact that the motif of misery and sexual exploitation in early life that pervade Faleiro's narratives, while perhaps representative of the bar dancers' testimony in interviews, might also be attempts by the dancers to gain sympathy from journalists or mainstream society. In this chapter I am interested in this claim insofar as it relates to these narratives of suffering engaging the "mainstream" publics sympathetically.

In light of Faleiro's statement in *The Hindu* quoted above, the profiles of bar dancers Faleiro penned for *Tehelka*, might also be understood as an attempt to encourage the readers to "see" bar dancers "differently". It is possible to glean from the text of the articles what she expected her readers' (public) perception of bar dancers to be. In the interview with Faleiro, Laxminarayan Tripathi (25th November, 2005) mentions that not every bar girl has "links with the underworld, or are rich. These false linkages have been created for political benefit." The article mentions the case of Tarannum Khan who had been arrested by the police for her links with "bookies". This anxiety against alleged riches (earned due to underworld connections) is also present in the second article (8th October 2005) where Geeta Shetty asks the photographer accompanying Faleiro to refrain from taking photos of her frying fish for her children's dinner. "And don't take pictures of the fish, either", she is quoted as saying, "People will wonder, 'If she's so poor, why is she eating fish?'"

The "hierarchy" of the city's sex trade as portrayed in Faleiro's book (2010: 14) is a topic that she speaks about frequently in international public talks and interviews. In these articles she alludes to it in a few instances. In the third article in the series, "Bawdy beautiful, not yet damned" (15th October, 2005), Faleiro describes the erstwhile position of the dancers in this ecosystem and their subsequent "fall from grace" as follows:

> The dancers were the axis of the bar world. Their dance and beauty, their clothes, the banter used to beguile men into parting with their money, made them objects of desire. They could refuse proffered phone numbers at will; men would always return hoping for a date outside the bar. Without the image altering effects of strobe lights, bereft of their costumes and the security of the bar, the girls are no longer unattainable. They are hungry, desperate and, in Chauhan's case, homeless.

In the fifth article, "My Love Encloses A Plot of Roses" (29th October, 2005), she also mentions that Vaishali, who used to be an orchestra singer in Manali Bar was not able to procure the "more lucrative career" of a dancer because she was not beautiful enough. Vaishali, however, felt that her singing career in the bar gave her respectability and was a way of "honouring her parents", although she is a "bar girl who from the age of 11 had used her body to better her life" and people still saw her as a sex worker. In her book this form of precarious respectability is explained as such:

When some people saw Leela they saw a *dhandewali*, working girl. But when she saw herself…

she saw a bar dancer. And the difference to her was the difference, she said, between the blessing

that was my life and the blight that was hers. (2010: 15)

She further explains in her book (ibid), "all of these women (sex workers) ranked below Bombay's bar

dancers, and this was partly because selling sex wasn't a bar dancer's primary occupation and because

when she did sell sex she did so quietly and most often under her own covers." Further she offers:

"Although they all did it, no bar dancer ever admitted to galat kaam. The only answer to a question

around it was, '*Main mar jaongi magar* galat kaam *nahin karungi.*' I'll die before I perform galat kaam"

(14).

The first statement utilises the third person voice of the heterodiegetic narrator[9], although it seems to repre-

sent Leela's viewpoint about the "hierarchy" of Mumbai's sex industry, and is therefore an example of het-

erodiegetic figural focalisation (Nieragden, 2002: 691); it directly relates to how Leela sees herself (accord-

ing to Faleiro who is the narrator). The second statement suggests that the narrator is perhaps more altero-

diegetic (involved in 'questioning' and observing), but also is the subject of focalisation as she offers a

statement that is contradictory to those of the individuals she interviews. Both these narratorial assertions

are borne out by Faleiro's interview with Geeta Shetty in the second article in the series, "Camera, camera,

who's the saddest of us all?", in which the latter is quoted as saying, "I only returned calls. Never more. Il-

legal activities take place outside the bar, where it is up to the girls to do as they please. On the dance floor,

we dance. We don't have sex with stewards and managers!" Therefore, it seems that perhaps Leela (who

might well have held the views that Faleiro reports here) is not the sole focaliser of the narrative in the

book, but as in this instance, is delegated the task of representing views which the narrator has found to be

typical amongst bar dancers while observing the life-world of the bar dancers.

Another way in which the articles and the book overlap is due to the similarity in characters and events

related in them. In fact, although fictionalised to some extent in the book, it is possible to trace back cer-

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[9] In this thesis, following Nieragden's article (2002: 686), I have adopted Gerard Genette's narratorial terms when discussing heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narratives: "According to Gérard Genette's elaborate and widely accepted theory, an authorial narrator, who is not a character at the same time and remains ''outside'' the story, is called a heterodiegetic narrator, while a narrator who has the status of a character in the story is homodiegetic". Nieragden also adopts Susan Lanser's scale to show the level of involvement of narrators in a homodiegetic text. He further observes in this article that the alterodiegetic narrator (from Lanser's scale), or an uninvolved eyewitness, might be "a genre-specific feature of non-fiction or documentary non-fiction, also known as "new journalism" (686).

tain characters to the dancers Faleiro interviewed for the articles. There exist, for example, so many simi-larities between the *hijra* Neelam in the fourth article "Gali No. 2, Street Despair" and Maya in *Beautiful Thing* (2010: 105) that it would be fair to suppose that the latter's character is based on the former. Maya, like Neelam (or Shankar before castration), was born in Kamatipura to a prostitute, and started prostituting herself at the age of ten; even the detail that she solicited clients near the theatre is similar in both the ac-counts. Moreover, details of Maya's castration – like the fact that it cost 30,000 rupees – also correspond with Neelam's account of her ritualistic induction into eunuchhood. The birthday party in the article also seems to be the same one that Faleiro attended with Leela and Priya in the book (98- 109). Of note is the fact that whereas in the article Faleiro's point of view is the focalising agent – she seems to be there in her own right as a journalist – in the book it is Leela who leads Faleiro to the *hijras'* residence for her friend Masti's birthday party. Another example of this overlap is Vaishali in the fifth article, "My love encloses a plot of roses", whose story is retold as that of Leela's friend Anita. Like Vaishali's father, who made sex-ual overtures to her when she was a girl, Anita's raped her. Moreover, like Vaishali, Anita has two sons, one of whom is named 'Sridhar' who rapes Vaishali/Anita one monsoon night. Here again, whereas the article is framed with the narrator, Faleiro, having a conversation with the subject, Vaishali, in a coffee shop, in the book, it is Leela who introduces Faleiro to Anita "to prove her point" (23).

In the book (2010: 6), as well as in interviews and talks about the book, Faleiro brings up Leela's "optimism", "larger than life personality" and "magnetic vivacity" as what attracted her to write about her. Further, in the book, she mentions "From Leela's point of view, our friendship was an adventure…but only she could teach me what I wanted to know", which is to understand the "mysterious" world of dance bars (ibid). Moreover, the text in the inset of the book claims that Leela "introduced Sonia" to this world. In an interview (with Reuters, 25th November, 2010), Faleiro says that although most of the individuals she inter-viewed didn't traditionally trust authority figures, especially journalists, "once Leela honoured me with her trust, her family and friends were quick to follow".

This centrality of Leela in the discourse surrounding *Beautiful Thing* is due to the fact that she serves sev-eral important functions within it. As a protagonist who has been referred to as "unforgettable" (Kate Holden, in talk with Sonia Faleiro, Sydney Literary Festival 2013), she does more than just humanise the suffering and hopes of thousands of bar girls who found themselves losing whatever little agency (and "freedom") they had managed to gain over their own lives after a lifetime of being abused by people

around them following the 2005 ban. Firstly, her relationship with Faleiro is significant to the author's 'insider' status in a "hidden world" (William Dalrymple on the back cover of *Beautiful Thing*). It allows the author to position herself as an alterodeigetic narrator in the work (in portions of the story at least). This is an aesthetic choice, but one that also foregrounds the sympathetic eye she brings to observe and understand the reality of the individuals she writes about, and a point of view she intends for her readers to share. So although Faleiro continues to comment on social realities she observes, a role shared with novelists in the cultural sphere, *Beautiful Thing* as an account of real people, and Faleiro's relationships with them elevates it above a novel in a certain sense. The second way in which Faleiro's relationship with Leela is important to the book's believability and success with a middlebrow reading public, therefore, is that the fact that the author actually experienced and felt empathy for the (real) characters because of her friendship with them accords the text authenticity (Driscoll, 2014).

Faleiro also highlights the differences between her world and the one she writes about, i.e. Leela's world, quite explicitly in *Beautiful Thing* (2010: 7). She lived then in "Bombay's Manhattan" – "a place so special it deserves its own borders". Her relationship with Leela, and an interest in her life, accounts for her motivation in surpassing these "borders" in the book. Beyond that, at the "other end of this dazzling spectrum" lay the Bombay Leela lived and worked in, with a view of salt pans, "dinky cars stuttering over potholes, gangs of stray dogs chasing cyclists, residential buildings that resembled giant washing lines".

This is perhaps the first time Faleiro makes such an obvious distinction between her subjectivity and that of the subjects she writes about within the text. The next section addresses this in more detail, in reference to assumptions about an ordinary childhood presumably shared with the assumed 'global elite' reader. But the practice of textually demarcating herself from her subjects is a narrative device she adopts perhaps to make this reality intelligible to an audience distant from her in terms of cultural familiarity because of the book's predicted global reach, as well as temporally due to the longer-lasting nature of the format (as opposed to news articles). However, this difference in social and economic standing which Faleiro highlights in the book also allows another interesting discursive strand to emerge around her work – the narrative of how this distance in subjectivities is traversed through her research and writing. For example, in an interview with the blog *Curious Book Fans* (11th October 2011), Faleiro replies to a question about the "different worlds" of her and her subjects in her book as follows:

CBF: It seems like the world in which you researched your book is very different from the world you grew up in. How did you make your first contact with Mumbai dance bar culture and gain the trust of people from such a very different world?

Sonia Faleiro: If you're a reporter in India reporting on marginalized communities for the English media it's almost certain that your social and economic background, and therefore your life experiences, will be very different from those you write about. But that doesn't mean that you can't learn about the lives of others. You can, if you invest the time and have interest, sensitivity and compassion.

I met Leela through a source in what I call the 'bar and brothel business'. She was 19 at the time, and one of the smartest young women I'd met anywhere. I immediately knew I wanted to write about her and so I asked if I could follow her around. She initially thought I was kidding and shooed me away, but I was so persistent she eventually gave in and allowed me to hang around. Over time she came to trust in my project, and in me and introduced me to her family and closest friends.

In another interview with *Reuters* (25th November, 2010), she mentions further on the topic of establishing trust with her subjects:

They spoke to me because as a reporter I have developed a reputation for being upfront and honest, and because as a person I'm respectful and non-judgmental. I'm also low maintenance, and have endless amounts of time to invest in the pursuit of my subjects whether at day or night.

This discourse continues in Faleiro's subsequent public engagements, for example, her public talk for TEDxAmsterdam Women (November, 2011) titled "Writing on the Margins", as well as her talk at 5x15 in London (Oct, 2011). In her London talk she mentions her choice to substitute her "middle class opinions, no matter how sensitive or well-informed" in her writing for a more "inside out view" on her subjects' lives. She further adds that "I wrote how I thought the families of Vidarbha (the village she wrote about in her stories about farmer suicides) would write if they had the opportunity". Speaking from platforms in global literary centres like London, in events which feature popular writers who are renowned transnationally, like Jeannette Winterson, Neil Gaiman and William Dalrymple, Faleiro seems to be well-positioned at

this point in her career to address a global 'English language' audience. Her position as an author representing 'authentic' voices of the Indian marginalised despite being divided from them by class and socio-economic situation, therefore, is legitimised by the discourse about a sentimental, or rather an empathetic, identification with them, as well as the rigour and time taken to research this 'other' reality and its subjects. In so doing she also differentiates her own writing from that in the Indian mainstream news reporting, and thus gathers autonomy for the budding field of in-depth long form journalistic story-telling in India. In a conversation with William Dalrymple, she elevates the motivations behind her writing from the economic factors which drive mainstream journalism as well as the fiction market by saying that she was afraid that nobody might read her non-fiction book, as "fiction sells". The articles in the next section traces her expanding symbolic power in the global cultural sphere. It also discusses the discourses that shape her as a figural author, which also lead her to occupy a more prominent space within the public discourse which construct ideas of modern Indian citizenship amongst middle class Indians.

Narrating "The Other India" – 2011 – 2012

In the article "Survival Without Adult Supervision, Stark Reality in Rural Bihar", (25th June, 2012) which was published in the "India Ink" column in *New York Times*, Faleiro draws attention to the plight of a family of three orphaned siblings who have been living on their own with very limited and sporadic help from their relatives, who are desperately poor in an equal measure. The oldest sibling, 14-year old Anil, lives in another state where he works full time in a brick kiln and sends money back home when he can. The two younger siblings, Meena, 10, and Sunil, 11, go to school, where sometimes they get a free hot meal; they take care of themselves, and cook with whatever food their aunt, Savithri Devi, can afford to send them after feeding her own family.

In a subsequent article (not a part of the series "The Other India" comprising of 13 articles), "For India's Children, Philanthropy Isn't Enough", published in the Opinion column of the *New York Times* Sunday Review (15th September, 2012), Faleiro picks up the narrative where she left it off. Following the first article, there had apparently been an offer from a reader based in the United States, a "record producer in Los Angeles", to pay for the children to attend a school run by the charity Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement). The offer was refused by the children's relative, her aunt introduced in the first article, who claimed that she was capable of looking after the children herself. The article ad-

dresses the question: Since this is an offer that could have lifted the children out of the poverty and vulnerability of their current condition and improved their future, why then did their relatives refuse to take it?

Although the first article alludes to governmental failings in relation to the situation the children are living in ("In this time they haven't received a single visit from anyone associated with the local district, Nalanda, or the state government."), it is the second article that delves into the relationship between the lack of regulatory structure implementing ambitious government programmes to alleviate poverty and its impact on a population rife with intergenerational poverty, where men and women, forced to prioritize their daily survival, "may have empathy for their niece and nephews, but they can't afford to act on it." In this section, I explore the two articles and the relationship between them focusing on focalisation, narratorial involvement, and interpellative subject-making. Moreover, in the second article, Faleiro mentions that when she wrote the first article "documenting this family's daily life in the impoverished eastern state of Bihar. Emails started to pour in the next morning", one of which was from the record producer. Therefore, this section attempts to explain some of the narratological and discursive means through which these articles were able to garner such a response from the readership. Moreover, the section aims to lead to a more general discussion about the ways in which longform narrative journalism by Faleiro represents issues affecting Indian marginalised subjects to an audience, which based on its knowledge of English, and cultural consumption habits (*New York Times*) can be classed as 'the global elite'.

The opening sentence of the first article signals the distance in the reality, and hence the subjectivity, of the imagined reader from the reality of the lives of the central subjects in the article: "Meena Devi is unlike any little girl *you will eve*r meet." (Emphasis mine). Following this, describing the "daily routine" of the child's life, based on her conversation with Meena, Faleiro refers to it as "extraordinary", presumably next to the 'ordinary' lives of the presumed reader. So, although Faleiro later stresses the surrounding poverty and helplessness of the villagers around this family that renders the latter's suffering and vulnerability quite 'ordinary', if still pitiable ("Entire villages in Bihar have no roads and no running water for miles, and Jhanwatola, with its cramped little mud huts, is no exception. Villagers know of electricity as an abstract concept rather than a modern-day essential."), the focalization in the opening paragraphs is of the presumed readers' point of view, through which this 'ordinariness' is considered "extraordinary".

Another instance in which these two subjective realities are shown to be distant, and often contradictory, is when Savithri Devi refers to the oldest sibling, Anil, as a "grown up boy", also remarking that "if he won't look after his brothers and sisters, who will?". Anil is one of the "youngsters cursed with an adult's sense of responsibility. They go (out of their village to work in brick kilns) because otherwise they and their family will starve." This mirrors the characterization of Meera earlier in the article, who Faleiro says is "in many ways [she] isn't even a child." These descriptions imagine an ideal of 'ordinary' childhood/adolescence as one where children are supervised as well as protected by adults, do not live on their own, are not expected to take upon themselves the responsibility to feed themselves as well as their younger siblings, or to work full-time in risky workplaces. This initial focalization of the reader's reality or point of view serves to interpellate the reader as individuals inhabiting a 'world', or social and economic space, that offers a greater amount of structural privilege compared to the one inhabited by Meena and her family.

In the sixth paragraph, she reports "Almost three years ago, on Aug. 8, 2009, Meena's mother, Phoolmanti Devi, died of starvation." Despite the apparent neutral tone of this statement, the extent of the subject(s)' marginalisation is highlighted in this statement, given the fact that death by starvation is not a normal condition experienced by the assumed readership of the 'global elite'. However, paragraph 9 mentions that "the cause of Mrs. Devi's death surprised no one in the village". This is perhaps the point in the article that there occurs a small but significant shift in the focalisation; Faleiro explains the conditions of the villagers' daily life, their caste-based marginalisation, their exploitation due to their desperate poverty, which forces them, as well as their legally under-age children, to migrate and work in slave-like conditions for minimal pay.

The shift is small, because the following paragraphs still exhibit external focalisation; however, once the article establishes the distance between the marginalised characters of the story and the readers, it moves on to construct the context or the subjective reality within which the actions, speech as well as otherwise, are situated. This is to assist the 'elite' reader to sympathise with what could be seen to be quite heartless decisions taken by the children's neighbours and the legal guardians. Savithri Devi Manjhi, for example, can barely afford to feed her own family of four. So although she is the closest relative the children have, and lives nearby, the fact that she doesn't take them in, and only sends food sporadically, as well as the fact that she has sent the oldest brother, Anil, to work in unsafe conditions, can be seen in light of her own poverty and desperation. In the second article, which I discuss in more detail later, Faleiro also explains the motivations of the Manjhis' refusal to take up the offer to send the children to boarding school as follows:

The Manjhis are the product of intergenerational poverty and caste-based marginalization. Like their parents, they're poor, illiterate and seasonally employed. They don't think beyond their daily survival. They're also aware that no matter how bad life gets for them, public assistance is unlikely, and change is an impossible dream. They know they have no one to depend on but themselves and their younger kin. They may have empathy for their niece and nephews, but they can't afford to act on it.

Who then is responsible for the fate of the children? Their fate seems to be quite dire if the present circumstances persist. The first article ends on a rather grim note, especially about Meena's future prospects, unless she is "rescued":

"Thekedars already know the village and regularly hire children for hard labor," said Mr. Haque, "But it's different for girls. Sometime in the next couple of years, while she's still a child, a thekedar may masquerade as an eligible groom and trick Meena's aunt into letting him marry Meena, and once she does he'll take her to Delhi and sell her off to a brothel or to an employment agency that will hire her out as a domestic worker, and she'll be treated like a slave. But she's so vulnerable, so poor, that perhaps he won't even have to pretend. He'll just whisk her away one night, and no one will notice, and by the time they do, she'll have vanished forever."

The focus on children, as well as the ways in which their childhood is shown to be lost, or not afforded to them due to the poverty and lack of adult and institutional support constituting their living conditions, as well as the dire future awaiting the kids which is presented as inevitable ("there's only one way this story will end") is quite evocative; it serves to sentimentally engage the reader, whose ideas of global citizenship is affirmed by that engagement. However, this assessment of the children's situation is vocalised by the representative of the NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan Bihar office, (which is presented as the only institution paying any attention to the children's situation), who is also raising money to help the children. The article also mentions the amount of money required to look after the children every month. The article, in this manner, therefore, also serves to call upon the readers to not only invest in the fate of the children through sympathetic involvement, but also to play a more active part in redressing their situation through financial donation.

This latter point is evidenced by the fact that the readers indeed responded by asking how to donate for the children's schooling. In addition to the fact being mentioned in the second article by Faleiro, it is also evident in the 'Comments' section following the article. Although this analysis does not focus on issues of reception and therefore does not examine these comments in detail, it is still a useful indicator of the way in which such texts operate in this context, as well as its emotive function. Moreover, the 'Comments' section following the first article is particularly interesting as Faleiro herself posts in response to readers wanting to donate by directing them to a contact within the BBA. This extra-textual interaction with both the readers as well as narrative boundaries of the article is quite interesting in terms of what it reveals about Faleiro's role and involvement with the story (her own subjectivity) and the various subjectivities involved (both the 'characters' as well as the readers).

In a similar way, Faleiro writing a second article about the same individuals also shows a level of involvement with the characters as well as the issues their lives highlight at a level that belies the apparent heterogeneous narratorial involvement suggested by the third person voice utilized in most of the first article. The second article, although an 'opinion' piece, also uses first-person voice sparingly, only in second and fourth paragraphs. However, whereas the first article primarily relies on the narrator's (Faleiro's) conversations with various characters, supplemented by what she observed first hand on her visit to the children's village, in the second article, the narrator draws on her experience of reporting, and then being involved in the events following the story, to present the readers with her opinions. To put it simply (and simplistically), in the first article the narrator reports what she *sees* and *hears* (observer)*,* in the second she reports what she *thinks* and *knows* (expert). Of course, the first article is not free of Faleiro's subjective thoughts and opinions; this comes across in her choice to portray certain characters sympathetically. But they are more explicitly foregrounded in the latter article.

Her sense of agency here can be understood on the basis of her response in an interview with *The Hindu* (25th November, 2010). She says:

> In the past, people have asked of how they could contribute to bringing change to the life of a marginalised person I've written about, and I was able point them towards the appropriate person or organisation. But the issue here isn't small sums of money. What we're talking about is a change in what we see and how we see it. This book asks that we see the humanity of not just bar dancers but of all people marginalised, abused and discarded. I'm a writer and I've done the best I could. But

change is a collective responsibility and for true change we—writers, reporters, politicians, citizens—must all do our job, fulfil our citizenship responsibilities if we want to see a difference.

Except in the case of this particular series in *New York Times* the subjectivities she is interpellating in order to see India's marginalised in a more humane fashion are not just of the Indian middle and upper class, but also a transnational global readership. Following Berlant's critique (1999), therefore, it is fair to conclude that the "citizenship responsibilities" she wants to evoke through an empathetic identification with these marginalised subjects based in India is that of socially aware global publics. The criticism of the Indian nation-state in failing to protect these groups of marginalised subjects from the spiral of poverty and exploitation that Faleiro expresses in her op-ed therefore positions her writerly agency as being opposed to, and independent of, state power. Over the next few years in her career, perhaps spurred on further by the election of a Hindu fundamentalist party to the central government in India, Faleiro continues to call to account the Indian nation-state in her articles and op-eds, including a recent piece in *The Guardian* which states that Leslee Udwin's film about the Delhi rape which was banned by the Indian government "does what the politicians should be doing" (5th March 2015). Another article which deals with the issue of the fundamentalism in current Indian politics is "The Rationalist" published (15th June, 2015) in the left-wing digital "art and politics" magazine, *Guernica*. This recent position that Faleiro occupies, in opposition to the nation-state and its fundamentalist policies and bans, has been constructed on the basis of her earlier articles, for instance the series in "India Ink", where she initially critiqued the state for not doing enough for its marginalised subjects. It is interesting to refer here to Berlant's (2008: 6) criticism about the role of narratives about black and working class subjectivities "based on what suffering must feel like" in order to give "more privileged suffering" of middle class white women legitimacy and voice. In Faleiro's case, her earlier self-positioning as representative of the Indian marginalised voices to a global audience places her in an elevated global sphere which allows her the freedom to opine about an even wider range of social issues in India.

The remit of issues she can authoritatively address extends beyond those subjects of abject marginalisation she focused upon in her self-positioning in 2010 after the release of *Beautiful Thing*. Although she still continues to oppose fundamentalist stances of the government policies from the viewpoint of how they affect the absolute poor ("Saving the Cows, Starving the Children", *New York Times,* 27th June, 2015), op-ed articles like "The Lynching of Syed Sarifuddin Khan" (20th March 2015) which appeared in *Foreign Policy*

shows that Faleiro now occupies a position in the global journalistic field which recognises her authority to provide critical commentary on the social and political news events in India, and not just when it involves those who live under the poverty line. However, her authority also extends to opining about issues affecting women (often middle class women) in India. When she writes on this topic, as in her 2013 op-ed article, "The Unspeakable Truth About Rape in India" she often focalises her own subjective experiences as a woman who grew up in India to base her point of view on the issue upon. The issue of misogynistic culture giving rise to what was popularly labelled "rape culture" in India being discussed in international news publications like *The New York Times,* however, was triggered by the Delhi rape incident in December 2012. Therefore, although Faleiro's symbolic capital as an author of an internationally acclaimed book in 2012 allowed her opinion to be considered valuable for the understanding of this "Indian" issue by a global public, the writing of the op-ed in response to a "newsworthy" story still implies that her agency was closely tied to that of the journalistic field. Simply put, the acclaim earned in the literary circuits translated to an increase in her symbolic power in the journalistic field, giving her access to premier global news publications to comment from, albeit so far only about "Indian" issues. This position is afforded to her due to her strong critical stance towards the Indian nation-state, which gives her authorial agency through the consecration of being an autonomous "global" cultural producer, with more symbolic power than journalists who solely work in mainstream media publications in India.

Whether Faleiro intended to be recast as an "expert" on Indian, especially women's issues, when she first wrote *Beautiful Thing,* is debatable. Even though her book was very critical of the Maharashtra government ban against the dance bars in Mumbai, as a journalist she tried to distance herself from a position of prescribing policies to benefit the subjects she wrote about. In the interview with *The Hindu* (25th November, 2010), when questioned about possible "solutions" to improve the lives of her subjects, she says, "I'm not comfortable offering policy prescription — there are people whose job it is to do this and they would know best." However, this question seems to resurface in almost every interview she gives since (for example, her interview with Kate Holden in Sydney Literary Festival, 2011). This case therefore throws some light upon the way literary middlebrow spaces operate, particularly the relationship with a reading public's global political engagement. So although she does speak publicly about her opinions in the international news publications and cultural spaces, it seems from her recent creative endeavours that she intends to utilise her greater symbolic power to gain even more autonomy for her writing, and for the new style of journalism this constitutes.

Deca Collective and "Complicated Stories" - 2015

Recently (Feb, 2015) Faleiro recorded a livecast conversation between herself and four other Indian journalists– Prem Panicker, Naresh Fernandes, Mihir Sharma and Samar Halarnkar. The recording was done on behalf of Deca, a longform collective comprised of international journalists, which Faleiro founded. In this recorded conversation Faleiro mentioned that it was only after she published her book that she was "able to write longform journalism independently". In March 2015, a few days after this conversation, Faleiro's long form e-single *13-Men* was released, published by the collective which she is also a part of. *13-Men* features a story of the rape of a 20 yearold Santhal woman, referred to as Baby, from a tribal village in West Bengal, who was allegedly raped by 13 men in the village following the instructions of the village council as a punishment for having a sexual relationship with an outsider, a Muslim man named Khaleque. Faleiro was the only journalist allowed to interview Baby, a fact that is mentioned in the book, as well as in the following interviews. She also interviewed the families of the convicted men, using a translator to speak to them in Bengali.

The book, like the author interviews following it, present the story, as well as Deca's initiative, and Faleiro's authorial subjectivity, as providing the kind of coverage of stories which ordinary mainstream media is not able to. When interviewed in Columbia Journalism Review (29th April 2015), for example, in answer to a question about why she chooses to publish with Deca rather than in a magazine, she says:

> I just don't know how another editor in another magazine would have dealt with it while maintaining all of this nuance. I think Deca gets that there are complicated stories that don't need to be unknotted. Some complicated stories should be written in a way that shows that the world is a tough place that's hard to understand.
>
> So much of what I write is in the detail. I cannot have everything stripped away, because that doesn't explain that life is messy, lives are complicated, people are hard to understand. You have to show that, in all the richness of detail and depth.

The stance in the book is similarly critical of mainstream journalistic practices, especially its tendency to sensationalise cases of rape as well as treat them insensitively. In the first chapter of the book, for example, she writes "But for decades, such crimes (gang rapes) had gone virtually unnoticed by the media." Furthermore, she mentions that following the "sensational" Delhi gang rape case such cases gained more focus from the mainstream media.

> The graphic details that emerged about the attack were impossible to ignore. Unlike in many cases of the past, the victim was an urban, upwardly mobile medical student. It was easy for the middle and upper class to see themselves in her. Her death touched the heart of the nation and triggered a national conversation about women's safety and human rights. There were soon so many rape cases in the news that journalists slapped labels on them to help the public keep track.

It is interesting to note, however, that a prominent Indian non-fiction author, Madusree Mukerjee, negatively reviews Faleiro's work in the Nepal-based South Asian digital magazine *Himal*, calling it "inconsistent" and "contradictory" (10th June 2015). I will not detail here the exact points on which Mukerjee finds Faleiro's narrative to be inconsistent, but she seems to suggest that Faleiro seems to prefer or highlight the official stance in this story, which the former finds problematic. This allegation seems to counteract the most prevalent discourse around Faleiro's book, which revolves around the open-endedness of the narrative, an effort by Faleiro to not take any sides, or try to unravel a "complicated" story. Nevertheless, Mukerjee claims,

> I concluded, however, that the official story, which is also Faleiro's, is about as believable as the tiger story in *Life of Pi*. It's such a thrilling story, though – such a perfect fit with mainstream notions of rural primitivism, which we, as the 'modern' and the 'enlightened', are striving to eradicate – that it effortlessly assumes the mantle of truth.

Although Mukerjee provides evidence from the text of *13-Men* to support her claim of inconsistencies which Faleiro did not pick up on, her main critique seems to be centred upon the latter's position in the global cultural field, particularly the bias that Faleiro might share with international media agencies. In short, this review calls into question Faleiro's authority to represent the Santhal fairly. Faleiro is portrayed as taking the side of the official bodies which have for centuries oppressed the tribal people, a group, Mukerjee claims in the article, she has been studying for years.

It would seem that once the story was told, it took on such unstoppable momentum that it had to become the truth. Every major media outlet in the world faithfully inscribed the official account, reading into the atrocity the flailing of a doomed primitivism. "India's rapid modernisation has given young women enhanced opportunities and freedoms, which these self-appointed guardians of patriarchal tradition view as a grave threat," explained the New York Times in an editorial.

As writer Nandini Dhar points out in a perceptive critique of India's Daughter (a documentary film which Faleiro has publicly supported and written in favour of), there are reasons why certain stories, such as Nirbhaya's and Baby's, prove so irresistible to the mainstream and global media. No BBC film maker or award-winning book author has related, for instance, the story of Soni Sori, an adivasi teacher and political activist who was arrested under false charges and sexually tortured by a police officer. Nirbhaya and Baby are, to borrow Dhar's apt phrase, "ideal neoliberal citizens" – brave young women, emancipated from their restrictive traditions by the possibilities of the "new India" who are brutally punished for enjoying their fledgling liberties by the vindictive forces of "old India, of patriarchal value and entrenched rape culture." Their stories are more equal than Sonia's.

Far from being seen as being critical of the state, this review portrays Faleiro to be complicit in reproducing official narratives in her book. Moreover, although Faleiro's own account critiques Indian mainstream media for under-reporting and often mis-reporting rape cases, Mukerjee's review criticises *13-Men* for being a narrative of a similar ilk to the ones which Faleiro defines her own work to be against. This review is, in a way, similar in function to Morcom's criticism I have explored earlier in this chapter, insofar as it challenges the position Faleiro herself lays claim to for her work. However, Faleiro's greater symbolic power in the global cultural space is exhibited by the fact that neither Morcom nor Mukerjee's critiques have had a great effect (so far) on how Faleiro's authorial positioning is perceived. Just 10 days before Mukerjee's review was published, for instance, Faleiro spoke alongside the renowned Congress politician[10] and public intellectual, Shashi Tharoor in a panel titled "India's Hard Truths", about politics and women's rights in India, at the Hay Festival in England. Whereas the transnational reputation that Faleiro has garnered authorises her to speak about issues about minority rights in India to a global audience, it

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[10] Tharoor is a member of the main opposition party in India, Congress.

also brings her cultural authenticity to question by local actors. However, as in this case, the relative lack of symbolic power of these actors at a transnational level renders their critique ineffective in impacting the way Faleiro is perceived.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to trace the trajectory of Sonia Faleiro's ascent in the transnational cultural sphere through a process of accumulation of symbolic capital in the fields of journalism and literature. Her individual career path is unique to her, but also allows us to analyse the general tendencies of these fields, as well as the synergies and overlaps between them which allows actors within these fields to carry over their symbolic capital within one field over to the other. The narrative analysis in this chapter was thus instrumental in elucidating Faleiro's authorial positioning in her works, and how it changes as her career progresses. However this chapter also looks beyond the borders of these journalistic and literary texts, and extends the analysis to include discourses within various media texts that serve to consecrate Faleiro as a journalist, author and a cultural commentator and critic.

Having conducted this analysis the main insights to emerge are as follows: firstly, writing about certain marginalised subjects as a journalist gave Faleiro the appropriate background to launch her later career as a writer of books about subjects pertaining to marginalisation in society. Secondly, in her role as a writer of books her authorial persona was constructed around both the expertise from years of being a journalist covering stories about marginalised subjects, as well as the authority accorded to a *sentimental* public figure whose work is driven by a sense of empathy for these subjects. The latter I argue is a key feature of the cultural field within the adaptation economy, as one can observe it at play in the emergence of Indian literary journalism. In short, cultural products that were previously thought of as aimed at specific audiences can now transcend these niches and appeal to a broader set of (transnational) publics by appealing to a general sensibility (for example outrage at cases of violence against children) or empathetic kinship between the subjects and the audience (where the audience might be able to relate to the subjects). In this chapter I have highlighted how the construction of the author as a *feeling* agent is key to this property of the field.

Thirdly, thinking about journalism as being heteronomous and therefore not as powerful as literature in the cultural field clearly does not do justice to the factors that propel Faleiro as an actor with a significant

amount of symbolic power. Although Faleiro herself mentions that writing a book allowed her greater freedom (agency) to write the way she wanted to, I am sceptical about the extent to which it necessarily follows that the field of literature holds more influence. It is important to note that since the publication of her book in 2010 Faleiro has continued to write book reviews and op-ed pieces in international news publications like *The New York Times*, as well as Indian publications like *The Wire*. She has also undertaken a project to co-found a collective of journalists from around the world who publish works of literary journalism as e-singles (short ebooks). To elaborate this point further would require thinking about journalists not just as agents who compete for legitimacy within the field of journalism, but as actors who are key players in legitimising and consecrating other cultural (as well as political, social and economic) actors in their role within mass media communication institutions. So when Faleiro reviews Aman Sethi's *A Free Man* for *The New York Times* not only does it serve to introduce the latter's work to a transnational readership, it also serves to consolidate her own position of familiarity with this audience as well as her expertise in Indian contemporary writing and literary journalism. Later in Chapter 4 I study Faleiro's Twitter feed as a way of exploring the idea of legitimation and consolidation of authority within the digitally enabled adaptation economy as being dependent on factors external to the hierarchies within the cultural sphere. Rather I argue that the deployment of sentimentality, mediated by certain media forms and institutions like author interviews in news channels, is key to the consecration and greater cultural power that writers of literary journalism about marginalised subjects like Faleiro have obtained.

Chapter 3

Aman Sethi: From Frozen Narratives to *A Free Man* and Beyond

It all began with an attempt to write differently about labour. The narratives we were used to in our writ-ings about labour had gotten frozen and the more I tried to write differently I realized that some of it had to do with the form which was trapping people into a narrative…changing the form would result in a very dif-ferent way of writing about a person.

-Sethi in an interview with me in May 2015.

Introduction

Aman Sethi is a journalist and the author of *A Free Man*, a book-length work of narrative non-fiction which was the recipient of the Economist-Crossword award (2011) and a Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar (2012) for best non-fiction. The book was published in India by Random House (2011), in the U.K. by Jonathan Cape, Random House (2012) and in U.S.A by W.W. Norton (2012). Sethi describes his book as a biog-raphy of a casual labourer, Mohammed Ashraf, "a man who lives on Delhi's pavements"; however the book also tells "a larger story about urban life through his life" (Interview with *Newlaundry*'s Manvi Dhil-lon, 2012). The title of this chapter draws upon Sethi's main interest which drove him to write *A Free Man* and which he articulates in an interview with me (2015): "It all began with an attempt to write differently about labour. I felt that the narratives that we were used to in our writing about labour had now gotten fro-zen." A six-month fellowship at Sarai in the beginning of his career as a journalist gave him a chance to explore forms of writing that went beyond the prevalent journalistic narrative format of "problems and so-lutions"; "The book", he says, "came out of this project." (Interview with *Newslaundry*, 2012). The Sarai programme is a Delhi-based research and creative platform investigating urban culture, technology and me-dia in contemporary India.

In the book, Sethi mentions that he met Ashraf in December 2005, "while working on a story on a proposed Delhi government bill to provide health insurance for construction workers" (2012: 6). The article he was researching when he met Ashraf was published in *Frontline,* a national magazine in India "from the pub-lishers of *The Hindu*" as part of a tri-partite series in December 2005. The articles appear under the tag or section 'Labour Issues'. At the time Sethi was working as a North India correspondent at *The Hindu,* one of

the largest English language dailies in India. A biography penned by him on the website for *Uncovering Asia: The First Asian Investigative Journalism Conference* mentions that in his reporting for *The Hindu* he was covering "mining, conflict and Human Rights". In 2011 he won an international award for his journalism on the torching of three villages by police commandos, the International Committee of the Red Cross award for the best Indian print media article on humanitarian issues. *The Hindu* article reporting Sethi winning the award adds that the article also "spurred the local administration to probe the incident and send aid to the affected villages" (28th February 2012). However, in an interview with *Newslaundry* in 2012, he clarifies that his objective in writing is not to provide policy recommendations to be implemented, but simply that readers might "just observe the material [he] uncovers". I will discuss in this chapter the tension between the questions in interviews that seek to set him up as an expert on various areas of public policies and issues he has reported on, and his interest in foregrounding the writerly experiences of experimenting with form and narrative. For example, on being probed by an interviewer from *Tehelka* (also in 2012) on his participation in Jaipur Literary Festival – despite the involvement of corporate sponsors whose interests might not be compatible with his politics – he responds: "politics is done by the powerful trying to impose a seamless narrative, which is opposed by the kind of anarchy of the everyday or narrative anarchy".

The biography on the *Uncovering Asia* website mentioned above further reports that in 2012 he relocated to Addis Ababa as *The Hindu*'s African correspondent, a role he stayed in until early 2014. Since then he has worked as an Associate Editor in *Business Standard* before going freelance in late 2014. He has been appointed as the Editor-in-Chief of HuffPost India, a Pulitzer-winning online news source, in April 2018. His work was published in *Granta: 130* ("Love Jihad", 2015)*,* the special edition on Indian writing, which showcases the growing trend in non-fiction writing in the country. A version of the *Granta* article appeared in 'The long read' section of *The Guardian* ("'Love jihad' in India and one man's quest to prevent it", 29th Jan, 2015). He was also featured in the 'In Conversation' section of the online version of *Granta* issue, alongside novelist Pankaj Mishra, discussing "the politics of aspiration, Narendra Modi and the future of journalism" (18th May 2015). Recently he has been in the news for being one of a handful of Indian writers, film-makers and artists (most notable amongst them being Arundhati Roy) who have returned their national awards in protest of the institutional silence of these bodies about the murders of rationalist artists Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare and MM Kalburgi (a former Sahitya Akademi prize winner). In an open letter, which was published in the Indian digital daily, *Scroll.in*, Sethi wrote (11th Oct 2015):

Accepting the award, I thought at the time, would be a way of asserting our claim on this space of collective articulation, and acknowledging the efforts of the Akademi's members in carving out an autonomous space for arts and letters in India… recent events suggest that the Akademi is neither interested in supporting writers in their fight to push the boundaries of expression and thought, nor in asserting its autonomy at a time when the spirit of critical inquiry is clearly under threat.

This recent position that he occupies is strategic to the extent that it does not diverge significantly from the position he claimed to occupy in the field as a writer attending Jaipur Literary Festival in 2012 (as well as a journalist for *The Hindu*, who were one of the sponsors), despite the involvement of corporate interests which might not ideologically agree with his own. In fact, there is a sense from the above extract from his letter that he was critical of accepting a national award in the first place because of its association with the government, but also saw it as an opportunity to partake in the attempt to carve out "an autonomous space for arts and letters in India". This is similar to the "wriggle elbow space" he speaks of in his interview with *Tehelka* (2012). Of the relationship between commercial and state interests and the autonomy of his journalism he says in this interview: "people put in money to project certain ideas, and you have to be conscious of that and either work with it or against it depending on what your politics are." However, the open letter can also be seen to be a move away from his position in 2012 where he was reluctant to articulate these concerns publicly in interviews unless probed, as he was aware that such "articulation is also a way of making yourself visible" (interview with Sethi, 2015).

Even more recently Sethi has been engaged in a public correspondence with German journalist, author and co-founder of an experimental journalism platform, Georg Diez. In this series (October 2015 – current), which appears online on the Goethe Institut India website, Sethi and Diez discuss the European refugee crisis. The webpage introduces Sethi as a "New Delhi based journalist", and the author of a work of non-fiction book, who "has written (from various locations) extensively on issues of labour and migration". These articles serve to construct the image of Goethe Institut as an organisation promoting "cultural co-operation" and exchange worldwide that seemingly lies at the heart of Germany's "open society". Sethi, being a willing participant in this transnational exchange, can be construed as an agent increasing his symbolic power in a way that allows him to discourse on a sizeable news event in a European media scene. This series of published correspondence or dialogue is quite similar to the one published by *Granta* between Sethi and Pankaj Mishra; both lead to a discussion of the role of the journalist in constituting a transnational public space, as well as the part that narratives about marginalised subjects play in such work.

However, it is important to highlight Sethi's continual attempts, even in these dialogic exchanges, to foreground the shortcomings of various narrative tropes in understanding the complex and shifting realities of our times. In the first email in response to Diez, for example, he discusses the possibilities of thinking beyond categories that assume the nation-state as their centre (October 2015).

> Perhaps this moment – when nation-states in some of the oldest continually inhabited regions of the world (like Syria and Iraq) collapse – shall result in a re-fashioning of the critical categories of thought and language that we are accustomed to.

Furthermore, he critiques the "amplification of horror" in the media, which, he argues, is "the only politically feasible way Europe can engage with this situation…through the trope of humanitarianism". He continues,

> The current narrative of "rescuing the desperate" allows European nations and commentators to speak of humanitarian rescue and "European Values" without engaging with the strange, policed landscape that we live in, and accept the eternal policing of borders and residents as normal…I think this "march of the musafir" offers us a moment to reflect on the long shadow of the twentieth century and the strange new categories it presents us with – borders, aliens, people smugglers, camps for those who cross a border without permission.

In what follows I discuss the accumulation of symbolic capital over Sethi's career, utilising the concept of meta-capital to explain how his symbolic power or authority allows him firstly to move fluidly between the 'journalistic' and the 'literary fields', secondly to gain recognition and authority in a transnational public sphere, before finally establishing a new role within the transnational public space. In particular, in keeping with the focus of this dissertation, this chapter focuses on the relevance of Sethi's writings about the marginalised to his position in this public space, which based on the discourse around his writings, is focused on challenging "frozen narratives" for representing the reality of labour in marginalised communities.

Writing differently about Labour: *Frontline* and *A Free Man*

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Sethi met the protagonist of his book *A Free Man*, Mohammed Ashraf, while he was working on a series of articles on 'labour issues' which appeared in *Frontline* online magazine in December 2005. 'In a buyer's market' (Sethi, 2nd December 2015) opens on a busy morning in Bara Tuti, a chowk in Delhi, which also functions as a labour *mandi* (or market). The first paragraph of the article features an attention-grabbing and humorous quote from Mohammed Ashraf: "If you had studied psychology, you would know! If you don't wash your feet before you sleep, you get bad dreams. I sleep unwashed, on the pavement every day. Imagine the dreams I get." The first paragraph also posits the author, quite self-consciously, as "the unknowing outsider", and the labour *mandi* as a location "unmarked", "unmapped" and "unseen by those who do not come with the express purpose of looking for it".

The book provides more details of the incongruence of the author's habitus with the surroundings and people that he encounters in Bara Tuti. In the opening chapter, Sethi recounts that when he went back to look for Mohammed Ashraf, the latter's friends Lalloo and Rehaan referred to him as "angrezi murgi" "roaming around Bara Tooti Chown like a headless chicken" (2012: 6,8). The opening chapter also details a scene where Sethi (or Aman bhai, as referred to by Ashraf and his friends in the book) is listening to Ashraf, Lalloo and Rehaan trade stories while sharing a joint with them. Despite his tendency towards the prudent course of action ("I really should not take a hit of this"), he eventually gives in when he is handed the joint because, "after months of listening to the three complain about the perils of construction work, the horrors wreaked by the police and the sorrow of exile, this is the first time I have been invited to do something fun"(8). The narrative in the book is therefore prefaced with a description of how the author bridges the anthropological gap between himself and the subjects. Moreover, in the discourse surrounding the book, this aspect of immersion into an environment assumes a lot of importance, which is taken to be as unknown to most of the readers of the book as it is to the author when he first arrives there. For example, in an interview with a well-known Indian editor, Chiki Sarkar (*Brickmag*, undated), Sethi is prompted to talk about the methodology employed in reporting for the non-fiction book

> *Sarkar*: So, Aman, tell me a bit about what it was like to actually do the reporting. I mean, it often feels to me that reportage is like method acting; you have to throw yourself into it.

Sethi: As a man entering a predominantly masculine space like a labour market, it's easier to slip in because you sit down, you smoke a cigarette, you smoke another cigarette, you have a glass of tea, and over a period of time, there's only so long that people can ignore a tall, bearded man sitting in their midst. So you start talking, and then you try to build this idea of *yaari*, where you try to become friends and you find common things to talk about. And with me it was very clear that we would not

really go into the "How much do you earn, how do you spend that money" kind of stuff early on. One of the things that I thought often when I was reading lifestyle writing about celebrities was that no one actually turns to Mukesh Ambani and says, "So tell me, Mukesh, how much do you earn every month?" So I thought, Let's try to follow those rules to begin with. For instance, in a profile on a rich person, the question would be "So when you're not working, how do you spend your time?" And he'd answer, "I have my private gym, where I jog backwards for my calf muscles." So, similarly, I went in and asked, "Okay, so what do you guys do for free time?" And they said, "We drink." So I said, "Okay, so do you want to?" and they said, "Yeah, sure, sure." Then over a period of time, you get gradually drawn in to that space.

Also present in the discourse is a preoccupation with what motivated Sethi's investigations. In the interview with Sarkar (ibid.), Sethi recounts why he went looking for Bara Tuti:

A Free Man started with a three-part series I was doing for *Frontline* magazine on working Delhi. In 2005 and 2006, Delhi was going through an incredible urban transformation in preparation for the Commonwealth Games. A lot of slums were being cleared, and there was a perception among some of us in the newsroom that Delhi was changing from a city that did nuts-and-bolts manufacturing, getting-your-hands-dirty kind of work and was slowly trying to become a modern city with a financial- or services-driven industry. So we wanted to try to capture this kind of gritty everyday work, and the first part of the series happened to be on construction work. That took me to a site in north-central Delhi called Sadar Bazaar, where you have weekly and daily labour markets, and that's where I met the characters that would come to inhabit my book.

What emerges from this is that Sethi encountered the subjects he would come to write about while covering a beat in New Delhi. Of the article itself, Sethi says in the book, "I had spoken with all the experts, got all my quotes, and arrived early one morning to meet some construction workers and fit their views into a

story that, for all purposes, I had already written" (2012: 6). Ashraf, however, recalls Sethi in the book (ibid.), "had been a terrible interview subject … (and) refused to answer any questions directly"; but his editors noted that he "made for excellent copy". According to this discourse, therefore, it seems that his relationship with Ashraf is built up to be key to his motivation to "write differently about labour" (interview with Sethi, 2015). An example of this is perhaps this quote from his interview with Sarkar (*Brickmag*, undated):

> …when you're trained as a beat reporter, the idea is to look for that macro story. So the project actually began as an attempt to tell this massive macro story about Delhi, where we would write about urban transformation. And then as I began researching, I started getting more and more drawn into a small group of workers, and of them the most prominent was Ashraf.

Also mentioned by Sethi in the discourse about him "writing differently" is the fellowship from the Sarai programme, a research and training initiative based in India focusing on contemporary media and urban culture. In our conversation (May 2015), he mentions that the six-month grant allowed him to read and write "something different". He elaborates that this grant was part of a fellowship awarded to independent practitioners "to research whatever they wanted to write". He then told me about a "whole generation of (contemporary Indian) writers", some of whom are prominent writers of narrative non-fiction, like Basharat Peer (writer of *Curfewed Night,* 2010) and Naresh Fernandes (editor of popular online magazine *Scroll.in* and author of *Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age,* 2012)*,* who were also Sarai fellows. Referring to them as the "Sarai mafia", Sethi's reminiscence of this cultural and artistic hub based around a cafe in the middle of Delhi University, as a "phenomenal place of ferment for young people" who "grew up in the fringes of it", reminds one of the role played by literary salons in Bourdieu's conceptualisation of artistic autonomy and value production. Furthermore in our conversation, Sethi mentions the influence of the current trends in academic, literary and artistic fields on his work which pushes the boundaries of existing narrative structures and forms through the connections forged in the Sarai cafe and network.

One of the limitations, he mentioned during the interview with me, of journalistic writing is due to the limited material that most journalists read outside news stories. In his interview with Sarkar (*Brickmag,* undated), he mentions that during this time he read and was influenced by Studs Terkel's *Working* (1974), Ben Hamper's *Rivethead* (1991) and Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933). He also mentions that, "those books were not of India, so I thought it would be interesting to have such an account here,

so it started as an experiment, then gradually grew". He was looking for "a form of writing that went beyond problems and solutions" (Sethi in interview with *Newslaundry*, 2012). He thought the shorter and more conventional forms (assumedly conventional pieces published in newspapers) were "judgemental", as it left less room for the "subject position" (Interview with Sethi, 2015). He further said in the interview that the only way to understand the "arc of someone's aspirations", and why they do what they do, is to spend a lot of time with

them, speak their language and get close to their "decision matrix"; this is presumably what *A Free Man* allowed Sethi to do to a much greater extent than his article in *Frontline*. In the book he writes:

> I am flummoxed by the manner in which Ashraf and his friends make decisions.
>
> 'Why did you come back, Munna?'
>
> 'I felt like it, Aman Bhai. I missed Delhi.'…
>
> Ashraf is frowning. I think I've asked too many questions. It's bad form to keep asking people about pasts they are reluctant to confront. At Bara Tooti people come and go all the time. A man could get up from a drinking session, walk down the road for a piss, keep walking till he reached the railway station, hop onto a train, and return after a year without anyone really missing him. (Sethi, 2012: 54)

In the article 'In a buyer's market' (2005) which precedes the book, Sethi also foregrounds the limitations of the "existing narratives" to understand (and narrate) the "condition of the worker", arising from "the basic assumption of such narratives, that the state is the prime mover in society". Moreover, the text in the article suggests that (one of) the way(s) out of the line of inquiry about the workers' lives which involves reporting "problems and solution" (interview with *Newslaundry*, 2012), might be through an increased focalisation of the workers' points of view.

> In interviews with *Frontline,* construction workers repeatedly questioned this assumption. Workers often view themselves very differently from the way the state views them. The absence of fixed spaces of work and residences, seen as a 'problem' by state narratives, is often seen as "liberating" by workers. (Sethi, 2005)

This claim is supported in the article with a quote from Pervez, carpenter at Jama Masjid Chowk (near Sadar Bazaar/Bara Tuti): "I earn about the same as a factory worker, but I come and go as I please. I work when I want to, I go home when I feel like it." This seems to be a prelude to the theme of *azadi* that Sethi develops further in *A Free Man*. In the book, he mentions that in response to his worry "in the early days" of his research, that his presence in the space, as well as his interactions with the workers at Bara Tuti, was stopping the latter from looking for work, Ashraf says: "Only the barsati mendaks work every day…we work when we feel like it" (16).

To elucidate this sentiment further, Sethi explains, using in his own narratorial voice: "Ashraf and Lalloo could be described as 'work oriented' rather than 'work seeking'. They usually worked for a week at a time, followed by a week of leisure financed by their earnings" (17). "The ideal job", as explained by Ashraf, "has the perfect balance of kamai and azadi" (19). Expressing a sentiment that has since received a lot of attention in the interviews and book reviews, Ashraf is quoted as saying: "Azadi is the freedom to tell the maalik to fuck off when you want to. The maalik owns our work. He does not own us." (ibid.). This attitude to work – either lackadaisical or liberatory, depending on the reader's perspective – is very similar to one attributed to Pervez, the carpenter in Sethi's 2005 article (quoted above). However, the narrative arc that this theme feeds into is not identical in both these texts. The distinction is apparent when the difference in focalisation is observed within the texts. The unregulated nature of the space – utilised by workers for residence and work – and the futile attempts by the government to regulate it, is the primary concern of the article. The article is told with a macro focus: this focus is established in the deck, which mentions macroeconomic factors like "poverty and migration" which "bind labourers into informal networks" in the chowks, and how "Government's efforts to formalise these have foundered". The article uses multiple focalisation, e.g.when it begins with a sentence in which Sethi describes Bara Tuti as observed by him, "the outsider".

However, the first paragraph is nonetheless dominated by the reported speech of Mohammed Ashraf – the catchy and humorous quote from Ashraf which Sethi chooses to open the article with suggests that he is both a construction worker who sleeps on the streets but also, as the person "nominated" by others in the space to speak to the "outsider" reporter, a representative figure within and for the group. Ashraf is constructed to be the authorised source, legitimised by his co-workers' assent, who can "explain the inner workings" of the Bara Tuti labour market. The first paragraph ends with the line "'It's like this,' he begins", followed by an ethnographic account of the space, the routine of the workers who inhabit it either seasonally

or permanently, and details of the workers' daily work and responsibilities. The implication of this focalisation within the article is that this account derives authenticity from the construction of Ashraf as an insider. The "groups of softly whispering men huddled in tight knots" in the first paragraph then becomes intelligible to the author ("large numbers of men sitting in easily identifiable groups"). The account supplements observations of the author ("The largest group consist of an old man…scowling 40-somethings") with information which presumably originates from Ashram who has an insider knowledge of the space ("Contractors usually negotiate with the masteries to outline their needs for the day, and the masteries organise the necessary labour"). The narratorial role, therefore, seems to be shared between Ashraf and the author. In addition to the input from Ashraf, Sethi also includes quotes from other workers to describe the daily life of casual construction workers. For example,

> "You have to be smart," quips Mukhraj rather defensively, "otherwise you could try for years to be a mastery and still fail."

Setting up Ashraf as the knowledgeable insider, as well as the use of voice and register which resembles fiction ("quips Mukhraj rather defensively", "unmarked…unmapped…and unseen") moves away from the traditional hard news, opinion or even feature stories. However, this description of the everyday life of the workers gives way to more macroeconomic concerns, a form of engaging with issues of labour in narratives that Sethi in his later works tries to step away from. The focalisation in the second half of the article is similar to that used in more traditional news formats: the authorial voice is mostly homodiegetic, interspersed with quotations from labourers as well as other sources to support the author's points of view. For example,

> Maistry, carpenter, painter or common labourer, the one thing that binds these groups together is the shared experience of poverty and migrancy…According to the Report of the Second Labour Commission in 2002, "wages are by and large at minimum or sub-minimum levels."

Also:

> The absence of any long-term relationship between the employer and the employed, a defining feature of the unorganized sector, allows the contractor to escape liabilities and compensation payments with ease. "There is no contract saying that I work for a particular contractor," says Ram Singh, a labourer. "Most contractors simply say that the injured person was a passer-by who strayed into the construction area."

The quote from Pervez (as above) appears in this second half of the article. It leads to a discussion about the failure of the Building and other Construction Workers Act, enacted in 1996. Sethi includes quotations from government officials in charge of implementing the welfare programme, who cite a variety of reasons that "not a single worker has registered" to the scheme. However, the article ends with a point made by a labourer on the subject, by way of a conclusion:

> Kallu, a mazdoor from Saharanpur, pulls on his *beedi* and sums up why the project will not work. "The *sarkar* (government) don't understand us. All *sarkari* projects are conceived with the single aim of making someone very rich. That someone is never us."

Sethi thereby focalises the labourers' points of view to indict the state as inept, failing to provide solutions to the problems facing the labourers. The quotations from Kallu and Pervez feed into the construction of an anti-authoritarian sentiment as pervasive within the social world of the workers themselves.

In contrast to this, the book, *A Free Man* (2015), does not attempt to develop the concept of *azadi* that Ashraf expounds (19) into a macro theme. Instead the passages provide a closer understanding of Ashraf's personal philosophy and aspirations.

> To become a businessman is Ashraf's fondest dream because he believes it will free him from the clutches of the maalik forever. Even a mazdoor must answer to the man who hires him for the day; but to be a businessman, Ashraf believes, is to never have to be answerable to anyone. (21)

The chapter ends with a passage listing the many professions that Ashraf has practiced through his life, "many things in many places" (21). This tendency of the author to attempt to write a coherent trajectory of Ashraf's life, as well as Ashraf's lack of interest in retelling the biography of his life to the author is apparent in other places in the narrative. For example, in the third chapter of part two of the book, as Ashraf recounts his impressions of visiting Bombay, Sethi writes of his frustration to that end:

> …this is the first I have heard of him living in that city. I am still trying to build a year-wise timeline of Ashraf's life but as far as Ashraf is concerned, he was brought up in Patna and is now in Delhi – everything else can only be accessed via oblique enquiries. As a result every interview is a bit like playing a word association game. (74)

In fact, there are points within the narrative timeframe that Sethi is interviewing other subjects in Bara Tuti because Ashraf and he have had a falling out due the author's insistence on a clear timeline of Ashraf's life (pp 94). Therefore, as opposed to the focus on the 'macro' story in the article which this general notion of "liberation" or *azadi* feeds into, in the book it serves to contextualise Ashraf's life choices and provides a window into a way of life he comes to represent. The book, therefore, despite Sethi's original intentions of being about "urban transformations" (Interview with Sarkar, undated) in Delhi, became not only about a particular group of labourers, and how they live and think, but about the humanity of an individual whose story both illustrates and complicates the more general narrative about such transformations

> …the book itself is consistently being reviewed as an exposé on poverty…But for me, Ashraf is more of a philosopher than someone who should have another life… So Ashraf, as a person, rather than…a sociological concept, I think he's kind of a phenomenal person. I think that Ashraf, as a person, would've been an absolutely interesting person to write about even if he wasn't a middle-aged man living on the pavement, but was a middle-class man sitting in a residential colony in Delhi. (Interview with Sandhu, 2013)

> Arguably this is why A Free Man has had a broader resonance beyond just a book about labour, because it's finally a book about how to live a life. It gives us a sense of what it is like if you step away from a predetermined trajectory of how a life should be…the idea of escape is inherent in all our lives… (we) are all at some point exhausted and worn down by the lives that we lead, and the idea that for (some time) we might be completely free is extremely seductive. (Interview with Tehelka, 2012)

One of the most poignant narrative arcs in *The Free Man* deals with Satish being afflicted with tuberculosis, before dying following a three-month stint at a public hospital. Similar to the theme of *azaadi* which finds prominence in the discourse surrounding the book, this topic has also been the subject of attention. For example, in the interview with *Newslaundry,* Sethi encounters a question about the public health system in India. The interviewer asks him, based on his experience of hospitals in North Delhi and Calcutta while writing the book, does he think that "the system (is) meeting their needs?" However, the first mention of Satish and TB treatment in public hospitals can be found in the blog Sethi posted in during his Sarai fellowship in 2006. The blogpost, which was published in August 2006, is titled "Wrong Number in a Small Town". The extract on pp.155-159 of the book (2010) is a very close version of this earlier blogpost. The

blogpost uses descriptive language to set the scene of the metropolitan public hospital, as well as character development, free indirect speech and dialogues similar to fiction writing. The following examples illustrate the linguistic features used in the blogpost resembling the narrative style of literary work, mainly novels:

On the bedside table, Satish's earthen water pot is gone, as is his spare underwear that used to hang on the headrest. His pink plastic bowl and steel tumbler have been replaced by plastic Pepsi bottles (now filled with water), a loaf of Harvest Gold bread, a solitary boiled egg.

Singh Sahib says that, after a point, Satish just lost his will to live. Three months in hospital had worn him down. Then a young boy across the room died and someone else took his place. Then Pratap Singh was discharged and went home to his village. Then Krishna, then Ammi and Salil, and finally Manoj. Only Satish and Singh Sahib remained – staring blankly at each other across the narrow aisle. And then Satish left.

"Lallan Singh is your neighbour. He doesn't have a phone. Please call him, I am his son speaking." "No, I'm sorry, Lallan Singh's not my neighbour. You have the wrong number."
"No wait, one last question, I'm calling all the way from Delhi. Is this the kirane ki dukaan near the doodhwalla?"
"No, it isn't. I'm sorry."

The blogpost (which would later find its way into the book, Sethi, 2010: 157) contrasts the small towns and villages these men come from, with the large metropolitan hospitals they end up in being attended by a group of strangers: "Fortunately Beena was a small town, its phone insulated from the incessant violence of changing numbers". However, whereas home remained a distant and immutable memory which Satish, and others like him (in the blogpost Sethi also talks about Singh Sahib who calls home at every opportunity to no avail), the blogpost ends by breaking that illusion: "…the numbers don't change. But people do. People change and people move…and the numbers, just like hospital beds, are transferred to other homes and families." This theme of loneliness in the lives of men Sethi wrote about is expanded upon in the book in several chapters. For example, in Section 2 called *Akelapan* Sethi introduces the topic of how the state deploys the Bombay Prevention of Begging Act 1959 to pick up men like Ashraf and Satish, who do not "have any visible means of sustenance", with the following quote from Asharaf's friend Lalloo:

Because people vanish all the time, Aman Bhai...But no one looks for them anymore. It's been ten years since Ashraf spoke to his mother, Aman Bhai; he's terrified there will be no one to look for him when he's gone. (117)

In the next section of the book, which is named *Ajnabi*, Sethi continues the theme of loneliness and lack of a sense of belonging in the lives of these men by relating an incident when Ashraf forgot the only phone number he remembered - his mother's (2010: 173- 176):

For a week after Ashraf forgot his mother's address he didn't know what to do. He didn't know what it meant to be a complete lawaris without any fixed address, family or home...Kaka told him it was a good thing...Homeless lawaris people like you are completely free...But, one day he woke up and heard that the plumber in Bara Tooti, Ram Avatar, had died in his sleep and he understood. Lawaris meant he would die on a footpath in Delhi, and no one would even know. (Sethi, 2010: 176)

In the book, as opposed to Sethi's blog, these personal narratives are weaved thematically and linked to critique of the ways in which institutional logic and its enforcement through agents employed in state bureaucracy or in other positions of authority negatively impacts men like the protagonists of *A Free Man*. For example, in the chapter about Satish's illness and subsequent death, Sethi reports:

With the hospital running at full capacity, every patient admitted means another booted from his or her bed and declared fit to go home...Patients are allowed ten minutes to plead their case. The lucky ones are put onto stretchers and bundled off into one of the hospital's many wards; the rest are asked to return when their conditions worsens (143- 144).

In Sethi's recorded video interview with *Newslaundry* (2012), this theme of sorrow and loneliness feeds into a discussion about public hospitals in general and the policies surrounding public health. The interview, however, does not associate this theme with the character Satish; instead it is in relation to Ashraf, who also died of tuberculosis since the publication of *The Free Man,* that this point of discussion is raised.

Interviewer: "Have you heard from Ashraf?"

> *Sethi:* "I was in touch with Ashraf for a significant period of time and since you asked Ashraf died of tuberculosis recently…"
>
> *Interviewer:* "…the sorrow in the book is in the final destination of many of these people which seems to always be a hospital and tuberculosis stares many of them in the face. To that extent you have dealt with the sorrow in their lives. So like everything else that you have explored and discovered while writing this book…you have actually been to the hospitals in North Delhi and the hospitals in Calcutta and it seems…is the system gearing up and meeting their needs?"
>
> *Sethi:* "Given the funding that public health has in India, given the priority that it has, the hospitals are doing the best they can...the doctors and nurses...are dealing with the paucity of resources and with the fact that at one level this is not something that is of great interest to policy. There seems to be a focus on private healthcare and super speciality hospitals...there is a whole edifice that is gearing itself towards providing healthcare for a very different kind of people."
>
> *Interviewer:* "Palpable shortage of resources is what I felt in your description."

This exchange suggests that the relationship between the author, Sethi, and Ashraf, is quite significant to what might be understood as the middlebrow audience of *Newslaundry*. The event of his death here, for example, is useful in creating an affective connection with the reading public, which generates an interest about the state of Indian public health services, and how accessible and effective they are. This is a point that I discuss in the previous chapter in relation to Faleiro's affective connection with Leela in *Beautiful Thing* and the way that it is deployed within the public space to raise awareness and start conversations about various issues regarding government policies. However, the reflexive nature of Sethi's blogposts, in contrast with Faleiro's series of newspaper articles, displays a relative transparency about the ways in which these texts were produced. For example, as an introduction to his blogpost on May 16, 2006, he writes: "As usual, it's highly abstracted from my conversations with construction labour in paharganj."

In another piece, published on February 9, 2006, he expands: "It is now, with great pleasure, that I narrate 'Ashraf ki kahani'. Mohammed Ashraf is a painter at Bara Tuti Chowk; his Kahani is loosely based on one long interview that I conducted not too long ago, and a few informal conversations that preceded it." Here he signals the fact that these texts are "abstracted", stylised, and includes his own interpretations of his interactions with his subjects.

He also exhibits an awareness of his narratorial role mediating these experiences to fit the specifications of the form of writing he is adopting. Consequently upon his book being published he seems to be aware of

the expectations placed upon his authorial self to embody the affective connections to appeal to a middle-brow audience, presumably ones who would watch the interview with *NewsLaundry* I have quoted from above. In the interview he accedes to the demands of this role by answering the question he has been asked about the relationship between policy and the experiences of the subjects he has spent five years observing. However, he dissents when asked whether his objective was to educate the Indian middle classes about the men and women who form the Indian working class, and "sensitize without sermonising". He says,

> "No...your objective is to write this book, your objective is to make this book as porous as possible, your objective is to let the material breathe as much as possible...but if this book means that now everyone will look at labour differently, I mean it's great if you want to do that, but that's not my interest."

UP Love Jihad Story Goes Abroad

In a 1000-word news story in the Indian business daily *Business Standard*, Sethi, who was a staff writer at the time, writes about how fringe political activities of radicals have not only "ruptured" the "social fabric" of villages in Uttar Pradesh, but are also affecting mainstream politics, and more immediately the state by-elections that were upcoming when the article was published on 11th September 2014. The article, titled 'The fringe is the new centre in UP by-elections', appears in the 'Politics' and 'News' section of *Business Standard* and forwards the argument that communal politics, and the subsequent legitimacy it accords to "fringe" Hindutva religious figures in public and political life in rural and small-town Uttar Pradesh, could affect the poll results in the state as well as nationally. This article was followed by an op-ed the next day, on the topic of love jihad, in the same news publication, also authored by Sethi ('Love Jihad: A fictitious problem with real consequences', 12th September 2014). The latter article presents a point similar to the former the latter's deck, drawing from the body of the article, claims, "The Hindu right has latched onto anxiety over inter-religious relationships and turned it into an electoral campaign issue". The first article, which is a hard news piece, refers to and includes a hyperlink to another article, also about love jihad, published a month ago in the same publication by another journalist. It appears, therefore, that Sethi's articles in *Business Standard*, reflects the organisation's interest in covering the issue of love jihad, the rise of religious and communal intolerance and its effect on elections.

Sethi authored another longer piece on the topic of love jihad, which appeared in *Granta:* 130, a special edition on "Indian writing" ("Love Jihad", 2015). A version of the *Granta* article also appeared in the

Guardian "The long read" section ("'Love jihad' in India and one man's quest to prevent it", 29th January 2015), under the tag "India". The latter two publications, of course, have a much greater transnational reach compared to *Business Standard.* The article appearing in *Granta* (and *Guardian)* has a different focus compared to the previous two articles appearing in *Business Standard.* Although it carries a fuller (and retrospectively detailed) account of the by-elections in UP which is mentioned in the first two articles, as well as results at a national scale, Sethi mentions that he was mainly interested in the identity, motivations and realities of the men who enthusiastically followed and supported the politicians: "While the politicians were transparently opportunistic in their utterances and their aims, I was interested in the motivations of their followers. Who were these men? What were the lives they returned to when the elections ended?" The focus in this article, therefore, seems to be more in line with Sethi's personal interest rather than reflecting *Business Standard*'s corporate one.

In this article, as in *A Free Man,* Sethi follows an eloquent and colourful central protagonist to understand the "decision matrix" or motivations of his subject. Sethi also mentions in the *Granta* article that he "chanced upon Chauhan while on assignment for [his] newspaper, the Business Standard, in Saharanpur, a trading town in western Uttar Pradesh." Again, this reflexive proclamation is similar to the one he makes in the introductory chapter of *A Free Man,* where Sethi (2010: 6) recounts that he met Ashraf while writing a story for *Frontline.* In addition to connoting transparency and reflexivity regarding the author's subjectivity in the spaces he is writing from, the inclusion of the quoted text in the article (as well as the book) signals to the reader a distance from the journalistic voice he uses in the previous pieces. Simultaneously, this accords the account the authority derived from the assumption of the author's expertise and knowledge of the subject on the basis of his journalistic capital. Due to the positioning of the piece as one that deals with the "motivations" and the "lives" of "these men" it takes on the cultural function of an ethnographical or sociological text. Publication in *Granta* and the *Guardian,* along with the authorial positioning of Sethi, as a reporter – the deck of the article in *Guardian* reads "Aman Sethi reports on India's rising religious tensions"– signals that the piece of writing is for an international 'general, informed audience', or in other words, what I refer to as the transnational middlebrow.

The primary character appearing in one form or another in all of the articles is Vijaykant Chauhan, who Sethi introduces as one of the "radical" followers in the first article. Pictures of him accompany all the stories, even though in the second one he is not mentioned in the body of the article itself. It can be assumed

from this that his character is the main focalising character of the stories, even with their differing narratorial focus. Therefore, although the register of the three articles differ, the authorial focus on the radicalism at the grassroots level in the North Indian state of UP is clearly implied in the aforementioned quotation, as well as in a quote from Sethi in the first article: "Yet, evidence on the ground suggests it will be years before Uttar Pradesh's ruptured social fabric repairs itself." In this regard, perhaps, even in the earlier hard news article, "The fringe is the new centre in UP by-elections", Sethi showcases a tendency to divert from the macro-story. Although the article's main focus is a topic of national public interest, i.e., the UP by-elections, he focalises on Chauhan's voice and point of view in the first few paragraphs.

The first article demarcates Chauhan's point of view from the authorial point of view through the use of direct speech as quotations. In the longer article, which appears in *Granta* and *The Guardian,* there is a demarcation using similar stylistic means between the author's and the protagonist's points of view. There is no evidence of indirect free speech, or indirect free thought, which typically characterises literary fiction; dialogue between the author (as a character in a narrative level) and the protagonist, on the other hand, is utilised sparingly, but significantly, to draw out Chauhan's worldview. This narrative format allows the author to take on the role of an alterodiegetic narrator, as both the author (as a character) and the protagonist are constructed as sharing the role of the focalising agent in these parts of the article. In the passage below taken from the version of the article that appears in *Granta* and *The Guardian* (29 January 2015), for example, the author expresses his reservations about the protagonist Chauhan's "campaign" (as he does at several points within the narrative), but the protagonist counters the points he makes with his own arguments informed by his worldview.

> I once asked Vijaykant Chauhan if he thought it was possible for a Hindu and a Muslim,
> with complete knowledge of each other's beliefs, to be in love. My fear, I told him, was that
> his campaign was fostering suspicion and fear rather than amity and understanding.
> "We are not against love, Aman-ji. We are against deception and forcible conversion," he said.
> He referred to Muslim Bollywood superstars with Hindu wives. "In most cases, the women are
> brainwashed and converted. Like Indira Gandhi."

The conversational style utilised here, therefore, allows the author to act as a mediator (or translator) between the assumed reader's worldview and that of the protagonist; the author seems to vocalise the questions the assumed reader might pose to Chauhan. (The assumed reader, consequently, judging from Sethi's

narratorial stance, or starting point, as well as the fact that the piece was written for *Granta,* appears to be from an entirely different socio-economic class compared to the protagonist.) In contrast to this, the earliest article, "The fringe is the new centre in UP by-elections", introduces Chauhan as a "radical" in the first paragraph. The authorial voice here is heterodiegetic as the author, although obviously the focalising agent, stays outside the text, as is common in hard news articles. In fact a quote from Chauhan himself is used to support the authorial point (that "the fringe is the new centre"):

> "I've been fighting 'love jihad' for decades," he said, pulling out a ledger stuffed with news clippings detailing his exploits, "Back then, everyone called me a lunatic, but now they listen to me."

When compared with the article in *Granta* and *Guardian,* it's possible to see that although the first article utilises many of the quotations by Chauhan that are also used in the latter article, it does not bridge the gap between the viewpoints of the assumed reader and Chauhan to the same extent. The latter article, however, is not entirely from Chauhan's point of view. Aside from the alterodiegetic presence in the text of the author, an example of which was cited above, the longer format of the text also affords the author the opportunity to include passages that are autodiegetic, for example, the passage where Sethi describes his conversation with the Hindu retired schoolteacher and a group of Hindu boys. There are, moreover, also, heterodiegetic passages, for example, the passage containing a quote from the local activist Shandar Ghufran about the problem with the campaign men like Chauhan have launched, as well as the following passage which draws on a conversation with Mohammed Aslam, a man displaced from his village by communal riots. The use of such variable focalisation in this article serves an important function. It allows Sethi to write a "multilayered narrative that does not rob the subjects of their agency or humanity" ("Gareeb Aadmi ka Kaun Dekhta Hai?", 5th February 2006), while also providing the macro-level political context in which the actions of these subjects take place. This macro-level context takes a different form compared to the one in the first article in *Business Standard,* "The fringe is the new centre in UP by-elections": it is more detailed, and thus renders the subjectivity of the subjects more accessible to a transnational audience. For example, the following paragraph from the latter article describes the state of Uttar Pradesh, the demographic distribution of the state, and the historical evolution of the various castes, details which are notably absent from the articles in *Business Standard* (12 September 2014):

If Uttar Pradesh were a country, it would be the fifth most populous in the world. China, India, the US, Indonesia and then Uttar Pradesh, on a par with Brazil and some way above Pakistan, Russia and Japan. More than 200 million people live here, a fifth of whom are Muslim. The rest are mostly Hindu, and divided broadly between three mutually antagonistic caste groups: the upper-caste Brahmins and Thakurs; the lower-caste Dalits; and the "other backward classes" such as the Yadavs. While castes were once divided by hereditary occupations such as priests, warriors, traders, animal herders and manual scavengers, years of lower-caste political mobilisation and emancipation have blurred these hierarchies.

In the earliest two articles, the larger contextual framing also exists, but differs from the third article appearing in *Granta* and *Guardian,* thus giving clues to their respective intended purposes in the field and their assumed audience. To quote the first article:

Love jihad –or the apparent practice of young Muslim men allegedly seducing Hindu girls to convert to Islam – once existed on the outer-fringe of the political spectrum of the revivalist Hindutva politics. Now, it may have become the primary plank of the BJP's bid to win back 11 Vidhan Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh (UP) in a by-election scheduled for this Saturday.

In this article, therefore, the concept of "love jihad" is explained to the readers, who are assumed to have some previous knowledge of the political significance of communal incitement by religious figures in UP with its "diverse castes" of Hindus. The second article takes a broader view to understand the issue of "love jihad" and its effects, beyond the effects on immediate political events like the UP by-election. In the second paragraph it poses the question that it then goes on to answer: "So what is it really: A fiction, or a grave social problem?" To support his argument that this "criminalisation of love…across religious boundaries" by leaders of the fundamentalist Hindu party BJP to further their political aims is a "grave social problem", Sethi quotes excerpts from interviews with a local activist and a couple of residents affected by rising communal tensions. Interestingly, he also cites an interview with historian Charu Gupta in *Business Standard* which was published a few days before the publication of his own article ("Love jihad campaign treats women as if they are foolish", Interview with Indulekha Aravind, 6th September 2014). All these sources and interviews are also used in the later article which appears in *Granta*.

In the first paragraph of the second article (op-ed), Sethi quotes Amit Shah, the president of BJP, who says: "Love jihad is a media creation, not our terminology. It is a grave social problem". In the article, Sethi opposes this claim and forwards his own point of view backed by interviews with experts and witnesses. In the third article, appearing in *Granta* and *Guardian*, Sethi mentions Amit Shah, who he describes as "Modi's most trusted lieutenant", and quotes an election speech by him inciting communal hatred. However, in the next paragraph in this article he mentions that rather than being interested in the motivations of the "transparently opportunistic" politicians, he was instead curious about the motivations of the ones who followed these political figures. So although the sources and the overall topic of these three articles overlap, the authorial role, as it is constructed textually, differs. In the case of these three articles particularly, the main difference between the first and second articles on one hand and the third article on the other seems to be in the way the author writes himself, and his relation to the subjects, within the text. In an interview with *Tehelka*, Sethi distinguishes between the different forms he writes by saying that when doing journalistic stories "…you are trying to get a story out and what you feel about that story is not important at this point in a newspaper". In contrast, while writing *A Free Man* his relationship with the subject ("friendship" as he tells the interviewer from *Tehelka*) meant that while writing about his recorded conversations with Ashraf as a narrator he did engage with his feelings in the same way. So while Sethi makes a point about the varying degrees in which he would insert his own authorial character and agency within the text depending on its format, it is noteworthy that he distinguishes his authorial role while writing *A Free Man* from that of writing articles for newspapers. On the other hand, it also raises questions about whether his authorial subjectivity in the longer article appearing as "Love Jihad" in *Granta,* and "Love jihad in India and one man's quest to prevent it" in *Guardian* resembles his journalistic writing, his reportage writing in the book format, or straddles the lines between both.

There is a similarity between the book and the *Granta/The Guardian* article in the way Sethi introduces his encounter with the protagonist and scene of the narrative. In the article he says that he "chanced upon Chauhan while on assignment for my newspaper, the Business Standard, in Saharanpur, a trading town in western Uttar Pradesh". This is similar to the paragraph in the first chapter of the book where Sethi explains how he met Ashraf: "I first met him (Ashraf) in December 2005 while working on a story on a proposed Delhi government bill to provide health insurance for construction workers." (pp. 6). Other similarities between authorial subjectivity as constructed in the book and the third article might be a back and forth conversation, expressed as dialogues, between the protagonist and the author, as well as accounts of the author

entering and inhabiting the characters' space for a period of time. In fact, the third article begins with the line: "Every few days, Vijaykant Chauhan WhatsApps me a photograph of himself", followed closely by "Last week, I received a photograph of Chauhan posed beside a scooter laden with slabs of raw meat. 'What's up, Chauhan-ji?' I asked, when I called him up that afternoon. 'Why is a crowd gathered around a hunk of meat?'". The article, therefore, begins by Sethi establishing the fact that he has established some form of a relationship with the protagonist. This feature in the text is similar to the text and discourse surrounding the book, rather than the *Business Standard* articles, which revealed no evidence of a relationship between the protagonist and the author. In terms of its perceived affective involvement of the author with the subject, this article sits somewhere between the book and the journalistic works appearing in *Business Standard*.

Of course the piece appearing in *Granta,* a British literary magazine, in a special edition for Indian writing, is important to the positioning of the article in the cultural sphere. Sethi, in my conversation with him (May, 2015), acknowledged that being featured in *Granta* would have been far harder if it weren't a special issue on India. Exhibiting reflexivity about his position in the global cultural sphere he mentions that this is another example of "subcontinental elites benefitting from Western interest in pluralism and diversity". Although he is aware of the limitations of the representativeness of such efforts in the field, and critical of global elites "churning out person of colour narratives" to claim the right to articulate the plight of the dispossessed and "oppressed", he nevertheless mentions that he is "not going to say 'no' if you want to put me in *Granta*". This is again akin to the sort of "wriggle elbow space" he mentions in his interview with *Tehelka,* and that I have mentioned in earlier sections. Moreover, the prestige associated with the cultural field, as well as *Granta*'s position within the field was a key factor in Sethi's article being published in the *Guardian* 'The long read' section, and thus being more accessible to a transnational middlebrow audience. Although Sethi is credited as the author in the by-line of the article in the *Guardian,* the piece is not accompanied by a detailed profile of the author; instead the fact that it is an extract from "the current issue of Granta" is mentioned. The article appearing in Guardian, therefore, also serves to publicise the issue of *Granta* to its readers, especially to those interested in reading stories about India. This points towards the interdependency between the two publications, *Guardian* and *Granta,* the former a prominent newspaper with literary supplements and the latter a literary periodical, as well as between the fields of literature and journalism.

Dear Aman: Published Correspondences

Whereas following the release of *A Free Man* Sethi was interviewed on various media platforms, some of which mentioned in last the section, the publication of "Love Jihad" did not involve similar publicity. This is another distinction between the two pieces of work following from the discussion above. However, it is interesting to note that an email "conversation" discussing "Love Jihad" (and other topics which I will discuss in the next section) between novelist Pankaj Mishra and Sethi was published in the online edition of *Granta*: 130. Firstly, this feature of authorial conversations underlines the literariness of the publication. Secondly, as is evident from the following extract from Sethi's email to Mishra, it provides readers access to the former's reflections on his article(s) in a way that resembles articulations of self-critique in interviews following the publication of *A Free Man.* This allows the author's personal views to factor into the reading of the piece, which is a key feature of the literary middlebrow (Driscoll, 2014). This particular "conversation" will be discussed in detail shortly, but the following point Sethi makes in it regarding his article on Chauhan is interesting to note.

> The bigger question, I suppose, is if we are producing interesting narratives for those bored by the self-aggrandising pronouncements of the state. In my writing, I fear becoming a prisoner of that which I critique. The state (and its affiliates, like Vijaykant Chauhan – the protagonist of my text 'Love Jihad') produce such hypnotic charge, that it forces us to constantly contest it on its own terrain, rather than to seek radical spaces elsewhere. This, perhaps, is my biggest concern with my two pieces on Vijaykant Chauhan and Make in India – that they describe a slightly claustrophobic world going to hell in a handcart.

In addition to his critical attitude to his article "Love Jihad", this published exchange also reveals a drive on Sethi's part to not only finding new ways of writing, but also to produce narratives which challenge mainstream state-prescribed values, which interpellate readers to engage with it on the basis of its own "radical" values. The "fear" Sethi describes here seems to be to become a "prisoner" of a particular format of writing, which then produces its own biases and sensibilities. Here, Sethi might be seen to be coming back to his misgivings about popular formats used in the mainstream press, which is evident in the following quote from his blogpost about his Sarai project:

> …by repeatedly using the same metaphors to describe someone you create an icon, that can clicked to get a spontaneous, yet utterly predictable, response. Over the years, the media and the

state have successfully written people so vividly, that as a journalist, one no longer feels the need to talk to anyone at all. (5th February 2006)

This constant quest for new ways of writing also reflects Sethi's views on the need to constantly struggle against narrative forms becoming institutionalised. In our interview he said that the problem with presenting one's work as a "new age literary movement is that it dates very fast", and being recognised as a writer who belongs to a certain generation of writers, or who writes a "new form", is that "you gradually become 'the man'" (May 2015). Further during our interview he mentioned, in a similar strain to the one he expressed in the *Granta* "conversation" quoted above ("The state…produce such hypnotic charge, that it forces us to constantly contest it on its own terrain, rather than to seek radical spaces elsewhere") that most journalists seem to be surprised at the state of institutions and lament it, whereas to him it is more worthwhile to "step out of the space where you are constantly bringing the nation and the state into the writing".

Sethi's public exchange with Pankaj Mishra (May 2015) concludes with an allusion to the contemporary non-fiction works being written and published in India. Mishra's words in the following excerpt illustrates some ideas that have been discussed so far in my thesis about the relationships established within the field of cultural production between literary journalism and challenging the established ways of imagining marginalised individuals through writing differently:

> And, really, the best recent books on contemporary India – *The Beautiful and the Damned*, *A Free Man*, *Beautiful Thing*, *Churning the Earth*, *Curfewed Night* – are those that undermine conventional perceptions and propose another mode of enquiry – they have a more complex idea of human beings, and there is no question that this is the most exciting turn in Indian non-fiction writing in English, and that however demoralising political events in India may seem today we will witness over the long term a creative and intellectual flowering.

Two of the works discussed in the quote above, *Beautiful Thing* and *A Free Man*, are of course texts I focus on as representative examples and as case studies in this thesis. Here Mishra is proposing that the journalists who write in this form are performing a role that goes beyond the literary; in fact their agency seems to, in his view, stretch to counter the structures of oppression within the Indian political system. The manner in which a literary journalist is imagined to affect the political public sphere within India in this

exchange is through an "imagining (of) radically new ways of being", which Sethi points out in his response to Mishra. Sethi suggests that his role as a journalist and writer to be that of someone who is "paid to think up radical futures". Although he is cautious about asserting any claims about being a mouthpiece for marginalised or underprivileged individuals and groups, he views his role as a writer who challenges "accounts that, in the guise of writing about others, validate the life and aspirations of the writer". In short, contemporary literary journalism, including the works of Faleiro and Sethi, is positioned within the cultural field as a practice that allows the decentring of middle-class structural viewpoints that flatten the experiences of working class people. In so doing, the actors involved in the production and circulation of these works express hope that the "radical spaces" that exist within the Indian social spaces contribute to new narratives within the political public sphere. This quote from a blogpost by Sethi (Feb 6, 2006) sums up the motivation that guides their agency:

> In conclusion I would like to highlight the fact that, irrespective of how misguided they may be (or seem), meediyaa discourses prepare the foundation for state intervention and policy. Thus, alternative discourses that highlight the tactility and efficacy of informal networks should prove useful in enhancing the bargaining power of Kallu, Mohandas, Mohammed Ashraf, and Banno Devi, should they require it.

The email exchange with Mishra (18 May 2015), however, is not the only published correspondence Sethi participated in; as mentioned earlier in the introduction to this chapter, he was also involved in a "regular exchange" published in the 'Indo-German Magazine' on the website for *Goethe Institut* with the German journalist Georg Diez, between January and December 2016. The exchange between Sethi and Diez sits in the section of 'current projects' on the website, and seeks to explore the issues connected to the deluge of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe which became a major news event in mid-2015. Diez is a Berlin-based journalist and a columnist for the popular German online news-site *Der Spiegel*; like Sethi, Diez also is the author of a book based on the death of his mother. The fact that this signals an increase in Sethi's symbolic capital was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. However, it is also interesting to note the parallels and divergences between this feature and the conversation with Mishra, and extrapolate the ways in which each of them positions Sethi in the transnational public space. One of the first points of interest, of course, is that whereas the conversation with Mishra is limited to issues related to India, its politics, and its media landscape, conversing with Diez seeks to explore an issue which has been subject to global media focus. Perhaps the differing habitus of the individuals involved in the conversations with Sethi – i.e.

Mishra being a globally renowned Indian author and Diez being a reputable German columnist who covers political stories from across Europe –contributes to the difference in focus of these two exchanges.

Diez takes on the role of the participant-witness to some extent within the exchange, describing "what's happening on the ground in Germany" (Sethi, October 2015), but also in Paris during the Paris attacks. Of course, he does not only describe the situations he observes but also his affective responses and reflections about the implications of these events. In the following extract with which he opens this correspondence with Sethi he positions himself as not only the witness-chronicler based in Germany, but also as representative of the 'German' point of view, at least insofar as feelings of disillusionment and confusion are concerned.

> I'd be happy to describe to you what's going on in Germany at the moment – at least I'd be happy to try, because actually I don't understand it myself. And incidentally that's the way it is for most Germans. (Diez, October 2015)

In contrast, Sethi seems to take on the role of a distant, and relatively dispassionate, discussant. In fact, Diez's first email invites such an engagement from Sethi, as he says (ibid.): "But I'd be more interested in your perspective on all this, which seems to Germany like a historic watershed, but to many parts of the world naturally doesn't." In his first email back to Diez, Sethi (October 2015) in turn frames the events, as well as the bewilderment apparent in their coverage, as what he refers to as "(perhaps)…a new moment in our shared histories". In this regard Sethi's role in this conversation can be said to serve to generalise the events in Germany, experienced through a subjective 'German' perspective, to be relevant to a transnational audience. This is, of course, a superficial view of his role in this discourse, as although his involvement in this exchange has the effect of rendering another's subjective experiences more generalisable and denationalised, his own position even within the discourse is rooted firmly through discursive means to his location as a postcolonial intellectual or knowledge worker. This is affirmed through phrases in Diez's email, such as: "What can Europe learn, from India, from other parts of the world", and also, "In a certain sense you caught me. You noticed something in me that I don't want to see". Sethi, therefore, brings to the discussion a representation of a way of thinking which is 'outside Europe' or as Diez puts it, "from other parts of the world". By challenging state-based assumptions of the 'crisis' being centred around questions of national security, material resources and humanitarianism, Sethi (October2015) draws on experiences of reporting from developing countries to pose these events as the "collapse" of the nation-states and "a re-

fashioning of the critical categories of thought and language" which privileged the European elite. To achieve this he draws on the story of Abdul who migrated from Somaliland to Germany in the fourth email of the series.

> My reason for sharing this story is that I feel that the current writing about humanity's march across Europe has produced the refugee as an abstract figure…don't think of the musafir as a naked existence plodding through…this is a figure that doesn't challenge your view of the world; this figure only produces pity and hopes for rescue. Instead, imagine a young, muscular Somali man kitted out in sleek lycra and spandex, speeding across German border on a stolen 7-speed bicycle. (November 2015)

This harkens back to what Sethi (5th February 2006) describes as "abjectification" in his blog for his Sarai-funded project , and the kind of subjectivity he has attempted to overwrite in his works. He defines it thus: "The process by which a person is reduced to an "abject" – devoid of individuality or expression beyond an articulation of the condition of 'abjectness'".

Conclusion

When I spoke to Sethi in May 2015 he was in China in order to find a "new language" to write in as he was bored of "fucking longform". He reported feeling that there was "too much of it around" and "the vast colonisation of *New Yorker*-style writing in every single piece meant that they all read the same". In the conclusion of the previous chapter, I outlined how sentimental engagement is key to Faleiro's accumulation of meta-capital and her bid for legitimacy in the fields of production that she is prominent in. In this chapter I have also illustrated how contemporary literary journalism features in networks of affective engagement that characterises the literary middlebrow. This characteristic of the discourses surrounding the production and circulation of literary journalism is explored in more depth in the next chapter.

In addition, a discursive emphasis on finding new narrative styles to aid democracy that emerges from the analyses in this chapter contributes to the understanding of the way legitimacy and symbolic capital is accumulated by literary journalists from India. For example, in one of Sethi's blogposts, named "Alas, we are always in God's Hands", (16 February 2006), he critiques his own article that appeared in the magazine *Frontline* for what he terms as a "topological trap", by which he means a tendency to accord objectivity to

a physical description. He reflects even further by writing: "Personally, I am rather fond of this particular style of writing; however the map is not always reliable." Firstly, the use of a personal blog, or perhaps Twitter, to offer a transparent and reflexive view about one's writing practices and approaches is very important for middlebrow audiences who see it as authentic; this serves to increase the symbolic capital the author possesses. This increased symbolic capital allows the author to gain entry into other fields (or sub-fields) of cultural production.

Secondly, this increased symbolic capital – in this case meta-capital – allows such authors to extend their authority into certain public spaces. In these spaces their role is that of experts on certain topics; for instance, Sethi is positioned as someone who is knowledgeable about the state of public health in India in the interview with *NewsLaundry* (2012), discussed previously in this chapter. This allows their authorial figures, as well as the texts that they produce, to start conversations about dominant socio-political issues in these public spaces, for example, the refugee crisis in Europe, or the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India. These authors thus gain recognisability amongst an audience that is much larger than those that their works would have otherwise reached. This increased prestige and fame results in their published works travelling even further, and their authorial figures being consecrated by institutions like *The New Yorker* or *The Guardian* which have a more global audience base.

Chapter 4

Intimate Publics and the Author in the Digital Space

*"…*to exhort serious *critical, but not cynical*, attention to the fetish of true feeling*"*

-   Lauren Berlant (1999: 59, italics mine).

This chapter interrogates the role and the construction of the figure of the literary journalist as an author in the transnational public space. Although multiple sites can potentially be examined where transnational public discourses are conducted, the focus of the discussions in this chapter pertain specifically to the digital space, and the "intimate publics" (Berlant, 1999) which it comprises[11]. These theoretical arguments are developed and supported by empirical analysis that illustrates the strategies these actors employ on Twitter to legitimise their position in the field and accumulate more symbolic power. This focus on Twitter, although quite narrow as contemporary authorship is performed on a plethora of digital platforms, is an important step towards embracing the centrality of electronically mediated transnational spaces in the formation of middlebrow authorships. The arguments that emerge from this analysis draw on the notion of the literary middlebrow (Driscoll, 2014) as well as the construction of intimate publics to understand how the literary journalist, writing about marginalised subjects, is legitimated as an author in this space. The analysis that follows in this chapter is instrumental in pointing towards the need to extend the concepts of field theory in order to explain the ways in which middlebrow authorships are constructed. In this chapter, therefore, I introduce concepts of intimate publics, and the influence of affect[12], which serves to

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[11] Although elsewhere in this thesis I have discussed Papacharissi's notion of "affective publics" in relation to social media, I have chosen to forefront my discussion in this chapter with Berlin's concept of "intimate publics" instead. This is merely because the latter concept speaks more closely to the relationship between collective belonging in a dispersed audience and the production or shaping of collective affect and sentimentality by the media industries. What is an interesting convergence between the two conceptualisations of public spaces, which I think fits very well within the remit of this chapter's aims, is that both refer to questions of the formation of "structures of feeling" (Papacharissi 2015: 32) and (Berlant, 2012: 77). I have, however, retained the concept of "affective publics" in this chapter in the few instances when referring particularly to Twitter users performing communicative acts suggesting an affective response to an event.

[12] I define affect, emotions and feelings and sentiments following Eric Shouse (2005): "Feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*. Sentiments are enduring emotional dispositions developed over time." The difference between these concepts within the analytical framework of this chapter is not as clearly emphasised merely because it is difficult to differentiate between these categories using only content analysis or close reading tools.

However, a useful way of thinking about the presentation of the authorial self with relation to these concepts is through the lens of "emotional labour" and "emotional management" (Hothschild, 1983). Although not linked to the middlebrow literary authorship's characteristic presentation of "authenticity" and "emotional sincerity" in Driscoll's (2014) work, there are clear links between the increasing social need to present and look for emotional sincerity as emotional labour becomes increasingly more accepted as part of the job description for authors in publicising their works.

explain the influence of literary journalists in mediated public spaces.

In this section of the dissertation, I share Berlant's aim of being "critical, but not cynical". Although the performances of affect by, as well as surrounding the figures of, these authors in the digital space are critically interrogated in this chapter, it is not my contention that these are necessarily insincere. In fact, the centrality of these discourses, with its emphasis on the sharing of politics motivated by "true feeling" points towards a tendency on the part of the actors in the public space to desire an agency which, by the virtue of being emotional and personal, allows for connections that are more 'authentic'. However a critical examination of the construction of this authenticity, specifically around the figure of the literary journalist, demystifies the processes of collective belonging in the digital space which is often seen as "unbounded". It also allows for a more critical narrative to emerge about the role of such authors, especially of the role of journalistic celebrity in these spaces, as well as the overlaps between the various fields of production involved in the construction of literary journalistic narratives and these affective public spaces.

In this chapter, and in the thesis in general, I do not intend to imply either that it is impossible for authentic accounts of the postcolonial marginalised to be written, circulated, and read, or that the authors I have selected to use as case studies are in any way falling short of achieving those ends. Instead, I am critical of the tendencies in the contemporary fields within which these works are produced which tends towards essentialising certain truth-claims utilising the discursively constructed figure of the author. The strategic ways in which the authors navigate the dominant ideologies of the industry to position themselves to tell the stories of the postcolonial marginalised to globally dispersed 'privileged publics' is if anything, strategic and above all political, and not insincere. Adorno's critique of authenticity in the 'cultural industry' is useful to evoke here to make my point even clearer. In *Jargons of Authenticity* (1973: 17-18), he argues in strong polemical terms against its pervasiveness:

> The jargon likewise supplies men with patterns for being human, patterns which have been driven out of them by free labour, if ever in fact traces of free labour did exist…The jargon, which in Heidegger's phenomenology of small talk earned an honoured position, marks the adept, in their own opinion, as untrivial and of higher sensibility; while at the same time that jargon calms the constantly festering suspicion of uprootedness. In professional groups which, as they say, carry on intellectual work, but which are at the same time employed, dependent, or economically weak, the

jargon is a professional illness...Through this jargon they aspire to…put themselves forward as sharers of higher culture as well as individuals with an essence of their own; the more innocent among them may call that a personal note - using an expression from the era of handicrafts, from which the jargon in question has borrowed a lot. The stereotypes of the jargon support and reassure subjective movement. They seem to guarantee that one is not doing what in fact he is doing - bleating with the crowd - simply by virtue of his using those stereotypes to guarantee that one has achieved it all himself, as an unmistakably free person. The formal gesture of autonomy replaces the content of autonomy.

In this thesis I move away from trying to determine whether the "jargon" of authenticity is propagated to benefit the authors I discuss in this thesis, or whether they subscribe to it to differentiate themselves from seeming to be "bleating with the crowd". What I am interested to explore following Adorno's critique however is that the tendency of the cultural industry to utilise this jargon as a "formal gesture of autonomy" that sets apart works of certain literary journalists as superior to others.

Moreover, Berlant is critical of the tendency and the consequences of the media industries competing in the global marketplace to produce certain truths as "universal" (1999: 58-59). She expounds her critique of this process based on "the politics of true feeling" around the figures of exploited children from developing countries.

> Feeling politics takes all kinds: it is a politics of protection, reparation, rescue. It claims a hard-wired truth, a core of common sense. It is beyond ideology, beyond mediation, beyond contestation. It seems to dissolve contradiction into pools of basic and also higher truth.

These truth-claims are exactly the kind of discursive strands which Adorno challenges. The case study upon which the claims in this chapter are based shows a discursive positioning of three journalists within a digital site where such "universal" sentiments are produced and circulated. This chapter argues moreover that this "politics of true feeling" and the digital affective publics involved in it are key to the legitimacy (and thus symbolic capital) that these journalists have accumulated. The contemporary news and publishing industries, comprising of many institutions operating at a supra-national scale, therefore, are dependent on these actors engaging in these affective public discourses. A critical analysis of such discourses, therefore, is essential in understanding the nature of the contemporary cultural industries.

Carolyn Pedwell's (2016) article is an important contribution to understanding what she refers to as "transnational politics of empathy" (ibid.: 3). It refers to "empathy" or "affective ability" (ibid.: 2) as a means to bridge the gap between publics with "different social and cultural" backgrounds, across "national and geo-political boundaries". This paper provides an essential framework for the main contentions in this chapter; firstly, it expounds the urgency and importance of critically examining "transnationality" and its affective components. Moreover, it also provides a conceptual grounding for exploring the relationship between empathy which is constructed in discourses which are aimed to elicit a sentimental response from a demographic to whom Pedwell refers to as "a socially privileged subject" and those discourses which challenge the logics of these "mainstream liberal narratives" (14). In suggesting, following Clare Hemmings (2011), that a clear divide between the two is impossible, this article opens up the possibility of exploring the spaces where the tensions between "emotions and global capitalism" exist. In this section I argue that the figural author is constructed as a result of these tensions in the production of the transnational public spaces on Twitter.

When Pedwell refers to the processes which constitute "transnational politics", and where affective technologies are deployed, she is referring to a discursive communication circuit. In the wider project which informs this article her analysis encompasses "political communication, international development literatures, popular business and science books, postcolonial literary works, and feminist, anti-racist and queer theory" (2016: 3). This raises the question of how Pedwell's conceptualisation of affect in constructing transnationality tie in with mapping such discourses (constructing the literary journalist as an author) in the digital space, as is the aim of this section. Pedwell's article does not specifically analyse digital discourses as I do in this section, but platforms like Twitter, of course, are sites where the politics of transnational discourse, especially ones which utilise affective tools to construct and engage diverse publics, take place.

In what follows I first introduce the case study on Twitter that I conducted and the methodology I used to analyse the data. The section following this focuses on the various modalities employed by the actors I followed for the case study to consolidate legitimacy in the space. Then this chapter explores the relationship between the "intimate publics" in the digital space and the figure of the Indian journalist by drawing firstly on Carolyn Pedwell's work on sentimentality and transnational publics, and secondly on Papacharissi's work on affective publics in digital spaces. Lastly, I draw upon Beth Driscoll's work on middlebrow reading publics to complement Timothy Brennan's conceptualisation of the figure of the cosmopolitan author. What emerges from this chapter is a picture of the emergence of a 'middlebrow'

public engagement on Twitter in India, with its characteristic "emotional, earnest and recreational" nature (Driscoll, 2014: 9), mediated by journalists whose legitimacy in the field is linked to their presence and relative importance in a transnational circuit of sentimental recognition and politics.

Introduction to Case Study

Indian Twitter users in recent times seem to find most of the mainstream news media's coverage superfluous and not purposeful in adding to the public knowledge of the workings of the world's largest democracy, abdicating their role as the Fourth Estate to further corporate or other interests. This chapter examines in detail recent media events that have contributed to the negative public opinion about the Indian mainstream media and which finds its most vocal expression on Twitter (Chadha, 2012). Furthermore, this chapter contends that Twitter is a socio-technical microcosm where we can witness a representation or an enactment of the struggles for legitimacy in the field of journalism in India, especially in light of the recent public discontent with the mainstream media. In particular, I am interested in the cultural production and legitimisation of contemporary longform or narrative reportage. I therefore conceptualise this social networking platform, following Bourdieu (1993: 31), as a "space of literary position-takings", where it is possible to observe the strategies that each agent employs to defend or improve their positions within the field. However, Twitter is also a space where it is possible to empirically evaluate the power relations between various agents, media forms and institutions. For example, whereas the largest broadcast news channel, NDTV, has 3.7 million Twitter followers, *Tehelka*, an investigative news magazine has 348,000, and one of the most popular digital dailies, *Scroll.in*, has only 17100. These figures reveal the relative specific capitals possessed by various forms of news media, and provide a basic sense of the positions they occupy in the field.

This case study illustrates some of the strategies contemporary journalists writing in longform employ to establish legitimacy in the field by drawing on the Twitter activities of three journalists over a period of 10 days in December 2014 (11th December to 20th December inclusive). Such strategies involve critiquing the established practices of Indian public life, as well as echoing the demands of a disillusioned, enraged and vocal citizen body for an honest, transparent and inclusive public space based on modern democratic values. Consequently their writing, as well as the kind of writing and writers they promote, serves to foster a sense of alternative cosmopolitan citizenship in opposition to that of the Indian nation-state amongst its readers, who are relatively privileged and who share similar ideals, and is in turn legitimised by it. It can be

useful here to imagine such writers as promoting middlebrow reading practices which aid Indian Twitter users to "develop ideas about their membership of larger communities" (Driscoll, 2014: 42), especially amongst those users whose sense of identity either transcends their sense of belonging to the Indian nation-state, or is incompatible with it (Fuller and Rehberg Sedo, 2013: 211).

The three journalists I have selected for this analysis occupy their respective positions in the field in opposition to normative mainstream 'hard' news values. They are all advocates of stories aimed at the affective engagement of users, as well as passionate and emotive writing, as opposed to the impersonal voice that more traditional 'hard' news narrative is associated with. More important to my selection criteria is the fact that all three have written extensively about marginalised groups as detailed in the following biographical sketches. It might be useful to mention here the reason behind comparing Faleiro, whose work I have discussed in Chapter 2, with Neha Dixit and Shivam Vij, two working journalists in India who are not authors of book-length works. This has been done to showcase the fact that literary celebrity, of the kind that is attributed to Faleiro and Sethi, exists in a continuum and is inextricably linked with the practices of other professionals who are micro-celebrities. As Greg Myers (2016: 477) puts it in his article on authors using Twitter:

> Especially in the last 15 years, with the rise of social media, celebrity has been seen as 'a set of circulated strategies and practices that place fame on a continuum, rather than as a bright line that separates individuals' (Marwick and boyd 2011). Microcelebrities with sometimes tiny audiences share with the stars at the other end of the continuum the orientation to popularity, the management of a fan base, and the presentation of themselves in ways that facilitate consumption and circulation (Senft 2008, Marwick and boyd 2011).

Sonia Faleiro is the author of the 2010 book-length narrative non-fiction about Mumbai's bar dancers *Beautiful Thing,* whom I have discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Her Twitter biography as of February 2015 Twitter biography,Faleiro says that she "Wrote 'Beautiful Thing' (Sunday Times Travel Book of the Year) + co-founded @decastories. Next: '13 Men' (Deca, 26 February 2015)." She living in San Fransisco but writing exclusively about India, especially the socially marginalised groups and figures in that country, such as the bar dancers of *Beautiful Thing*, or impoverished members of an Indian tribe in *13-Men* . Before publishing her book she was a

freelance reporter based in Mumbai. She has reported for *India Today* and *Tehelka* magazines, and was a contributing editor to *Vogue* (India). Additionally, her articles and photographs also appear in international/global news publications like *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Granta*, *The Guardian* and *Vogue*. On Twitter, her user ID is @soniafaleiro, and she has 25,500 users following (listening to) her tweets.

Neha Dixit is a freelance journalist who writes about issues of gender and development in India. Her Twitter username is @nehadixit123 and she has a comparatively (in relation to Vij and Faleiro) modest follower count of 6543 users. She described herself in her February 2015 biography as "Independent Journalist, South Asia. Stories in the *New York Times*, *Outlook*, *Yahoo Originals*, Al Jazeera, *Foreign Policy*, *Fountain Ink*, *Scroll*, *Open* and others." The link that accompanies the biography leads to the 'About' section of her blog, which specifies that she covers "development, gender and politics in South Asia".

Shivam Vij is a former freelance journalist based in Delhi, who as of February, 2015, was the associate editor of one of the most prominent digital political and cultural opinion and essay publications in India. His biography on Twitter mentions his position in *Scroll* – "Associate Editor, @scroll.in. Tell me something new. shivam@scroll.in". His articles have appeared in *Tehelka*, *Open*, *Caravan* and *Fountain Ink*. Vij was one of the earliest adopters of social media platforms in India, and he is easily the most prolific Twitter user out of all three of the journalists in this study. Most of his tweets are related to Scroll.in articles; he also retweets other users a lot. His user ID on Twitter is @DilliDurAst, and he has a considerable follower count of 18,400 users. He also follows the highest number of users on the platform out of the three journalists I selected for this study – 2059 users, as compared to a mere 436 followed by Faleiro and 1585 followed by Dixit.

Faleiro, Dixit, and Vij, as is apparent from these brief biographies, are not connected to each other by any strong institutional or even ideological links. However, they differentiate their positions in the Indian journalistic field in similar ways, primarily by discursively constructing authenticity, reflexivity and public accountability in opposition to the public perception of mainstream, particularly broadcast, journalism. The frequency and volume of the tweets of these writers are very diverse (650 from Vij, 109 from Faleiro, and 30 from Dixit); hence, a statistical comparison between them would be meaningless. In the analysis that follows, close reading methods were employed to draw conclusions about the discursive construction of the figural author and legitimation in these spaces through performances of affect. Since this research project is not sociological in its ambitions, I have not covered the precise methodological underpinnings behind this analysis. However, the next section includes references to linguistic and sociological studies that have more precise, mostly quantitative,

analytical frameworks. Following the exploratory analysis in this chapter, it would be useful for future research to focus on a more thorough analysis of Indian journalists on Twitter resulting in more generalisable findings.

<u>Twitter and Journalism/Journalism on Twitter</u>

There has been very limited scholarly work done on the topic of Twitter and journalism in India, although many journalists, editors, news organisations and other actors in the journalistic field have a Twitter presence.[13] The notable exceptions include Belair-Gagnon *et al* (2013), Rodriguez (2014), Chadha (2012), and Chadha and Koliska (2014). These works focus on specific news events and the growing role of Twitter in the coverage of and response to these. Belair-Gagnon *et al* interview 16 Indian and foreign journalists who covered the Delhi gang rape case (which took place in December 2012, and was widely covered in Indian and Western media) to explore how social media, especially Twitter, was incorporated into their practices. Rodriguez's paper traces the evolution of the relationship between mainstream media and public discourse on social media during recent events like the Mumbai terror attacks in 2008, Delhi gang rape case in 2012, etc. The last two papers focus on the Radia tapes scandal of 2010 and highlight the "media watchdog" role that Twitter played in the aftermath.

There are, however, works that examine the changes in the broader field of journalism due to the assimilation of Twitter in the news and media ecology. A large-scale quantitative content analysis of 'j-tweeters' forms the basis for a 2012 study by Lasorsa *et al*, which examines how mainstream journalists negotiate traditional professional norms and practices with their presence on Twitter, a platform which facilitates a shift towards more dialogic and interactive relationship between the producers and consumers of media content. This study operationalizes the traditional journalistic norms and practices of mainstream media as objective reporting, impersonal and informative language, lack of transparency and accountability about how journalists conduct their work, and sharing news only from the publication they work for.

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[13] I have limited the discussion in this chapter to existing literature on the very specific topic of Twitter and journalism in India, as well as some main methodological influences and insights informing my qualitative analysis in this chapter. For a more comprehensive overview on journalism and journalistic practices of Twitter the reader can refer to the following sources:
- Broersma, M. e Graham, T. (2012). Tweets as a news source during the 2010 British and Dutch elections. *Journalism Practice*, 6 (3), 403-419.
- Chadwick, A. (2013). *The hybrid media system. Politics and power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coddington, M., Molyneux, L. e Lawrence, R.G. (2014). Fact checking the campaign: How political reporters use twitter to set the record straight (or not). *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 19 (4), 391-409.
- Coma, R. e Chen, K.J. (2012). What's in a tweet? Foreign correspondents' use of social media. *Journalism Practice*, 7 (1), 33-46.
- Domingo, D. e Heikkilä, H. (2012). Media accountability practices in online news media, in E. Siapera e A. Veglis (a cura di) *The handbook of global online journalism* (pp.272-289). Oxford: Wiley/Blackwell.
- Holton, A.E. e Lewis, S.L. (2011). Journalists, social media, and the use of humor on Twitter. *The Electronic Journal of Communication*, 21 (1-2), http://www.cios.org/EJCPUBLIC/021/1/021121.html.
- Lewis, S.C., Zamith, R. e Hermida, A. (2013). Content analysis in an era of big data: A hybrid approach to computational and manual methods. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 57 (1), 34-52.
- Poell, T., & Borra, E. (2012). Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr as platforms of alternative journalism: The social media account of the 2010 Toronto G20 protests. *Journalism*, 13(6), 695-713.

Most of the tweets analysed in this chapter were accompanied by a web link, usually to an article which elaborates the context of the tweet, justifies or argues for the opinion stated or comment made in the body of the tweet. Some of the tweets linked to their own work (for example, article on Uber posted by Vij discussed later; some linked to articles in the publication or projects they are associated with (for example, Faleiro tweeting about Deca collective's new Instagram account). Lasorsa et al. put forth the idea that linking is a way which "j-tweeters" can be transparent and accountable (2012: 27). However, in my analysis, I examine the content of the links to not only establish the type of link it is (i.e. the journalist's own news organisation, outside blog, etc.), but also to understand how the journalist is positioning themselves with regard to a specific issue, values underlying journalism and writing, as well as within the field. In some cases, therefore, based on my assumption that the articles linked by the journalists form an integral part of their communication and construction of self on Twitter, I have quoted text from these articles to support my analysis.

Hermida's paper, in contrast to Lasorsa's study, draws on computer science literature to describe the role of the journalist on an "ambient media" environment like Twitter. He argues that Twitter enables a user to be immersed in an "awareness system" in which they receive information "in the periphery of their awareness" (2010: 301). He claims that "(t)he value (to a user) does not lie in each individual fragment of news and information, but rather in the mental portrait created by a number of messages over a period of time" (ibid.). This paper raises interesting exploratory questions about the shifting role of journalist in a postmodern context, which tends to delineate 'news' with other information in an "eclectic mix".

Both these papers provide useful insights into the ways in which contemporary journalists adopt their public communication strategies to meet the challenges to the traditional values and practices associated with modernist journalism on a micro-blogging platform like Twitter. However, both these approaches have their limitations. Lasorsa et al. (2012) do not explore the question of the fragmentation of the journalist's identity. The sampling in the study is focused on Western journalists with large follower counts and is therefore likely to also have excluded freelance or independent journalists who work in niche news sectors and who may have a vested interest in challenging ideological norms associated with mainstream journalism.

Unlike the subjects of Lasorsa et al.'s study the journalist-writers in this chapter are not the ones with the most followers on Twitter. Compared to Barkha Dutt, a popular mainstream journalist who works for a top broadcasting company, and who has 1.98 million followers, for example, Shivam Vij has a relatively modest 19,800

followers. However, their importance to this study is based on their oppositional position in the field that is useful in illustrating the struggles for legitimacy of longform journalism in contemporary Indian cultural field. Moreover, as this discussion is limited to a close reading of only three journalists in the field it is not possible to generalise the insights from this study to the extent that Lasorsa and Hermida's studies aim to do. However, a familiarity with the actors' body of work, professional history, and ideological leanings add to a deeper, contextual understanding of their position and role in the field, which is more suitable to the aims of this chapter.

Hermida's (2010) claim about the irrelevance of examining individual tweets, although perhaps pertinent from the perspective of making sense of mass information, does not take into account individual actors' performance of the role(s) they occupy in the public space. In this chapter, after initially noting patterns of tweeting by the three journalists, I undertook a brief longitudinal analysis by (manually) collecting all tweets posted by them over a period of 10 days in December 2014. Conducting a qualitative analysis based on an exploratory digital ethnography allowed an observation of a few common themes emerging from the tweets of all three of the journalist-writers. Therefore, although I also conducted a close and interpretative reading of selected individual tweets, which perhaps do not hold as much meaning as a published article, or even an email (ibid: 301), those that I concentrated upon were determined by the frequency and overlap of messages over the whole 10-day period (as well as based on previous observation of prominent journalist-writers in India).

Since the performance, presentation and construction of selves on Twitter is central to my research questions, I draw upon Goffman's (1959) seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which approaches everyday interactions as performative sites where individuals constantly manage how they are perceived by others. Other studies on Twitter which take this approach are Page (2012), boyd and Marwick (2011, 2011), and boyd et al. (2010). Page's 2012 paper conceptualises Twitter as a "linguistic marketplace" and examines the differences in self-branding practices of 'ordinary' users, corporations and those of celebrity figures through an analysis of their use of hashtags. This chapter utilizes digital ethnographymethods to analyse tweets drawn from 100 accounts for over a year. It concludes that although conversations on Twitter do indicate a move towards participatory culture, the hierarchical nature of the traditional public space and media landscape is reproduced on the platform (198). Furthermore Page argues that the conversational tone of corporate and
celebrity accounts is simulated to connect with audiences and fan-bases, meaning the tweets from these profiles cannot be considered as properly "dyadic" conversations among peers. This is a very important finding that corresponds with my contention about the performance of authority by journalists in the contemporary cultural field.

Similar to Page (2012), boyd and Marwick (2011a, 2011b) also examine the ways in which Twitter users manage the expectations of an 'imagined audience' while tweeting. The first article addresses the issues of context collapse and strategically navigating the expectations of multiple audience groups on Twitter. It uses insights from empirical data collected in response in the form of tweets from 180 profiles to survey questions posted on the social network. The relatively small sample allows the paper to describe diverse ways in which users attempt to control the way they are perceived by various groups of audience. The second paper, on the other hand, discusses the performative aspects of conversational practices of celebrities on Twitter using three case studies (after studying the Twitter use of 300 most followed author accounts). Both these papers set an interesting precedent for this chapter as they delve into the practices and politics of self-presentation on Twitter.

Performance and (Self-)Positioning for Journalistic Legitimacy

Sharing non-professional, and often personal, views and information with the public is one of the capabilities of microblogging platforms like Twitter that has been discussed in relation to the changing face of journalism in the digital age (Lasorsa *et al*, 2012). Studies on micro-celebrity practices, like boyd and Marwick (2011) also provide a framework for understanding the ways in which social roles and hierarchies are reproduced, performed and shifted using various Twitter functions. Moreover, Driscoll (2014) provides a very useful foundation for conceptualising Twitter interactions with and between writers as performances of ephemeral and intimate connections that form the basis of middlebrow social reading practices. For example, the following tweets by Neha Dixit and Shivam Vij express a personal connection with the subject of the articles they authored that week (on the #whyloiter[14] movement and the Uber ban respectively), which "provides evidence of the author's authenticity" (Driscoll, 2014: 169) to middlebrow readers, whose appreciation of reading material is derived from being able to engage with the authorial persona and viewpoints. Both Dixit and Vij also use affective words like 'love' in the tweets below in connection with subject of the articles, thus connoting that their work originate from a place of real passion or feeling, and therefore are more authentic than perhaps other news coverage on the subject. It alleviates the message from being too blatantly promotional, and therefore, 'inauthentic'.

> @nehadixit123: Old pic but in the true #whyloiter spirit. Me and @rohini_mohan in Delhi, 2010
>
> (picture)

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[14] #whyloiter is a hashtag based on the Indian gender-rights movement called Why Loiter? The name is taken from the title of a book written by three Mumbai-based academics - Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan and Shilpa Ranade - who argue that "loitering" encourages women to reclaim public spaces in their cities.

Neha Dixit retweeted

Rohini Mohan @rohini_mohan · Dec 18

@nehadixit123 @whyloiter Yeah! Loitering, with giggles about patriotic symbols, to boot!

Love this photo!

@DilliDurAst: I love Uber. Please don't ban it http://scroll.in/article/694020/In-defence-of-

Uber-Is-the-government-passing-the-buck …

Although Faleiro's attempts to construct an authentic connection to her own work is not as easily traceable from the dataset given that she had not released any work around the time this study was conducted, some of her phatic tweets serve to convey sincerity as well as intimacy. For example, the tweet quoted below is what boyd and Marwick (2011) refer to as "strategically managed self-disclosure". It provides a glimpse of a relatively unimportant aspect of her life and personality, which renders her relatable to her followers who might struggle with their concentration span while reading books.

@soniafaleiro: Book of the week, purchase in *paper* because it's getting harder for me to concentrate on an iPad.

However, it is important to acknowledge that although the construction of authenticity and sincerity by these writers is strategic, it is unlikely to be false or purely manufactured, just carefully managed and de-limited. Instead, this is arguably an inevitable outcome of the flattening of multiple professional, social and personal selves of the writers into a "verifiable, singular identity", which boyd and Marwick refer to as the "context collapse" (2011: 122) that Twitter imposes on all its users. Since most writers have a more diverse group of followers than users in most other professions due to the public dimension of their work, they are arguably compelled to be strategic in their presentation of self in order to balance the expectations from different groups of followers.

However, as potentially problematic as "context collapse" can be for public figures it also allows middle-brow readers the possibility of engaging in an "ephemeral and intimate connection" with writers on this platform, which the latter clearly encourage (Driscoll, 2014: 168). The following tweet, for example, serves to "perform connection and availability" (boyd and Marwick, 2011: 145).

@soniafaleiro: If you could suggest something for me to read next that would be great.

In this tweet, Faleiro invites book suggestions from her followers; the interpellative address in this message conveys a sense of intimacy, and encourages readers, professional and personal contacts alike to engage in a conversation with her. A closer look at the ensuing 'replies' to this tweet reveals that, based on the Twitter users Faleiro chooses to respond to publicly, despite appearing inclusive, this conversation is perhaps strategically limited to a small group of users who are fellow-writers, journalists, editors, etc., and therefore, her professional peers.

@MirzaWaheed Your editor had the same idea, but we concluded it might not be a good fit. I'm a meat and potatoes kind of reader.

@m_samina @MirzaWaheed Peer pressure! Fine, I'll read it.

This tweet, therefore, serves the social function of performing ephemeral connections with general readers/the public, as well as forming closer ties with other members in the field. Moreover, it is also a public display of the writer's relational ties with those other members, thereby showcasing institutional ties, which legitimise her position in the field. The tweets below by Vij and Dixit also exemplify this tendency.

@ DilliDurAst: Not being a fan of the north Indian winter makes me part of such a small minority, I feel like starting a club.

@sagarikaghose Exactly, you winter lovers want to have your cake and eat it too!

Shivam Vij retweeted

Sohaib @sohaibgulbadan · Dec 14

@DilliDurAst you know there is a Bollywood film song ... "Tarpaye tarsaye re, sari raat jagaye re, pyar tera Dilli ki sardi"

@nehadixit123: Old pic but in the true #whyloiter spirit. Me and @rohini_mohan in Delhi, 2010 (picture)

Neha Dixit retweeted

 Rohini Mohan @rohini_mohan · Dec 18

@nehadixit123 @whyloiter Yeah! Loitering, with giggles about patriotic symbols, to boot! Love

this photo!

Indian journalists reflecting on journalism as a profession, on the kinds of writing they engage in, and their implications for the larger ideological and functional values of journalistic work, is a fairly new phenomenon. Twitter provides a platform for journalists to express opinions, not just about events and issues (which have been discussed in previous sections), but also about their role in facilitating or constructing a public space, their professional values, and the state of the industry. Journalist-writers tweeting about their own profession serves to connote an increased sense of accountability and transparency, as does "engaging in discussions with other tweeters, writing about their personal lives, or linking to external websites" (Lasorsa *et al*., 2012: 19). However, it also serves to establish the legitimacy of the writing they do or/and advocate. The contrasting sentiments regarding the proliferation of 'personal essays' expressed in the tweets of the three journalists I observed is an excellent example of this. The positions these three journalist-writers take in tweets below illustrates the struggle to define this field of longform journalism; whether personal essays should form a part of this field, as well as a legitimate news form in the larger field of journalism, is a discourse which demonstrates this struggle.

@"Soniafaleiro: The personal-essay boom reflects our uneasiness with the slashing of budgets for in-depth reporting" http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/10/10/how-personal-essays-conquered-journalism-and-why-they-cant-cut-it/ …

@DilliDurAst: @kanikagahlaut your personal narrative is the one you know best.

@DilliDurast: Authenticity, expertise, and intimacy » @mitrakalita at the Nieman Journalism Lab http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/12/authenticity-expertise-and-intimacy/ …

@Nehadixit123: Thanks #whyloiter for reminding me why I need to be out for more often & for no reason #publicspaces @genderlogindia http://bit.ly/1zyw9RN

Faleiro tweeted a link to an article in *Washington Post* (18th Dec, 2014), an American daily broadsheet, which stated the downside of the growing trend of 'personal essays' is the fact that although there is a potential for the form to democratise the opinion spaces in news publications, most first-person essay writers are "journalists or writers of some sort". The article assumed, (and I find Faleiro's own ideological position regarding writing about the marginalised to be somewhat similar to this), that "it's always been the duty of reporters to tell stories about the lives of those people who cannot spin great stories out of their own astonishing experiences" (Fairbanks, 10th Oct, 2014).

Neha Dixit, on the other hand, is one such journalist Fairbanks talks about in the article above who draws on her first-person experiences as a woman in India to report and write feature and opinion articles about the issues facing women in India today. In the tweet quoted below, she links to a self-penned opinion article to promote the global movement #whyloiter. The article, as mentioned in a previous section, is written in first-person and consists of several vignettes from her own life illustrating how women's lack of access to public spaces leads to them being shut off from fully participating in social life. It is interesting that Dixit is the only one of the three journalists observed who did not tweet any posts about writing or journalism. This might be due to her having less of a stake, as a freelance journalist, who writes a larger range of articles, to promote and justify a specific genre of journalistic writing. Instead, her Twitter activity seems to be concentrated on an effort to promote her own work, as well as the issues (gender and development) that she mostly writes about, to ensure its continued newsworthiness.

Vij, in the meantime (19th Dec, 2014), tweeted a link to an article which appeared on the Nieman Journalism Lab, a Harvard based web platform involved in journalism research. The article mentions the previous article in its body, and opposes it in saying that the personal essay is definitely the way forward for journalism, as the "authenticity, expertise, and intimacy" brought to an article by first-person narrative makes it "memorable" (Kalita, December 2014). This article, in contrast to the one before, conceptualises the role of journalism as being representative of a diverse group of people who have had "authentic" experiences which audiences find relatable, and hence, memorable. Vij, considering his organisational association with Scroll.in, a web based publication dominated, in terms of content, with opinion articles and personal essays, of course supports the form.

However, one of the articles he authored about current journalistic insights (as well as tweeted about during the ten days I observed his tweets), explains his stance in a bit more detail. In an article that seemed to strike a chord with many fellow journalists (e.g. A tweet from @r_madhavi says about the article "The

Reader is Not Interested in the Story": A great read by @DilliDurAst on a line most journos have heard!), Vij writes, "That the story [the hugely popular "The Maruti Way"] was in first person, gave it a certain authenticity of voice" which caught the readers' interest. He also believes in the power of a narrative that draws the reader in and keeps them interested in the story that the journalist wants to tell. As an example, interestingly, of such a compelling narrative he points towards Neha Dixit's article in Scroll.in following up on the fate of the imprisoned Maruti workers. Elsewhere in my thesis I discuss in more detail the relationship each writer has with the nebulous 'genre' that is contemporary longform journalism in India. From this analysis of their twitter feeds it is clear that all of these three writers have a stake in the field of narrative or longform reportage in India, and they link it to various values of collective belonging in modern India.

Another factor to be considered when interpreting Vij's position in the journalistic field is his professional role as the associate editor of *Scroll.in*. As explained earlier in this chapter, he tweets the headlines of most *Scroll.in* articles from his Twitter feed, no doubt to publicise them and boost readership. However, the decision to do so also implies that the image of himself he constructs on social media, through tweets like these, is that of a journalist with liberal values who, nonetheless, is actively interested in promoting news and opinions from multiple (if not all) angles. This might be contrasted with freelancers like Faleiro and Dixit. As neither of them have strong organisational ties to any media institution, they do not face the requirement to appear objective (the objectivity norm being widely accepted in this context in journalistic organisations as something to aspire to, see Schudson, 2001), and hence represent multiple media viewpoints. Instead, their position in the field is based on their intention and abilities to represent marginalised viewpoints and to ensure that these become and remain influential in public discourse. In this light one can understand and account for why my analysis revealed that Faleiro's tweets contained links to external websites (not related to Deca, or her own work) most often, and also why Dixit's tweets mostly contained links to her own work. This is in line with the role they both perform for their intended audience, as discussed previously, as a reviewer of an authority on information about the marginalised and as a feminist writer whose subjectivity provides an entry point into stories about postcolonial women, respectively.

To sum up, the performance of journalistic agency in this space seems to be based, to a large extent, upon the performance of a self which is relatable to reading publics who follow these writers' accounts. Moreover, this space allows for an expression of the journalists' emotions and personal thoughts about

certain issues, which they or their colleagues are writing about. This lends itself to the production of ide-

ologies based on "true feeling" as discussed earlier in the chapter and, presumably, the coproduction

(with user-readers) of intimate publics. The examples in the next section will serve to illustrate this rela-

tionship even more clearly.

Being Middlebrow and Belonging on Twitter

This section follows the precedent set by Gruzd *et al* (2011: 1297) of conceptualising Twitter as comprising

of overlapping personal communities, which despite its asymmetric nature ("If I follow you, you don't have

to follow me") is a site for the development of shared community feeling. Although this paper goes to show

that Twitter is both an imagined as well as a possible site for the formation of a real community, this section

considers the former, the intersection between Twitter and Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities'.

As Gruzd et al. put it:

> Users [on Twitter] could never know everyone on Twitter but they are certainly aware of other us-
>
> ers' presence, especially in their "neighborhood" of sources. When users sign in to Twitter, they
>
> see a live stream of messages coming from all of their sources, and when the users write a message,
>
> they are writing for their intended audience of tweeps who follow them…it is impossible for them
>
> [users] to be on Twitter and not to be aware of other residents of this virtual place, just as in Ander-
>
> son's concept of imagined community. (ibid.)

In this chapter I contend that this particular social network therefore affords the possibility of belonging,

however fleeting, to those groups whose identities are marginalised by monolithic narratives of nation-state

or religion. However, the potential of this platform to allow affective expressions also accounts for individ-

ual tweets and interactions between users to be highly reflexive of their respective positions, sometimes

publicly calling others to account in order to explicate, defend or support ones particular worldviews. As

influential members in the public sphere on Twitter, the journalist-writers' Twitter presences are key sites

around which these personal communities can form. Other users direct tweets about issues of public con-

cern at them, which may or may not concern their journalistic work. Their journalistic work, as well as

their tweets regarding news and public issues can, therefore, be read as texts that cultivate middlebrow be-

longing. In the examples below the journalist-writers take specific positions regarding various women's

issues animating public discourse in India during this time, as well as a discourse about the current government's links to Hindu fundamentalism.

Driscoll's 2014 book on the literary middlebrow provides a key insight into how Bourdieu's field theory might be useful in conceptualising the figural author as legitimated by certain reading practices, which she refers to as "middlebrow". The term "literary middlebrow" in her work refers to a middle class reading public who carve out a complex space between the two poles of autonomous literary works and heteronomous and commercial mass entertainment through their reading practices which are "reverential towards high culture" but also "commercial", presumably with regard to the actual content and means of accessing content of their reading (17). Moreover, she describes such reading as "an event defined by affective response and reaction…for identification, connection, and response".

The author in Driscoll's conceptualisation of these reading practices, which correspond neatly with the audiences of the literary journalistic works I discuss in this dissertation, is a figure middlebrow readers look to connect with in order to "key into the emotion" (168). The digital space, being a platform using which members of the reading publics can potentially communicate with such authors directly, is an important site where this affective phenomenon corresponding with reading these books and articles take place. The middlebrow readers also, according to Driscoll, look to the author's persona for evidence of the (emotional) authenticity of the work; they look for "evidence that the author is real and that their book is rooted in reality" (169). The performance of this *sentimental* authorial self on Twitter, therefore, is important in according legitimacy to the works that are published by these literary journalists in particular, but also to the genre as a whole. I am interested in exploring how the author of the works Driscoll discusses is a significant actor in the way affect is produced and deployed in the transnational public spaces. Berlant's concept of "intimate publics" (1988) introduced earlier, which Driscoll also draws on in her book, provides a good starting point to think about the connections between these affective performances of authorial selves on Twitter as a transnational public space.

Women's Issues and Intimate Publics
Faleiro in an op-ed article in *India Today* (13th Dec., 2013) paints a picture of post-Nirbhaya India as one where conversations about women's rights ares gaining prominence, especially on Twitter, where urban middle class women are finding a voice. In the ten days I conducted this study, the two major women-

related news items in India were related to the Uber rape incident in Delhi and the two year anniversary of the Delhi (Nirbhaya) rape case. Uber-related stories were talked about the most by Vij. Faleiro's tweets, on the other hand, paid a similar amount of attention to both. This is probably because Vij self-admittedly 'loves Uber' and wrote an article on the subject for *Scroll.in* (Vij, 10th December 2014).

> @DilliDurAst (Shivam Vij): I love Uber. Please don't ban it http://scroll.in/article/694020/In-defence-of-Uber-Is-the-government-passing-the-buck …

Vij's tweet signals his 'love' for Uber to his followers, but the actual perspective his article offers is to foreground the importance of the government's role in ensuring the safety of women in the country's public spaces and transport systems. Faleiro also seems to support this position in relation to this incident, as is apparent from the following tweet sharing Vij's article:

> @Soniafaleiro: Yes. 'You can kick #Uber out of #India, but adequate public transport and safety for women is the government's job.' http://scroll.in/article/694020/In-defence-of-Uber-Is-the-government-passing-the-buck …"

A closer reading of Vij's article (Vij, 10th December 2014), which both journalists shared with their followers, reveals a couple of interesting facts. Firstly, Vij goes to a significant length in being transparent about his connection to the subject of the article.

> "Uber hasn't offered me a bribe. They aren't even willing to take calls or answer questions. I believe they've been too busy with the police. But I do have a vested interest here, one that demands full disclosure: I love Uber. It's changed my life more than any other app on my phone." (ibid.)

He explains in the article that there had been a rumour on an anonymity-based social media platform that Uber had bribed 8 journalists and 6 bloggers to keep the incident quiet. In addition to feeling that this was a "misuse of online anonymity" (ibid.), it also prompted Vij to be explicitly transparent about his position in anticipation of anyone questioning his journalistic integrity. This is an example of an instance in which Vij comes across as a journalist who distinguishes himself from the mainstream media in two ways: by being responsive to challenges faced in the modern Indian journalistic field instead of

ignoring them; and by doing so through the use of 'transparency' and disclosures as rhetorical devices (in contrast to deflection and denial of the mainstream media).

The second point of interest in the article is the manner in which Vij also defends himself against potential allegations of his viewpoint not considering the fear of personal security most women feel in India. He points the reader to an article written by a female broadcast journalist, which is in line with his stance on this issue (Choudhary, 8th Dec., 2014). In fact, although he declares "I love Uber" in the beginning of the article, and the tweets aimed to get readers to click on the link to his article, once he has established his viewpoint as representative of (some) women as well, he goes on to give reasons why "We love Uber". His article, therefore, gains legitimacy amongst not just young, urban, middle class Indians who are upset about a potential banning of the app, but also through the fact that it seeks to be representative of the voices of women who decry the lack of security in Indian transport systems.

An interest in women appropriating the Indian public space also pervaded Dixit's Twitter feed. All but one tweet she posted about women's issues in the period pertained to the #whyloiter movement. She shared her own photos and used the hashtag in support of the global movement. Most of the tweets, however, link to her article, which consist of vignettes from her life that illustrate the way in which the lack of access to public spaces curtails women's participation in society. Moreover, most of her Twitter activity (21 out of 31 tweets by Dixit over the 10-day time period) seems to consist of retweeting other users who tweeted her article.

Neha Dixit retweeted

Camila Bassi @dr_camila_bassi

"Ten reasons why I want women to reclaim the streets" by @nehadixit123 http://www.dai-lyo.in/life/ ten-reason-why-i-want-women-to-reclaim-the-streets/story/1/1137.html … #Whyloiter #Geography

Neha Dixit retweeted

Seema Chowdhry @SeemaC

> Why the paranthawala won't let a single woman eat at the dhaba and other stories by @neha-
> dixit123 at http://www.dailyo.in/life/ten-reason-why-i-want-women-to-reclaim-the-
> streets/story/1/1137.html

Compared to the mostly issue-driven focus in both Vij's and Dixit's feed, Faleiro's interest and participation in discourses regarding women on Twitter seemed to be more general. There are more links to external (authored by others) articles as well as books (which is noticeably absent in comparison in the others' tweets). Noticeably, the final tweet of the examples below comments on the quality of reporting or writing on a women-related issue, rather than upon the issue itself.

> @h_tejas @rgay I loved Bad Feminist!

> Within minority groups, darker-skinned girls are disciplined more harshly than light-skinned
> ones. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/11/us/school-discipline-to-girls-differs-between-and-
> within-races.html?smprod=nytcore-ipad&smid=nytcore-ipad-share …

> "A female officer slapped me hard and said, good girls are never raped. There must be some-
> thing wrong with you." http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/my-rapist-is-now-an-advo-
> cate/ article1-1297742.aspx …

> Very good new issue of @Harpers, including this Jen Percy report on the love "crimes" of Af-
> ghan women: http://bit.ly/16CUTgW

To sum up, firstly, the ubiquity of women-related news, or the foregrounding of women's issues in news stories, signals the centrality of such concerns to the imagined audience of all three of these writers. This assumption is especially evident in Vij's reflexive positioning in his article about Uber. It is also interesting to note that although all three of the journalist-writers write about rural subjects in their longform journalistic works, the issues that they tend to tweet about during the observation period concern women in urban settings. This is another giveaway about the audience that these writers assume they are addressing on Twitter.

However, the three writers position themselves quite differently in reaction to this inclination in the field. Although Vij establishes an affective connection with the subject with an emotional word, such as "love" in

his tweet and article, he only deploys it to make a case for the advantages of Uber to a "young urban professional in a big Indian city" (Vij, 10th Dec., 2014), rather than to talk about the specific instance of rape, or the more general issue of safe transportation for women in an Indian city. In contrast, Faleiro, who also shares the link to the same article by Vij to her followers, highlights the latter concern in her tweet. Faleiro's tweets pertaining to women's and feminist issues do contain affective language, (e.g. "I loved Bad Feminist"), but it is mainly limited to expressing enthusiasm for other works of journalism or literature on the subject. This serves to cast her in the role of a new media reviewer on the subject, who helps her followers, who assumedly have similar taste in reading, to orient their own reading in relation to hers. Dixit, however, draws on the shared experiences of women's discomfort in public places to position her subjectivity as well as her work. This is apparent from her re-tweeting her readers, who clearly identify with her experiences.

Anti Hindutva and Gatekeeping Liberal Sentiment

One of the most pervasive ideological sentiments in the tweets collected for this study is a staunch opposition of the fundamentalist Hinduism the current government (Union led by Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP)[15] is associated with. The main events the tweets react to are Gharwapsi (a drive in rural areas led by RSS and Vishva Hindu Parishad to re-convert Hindus who had previously converted to Islam or Christianity), and a directive from BJP's Human Resources minister Smriti Irani stating that schools following the CBSE syllabus be encouraged to forego Christmas to participate in an essay competition. The tone of tweets pertaining to the subject (mostly hash-tagged #Hindutva, #HinduRashtra (Hindu nation), #Gharwapsi, and #SmritiIrani), is mostly derisive and sarcastic, often drawing attention to the hypocrisies of the government.

@Soniafaleiro: Pity #SmritiIrani cancelled Christmas, just when Santa was set to deliver her new brain.
Neha Dixit retweeted
 Mario da Penha @mlechchha
@kavita_krishnan @nehadixit123 Sanghskriti may *just* be the best word ever invented!

@DilliDurAst: Who can convert the evangelists to humanity? #Gharwapsi

---

[15] The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is a centre-right coalition of political parties in India. In 2014 general elections the National Democratic Alliance won a sweeping victory, taking 336 seats. The BJP, led by Narendra Modi, won 31.0% of the votes.

@DilliDurAst: Even if it's online, it's homework. If govt giving homework on Christmas is okay, how about homework on Diwali? https://twitter.com/smritiirani/status/544347676985151488 …

Shivam Vij retweeted

Sushubh @Sushubh · Dec 13

Our ministers can get away with hate speech by apologizing. You and me go to jail for a sarcastic tweet. http://scroll.in/article/694656/Government-says-Indian-online-free-speech-activists-are-working-for-business-interests …

The tweets also connect the Modi government with these fundamentalist excesses. This serves a very important political function. During the 2014 election campaign the BJP were able to allay concerns from some quarters about the Hindu fundamentalist ties as well as Modi's involvement in the 2002 Gujarat riots by pushing a neo-liberal, development-driven manifesto (Banerjee, 23rd May 2014). The narrative of the rise of Hindu fundamentalism following the BJP's election to power, therefore, has an important oppositional function. As Sonia Faleiro puts it in a tweet quoted below, this narrative suggests that Modi being in power is doing "irreversible damage to security and secularism". The tweets below also further the idea that not only is the government encouraging fundamentalist extremists to be more active but is also hypocritical about its communal policies ("Religion of the J&K CM not important, says Arun Jaitley").

@Soniafaleiro: @nytimes on Modi's poisonous #Hindutva agenda: a divisive affront to the country's secular democracy. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/19/opinion/narrowing-indias-horizons.html?smid=fb-share …

@Soniafaleiro: Buyer's remorse toward Modi would be amusing if only the outcome of electing him wasn't irreversible damage to security & secularism.

@DilliDurAst: Reliogion of the J&K CM not important, says Arun Jaitley. I suppose that's why they rarely give tickets to Muslims in elections across India

Shivam Vij retweeted

J P Yadav @jpy42 · Dec 15

Shiv Sena MP in LS says Modi has majority, Ram Temple[16] shld be construed without

delay #Gharwapsi[17]

Shivam Vij retweeted

Prashant Jha @prashantktm · Dec 12

Ajaz Ashraf's perceptive piece on why and how hate speech helps leaders get noticed, rise up in the

Sangh[18] hierarchy, http://scroll.in/article/694355/Wait-for-it-the-list-of-Sangh-leaders-spewing-ha-

tred-is-about-to-get-much-longer …

Moreover, the tweets also call out the government for being "unfit for job", and not fulfilling the prom-

ises made about focusing on development during the election.

@Soniafaleiro: Furious competition between BJP sadhus & sadhvis to prove most unfit for job.

Looks like they will share the trophy. https://twitter.com/firstpostin/status/542961787927162880

…

Shivam Vij retweeted

Namita Bhandare @namitabhandare · Dec 11

Godse, Gita and Ghar vapasi[19]. Is the government still talking about development? Or has that

agenda been derailed?

Shivam Vij retweeted

Madhu Kishwar @madhukishwar · Dec 17

PM @narendramodi asks all ministers to submit "Report Cards" to PMO. Dear PM, how about

u first submitting ur own "report card" to the nation?

---

[16] This refers to the Ayodhya dispute in India centring around a plot of land in Uttar Pradesh. Hindus believe the site to be the birthplace of the Hindu god Ram. The Babri Masjid stood at this site until 1992 when the mosque was destroyed during a political rally that turned into a riot. The ownership of this piece of land based on archeological evidence is being disputed in Supreme Court right now.

[17] Gharwapsi literally translated means 'returning home'. It refers to an ongoing campaigns led by leading Hindu organisations like RSS and VHP since 2014 after the Modi government came to power to convert non-Hindus to Hindus. These controversial mass conversions have been linked the to same groups who are also campaigning to re-build the Ram temple in Ayodhya (see previous footnote).

[18] Sangh hierarchy or family refers to a family of a dozen Hindu nationalist organisations that have been started by the members of RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). The RSS is linked to the national political party BJP, which is currently the ruling party in India.

[19] Nathuram Godse was a right-wing Hindu nationalist who assassinated Gandhi in 1948. Gita here refers to Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu sacred text, that Narendra Modi gifted to President Barack Obama in his official visit. Some BJP members are attempting to make it compulsory for schools in India to teach Bhagavad Gita.

There is also an allusion in some tweets to right wing fundamentalists trying to appropriate online space, especially Twitter, by 'trolling'. For example, the following tweets characterise these users as "outrageous" and attention seeking fanatics (Faleiro), extremists who until recently occupied the fringes of political and social life (Vij), and "scum" who celebrate the killings of Pakistanis as payback for Mumbai attacks of 2008[20] (Dixit), respectively. Shivam Vij, in the tweet quoted below, retweets a reply to his tweet from someone who is clearly a BJP supporter, or a staunch Hindu, and sees Vij's criticisms of the current government and the current nationalist drives as 'lies' and propaganda against the government. Vij broadcasting this reply to his followers serves to showcase the ubiquity of such views in Indian public life (at least online). This, in a way, justifies his role as a journalist drawing attention to the regressive religious, social and cultural policies of the government, and upholding the values of freedom and secular democracy.

> @Soniafaleiro: Be outrageous, get attention, feel like a somebody. Strategy of Hindu fanatics offline & on: http://pllqt.it/IDYiGB (meme picture)

> @DilliDurAst: The fringe is the new centre #BJP #Hindutva #HinduRashtra

> Shivam Vij retweeted
> Raghavendra Gandhi @gandhiraketla · 9h 9 hours ago @DilliDurAst new fringe is media like you, who spread lies and hate

> Dekhiye bharatiya sanskriti ka ek uttam namoona - https://twitter.com/saurabhsri2000/status/ 544356549955952640 … kya shishtachaar hai![21]

> @Nehadixit123: Unfriended/blocked several this morning: They were happy that #peshawar and #mumbai met the same fate. #Scum

In contrast to the tweets above, the following tweet by Vij refers to an interesting development in the discourse of the right wing and its visibility in the Indian mediascape:

> @DilliDurAst: Re-Think: The right wing plans its own intellectual conference in a five-star in Goa

---

[20] On 26th November 2008 (also known as 26/11) a group of attacks carried out by Pakistani terrorist groups lasting four days, involving a series of bomb attacks and shootings at multiple sites in Mumbai.

[21] This tweet can be translated to: Look at a prime example of Indian culture. What good/civil manners!

this week http://scroll.in/article/695008/Re-Think:-The-right-wing-plans-its-own-intellectual-conference-in-a-five-star-in-Goa-this-week …

The tone of this tweet is neutral and informative, compared to the derisive and sarcastic tone of the tweets above. It is accompanied by a link to an article in Scroll.in, which refers to the right wing "acknowledging the need to carve out a less angry space for conservative commentary online" (Venkatramakrishnan, 2014). Therefore, although, this story about the right wing vying for a larger presence in the intellectual public space is treated with neutrality by Vij, it still serves to validate his position regarding the pervasiveness of "angry" right wing commentators online. So on the one hand his neutrality serves to establish him as an unbiased, albeit liberal, journalist promoting diverse opinions in media discourse, yet on the other he also legitimises his position as a gatekeeper who might use his influence to counter the hate-mongering of fundamentalist users or 'trolls' in the online space in India, but rather reclaim the space for constructive public discourse.

Peshawar Attacks and Universalism

Another major news event that dominated the discourse at the time this analysis was conducted was the terrorist attack in a school in Peshawar, Pakistan, on 16th December 2014. All three of the journalists tweeted more than once about the event. Popularly used hashtags for these tweets include ones which allude to cross-border solidarity between the two oft-warring nations, like #IndiawithPakistan. These serve to further reinforce Berlant's notion of the creation of "universal" values based on "feeling politics", sentiments claiming a common sense "higher" truth which has the power to "dissolve contradiction and dissent" (1999: 58). One of the most telling tweets is the following retweet of Indian prime minister Narendra Modi's tweet by Vij, who is otherwise active, as discussed in the previous section in criticising the fundamentalism prevalent under the former's governance.

Shivam Vij retweeted

Narendra Modi @narendramodi · Dec 16

In the wake of dastardly attack in Pakistan, I appeal to schools across India to observe 2 mins of silence tomorrow as a mark of solidarity.

Most of the tweets employ a personal voice as well as emotive language. For example,

@DilliDurAst: #IndiaWithPakistan because no politics, religion, ideology is above the need to share the grief of Peshawar's parents

@NehaDixit123: Unfriended/blocked several this morning: They were happy that #peshawar and #mumbai met the same fate. #scum

The only exception is Faleiro whose tweets about the event are limited to articles written by other Indian as well as Pakistani authors published in international news platforms like *New York Times* and *Bloomberg.* In contrast, Vij, when he does share articles on the subject, cites India-based publications/channels like *NDTV*, and his own organisation, *Scroll.in.* Dixit does not share external news links about the event at all.

> Sonia Faleiro retweeted
>
> Isaac Chotiner @IChotiner · Dec 18
>
> In the NYT, Mira Sethi and @shehrbanotaseer write on the massacre in Peshawar, and its political consequences: http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/opinion/the-pakistani-talibans-massacre-in-peshawar-must-be-its-last.html …

> @SoniaFaleiro: Pankaj Mishra on #Peshawar: The murder of children destroys the already frail hope that there's justice in our world. http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2014-12-17/peshawar-terror-attack-violates-our-shared-humanity …

Instead, the latter journalists share or retweet personal tweets from the accounts of Pakistani journalists, such as Amar Mateen and Maheen Usmani, etc. Therefore, what is evident from the discourse is a focus on cross-border fraternity, with Indian journalists sharing the (emotive) voices, as well as visuals of the event, of their colleagues across the border.

> Neha Dixit retweeted
>
> Amir Mateen @AmirMateen2 · Dec 16
>
> The more pictures you see of innocent victims the more your heart weeps
>
> #PeshawarAttack "" (picture)

> Shivam Vij retweeted

Raza Rumi @Razarumi · Dec 16

Look at the faces RT @faridmemonpsf: Minors watching their senior injured in today's At-

tack #PeshawarAttack #GoTtpGo (picture)

Shivam Vij retweeted

Maheen Usmani @MaheenUsmani · Dec 16

#Pakistan do we have a consensus now? Drone the bastards. #PeshawarAttack

Transnational Publics and the Indian Literary Journalist

Although this analysis shows how literary journalists attempt to align themselves with the concerns of Twitter-using publics in India, who are these people who have found a relatively powerful voice on social media? One of the criticisms of social media, especially in countries that have a vast digital divide[22], is that the emotional inclusiveness that social media platforms like Twitter afford the public can only be enjoyed by the upper and middle classes. The platform is a place where the middle class can voice their "discontent", whereas the socially marginalised do not even have the means of accessing this space, let alone using it to articulate their own concerns (Belair-Gagnon *et al*, 8th April 2013a). In fact, a qualitative study comprising of interviews with various Indian journalists showed that the journalists do not consider public perspectives on Twitter to be representative of the country. "Indian citizens who use social media are more likely to live in cities, hold a passport, and share values with social media users in the West." (ibid, 2013b: 9). This raises a further question of whose concerns are journalists like Vij aligning their own with? The following quotation from an article by Faleiro on Twitter and women's rights in India (13th Dec., 2013), showcases the complexity of the position which needs to be explored further.

> "Can Twitter really change how people talk about and think about women's rights in India? No, the numbers of people who use it are simply too small. But what it can do, given the privilege and reach of the people who do use it, is to keep media and therefore public focus on the subject sharp and consistent."

---

[22] An article in *The Hindu* surmises that only 3% of total households in India have internet connections on their laptops or desktops; the number of households that have access to mobile internet might be higher. But households with connections are also very unevenly distributed between urban and rural areas, with two-thirds of the connections being in the cities. The article also quotes data to point out that 48% of Internet subscribers are moreover on narrowband, and therefore cannot access data-intensive applications. (Krishnan, 26 Mar, 2017)

The privileged publics on Twitter to whom Faleiro is referring to, therefore, shape the way authors are discursively positioned within this space. Another point of interest in this quotation is the perceived relationship between (mainstream) "media" and "public", as well as the position of the Twitter users in relation to both. The discourses on Twitter are seen to hold influence over media institutions, who in turn affect the discourses in the public space, potentially affecting the course of "women's rights". The influence that these discourses have can be attributed to the affective capacity they wield to elicit an emotional response from this socially privileged demographic (see Pedwell 2016).

But it is useful to link the publics Faleiro refers to here with Timothy Brennan's investigation into literary cosmopolitanism. Both the writer and the critic are concerned with privileged constituencies who see their roles as being key to bringing about changes in the legislative tools using which the nation-state organises its citizens, particularly the ones marginalised by existing socio-economic structures. According to Brennan (1997: 38), the cosmopolitan author is a figure through whom these publics imagine themselves representing "a nostalgia for 'democracy', a vision of pluralist inclusion, a diversity in unity, a global progress based on the Enlightenment". The affective labour that is involved in the performance of authorship in this space, then, is key to gaining legitimacy as journalists who might inhabit this figurative identity and by so doing create an affinity with an international readership. Their symbolic capital, therefore, depends significantly on this affective role that they fulfil in the "transnational politics of empathy" (Pedwell, 2016: 3), bridging the gap between disparate affective publics across national and geo-political boundaries. Based on the empirical analysis presented in this chapter, these authors seem to be aware of and reflexive about their position in a global cultural industry and sensitised to its relationship with an emerging transnational middle-brow public space. Consequently, they are able to navigate it according to their creative, career or political goals.

Our three journalist-writers in the Indian journalistic field have constructed positions that are quite similar to one another, insofar as they are constructed in direct contrast to the values and norms of the mainstream news system. Conversely, the varying modalities and focus of each actor demarcates the specific positions and roles he or she is claiming to occupy in the field. This demarcation is as much reflexive as it is artificial, that is, the "irreducible differences" (Kumar, 2013: 269) which are an inevitability of communication on a platform like Twitter compels these writers to react to those differences by aligning themselves to certain interests whilst at the same time distancing themselves from, or even disavowing, others.

Most of the users of Twitter, like Driscoll's (2008, 147) middlebrow readers, are not actively political, being content instead in an emotional expression for or against an issue, or "acting as a critical chorus". This emotive public space, however, has been quite influential in holding media bodies to account as is apparent from the pressure Twitter users have asserted in the aftermath of the Radia tapes, mentioned in the opening section of this chapter. But whereas most of these users come together in a collective expression of outrage in the event of a controversy or other such event of nationwide importance (or at least of importance to urban-metropolitan citizens), their worldviews are quite disparate and, in many ways, at odds with each other. This therefore enables writers like Vij, Dixit and Faleiro to continue to be relevant to a significant percentage of this demographic, while also establishing their legitimacy based on other identity markers or worldviews. This accounts for the slight differences in their positionings in relation to the ubiquitous themes or issues that they all commented on via Twitter. However, when viewed in relation to their relative positions in the larger field of Indian media, it is easy to see the oppositional tone they all take to the established forces of power in the field. By doing so, they mobilise an emotional connection within the disenfranchised public which legitimises their position within the field.

Tufecki (2013: 856) discusses how the "fracturing of mass media's command of public attention" has resulted in the rise of "individual mediators of attention…like prominent journalist-curators" who act as "focusers of (public) attention". This leads non-institutional micro-celebrities on platforms like Twitter to seek ways to connect with influential journalists, like the ones discussed in this chapter, to gain access to broader public attention and visibility to the causes they support. Tufecki also emphasises in his article that this dense, networked information ecology is hierarchical (862); this assertion is clearly borne out by the findings of this exploratory study. These actors, in their performative interactions with other international and national actors, institutionally affiliated actors, and celebrities legitimise themselves and their positions on this platform. Underpinning these practices undertaken by these actors is the knowledge that the publics on Twitter represent a demographic that is relatively influential and interested in voicing an opinion on political and socio-economic matters. The extent that the actors that I have discussed in this chapter play a role in the political public space is by seeking and focusing the attention of these influential publics for specific causes, rather than "solely for the sake of attention" for themselves (Tufecki, 2013: 850). By doing this they are able to navigate the somewhat oppositional nature of fame and literature that Greg Myers refers to in his 2016 article on authors on Twitter: "the fame of literary figures has often been seen as problematic, a

blurring of the boundaries between high culture and low" (477).

This middlebrow discourse around authors that legitimises their position within the public space is dependent upon, but not dictated by, the logics of the cultural field, and the specific forms of capital that act as a currency within it. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, when challenged by the logics of micro celebrity, and the fracturing of public attention that the postmodern cultural industry is faced with, the legitimacy of the author-figure is determined by whether they are able to appear emotionally authentic and relevant as mediators in the conversations that concern the affective publics in spaces like Twitter. This tendency evident in the findings of this exploratory study in this chapter points towards the need for the conceptual tools of field theory to be extended. The next chapter elaborates on how the concept of meta-capital can be useful in encapsulating how the symbolic power of literary journalists extends outside the specific fields of cultural production and consumption, in the sentimental public space.

Chapter 5

Bourdieusian Meta-Capital and the Literary Journalist

The necessity for a media strategy, and the requirement to submit to something like a 'media logic', affects all political actors.

Nick Couldry (2012:146)

Following the analysis and arguments from the previous chapter, I suggest that the literary journalists I discuss in this thesis can be seen to be key actors within the intimate political network. Quoted above, Couldry is referring to a more traditional political figure; when discussing the centrality of 'media logic' in their legitimacy, it can be argued that the same holds true for literary journalists as well. The 'media logic' that literary journalists must submit to in order to be legitimated and extend their authority in the cultural sphere requires them to be reinvented within the media field, which Couldry suggests has definitive power over other spheres where these actors wish to gain legitimacy.

This chapter explores how Bourdieu's theoretical frameworks might be utilised to conceptualise the figure of the literary journalist in the sphere of contemporary cultural production. Foregrounding the issues of legitimacy and authority that are central to this Bourdieusian model of cultural production, the first section of Chapter 5 explores the characteristics of the ambient news system (Hermida, 2010: 301), and how the influence of the media field on other fields of production and reception can be explained using the concepts of media meta-capital. The second section questions how the processes of consecrating literary journalists works in this ambient media system. The third section enquires into the appropriacy of the term 'agency' when speaking about the cultural sphere in an environment with such convergences; this section also introduces some concepts from Latourian actor-network theory that might be used to supplement our understanding of the relations within the sentimental political network within the transnational public spaces discussed in the previous chapters. It is useful to re-iterate here that this thesis is not hugely indebted to Latourian theoretical frameworks, but merely uses some concepts to encapsulate the indeterminate social relations inherent in the relatively fluid landscape of an emerging form of authority in the postmodern cultural industries. In the final section of Chapter 5 I discuss how the concept of meta-capital

might be useful in situating the influence of literary journalists from postcolonial origins in a social world comprised of transnational middlebrow publics.

The proliferation of the figure of the literary journalist in cultural discourses, and even arguably in certain public spaces, reveals firstly, the importance of sociological work (initiated by Bourdieu and his research associates) to study the growing influence of journalism as a field on the autonomy of other cultural spheres (Benson, 1998: 463). Secondly, as mentioned in Chapter 1, it also points towards the continuing relevance of the 'literary' as a signifier in the cultural sphere, which implies more than just books that can be read; instead Brouillette and Doody (2015: 142) suggest that the 'literary' is increasingly becoming a "shorthand for a set of generative values and experiences" that can be produced for, and accessed by, an audience far wider than just readers of books.

Contemporary News Media and Media Meta-capital

Following Simone Murray's (2012) work on the 'adaptation industry', Brouilette and Doody place the literary within a "converged system" characterising the contemporary sphere of cultural production of "transsectoral content franchise". In this section I attempt to align Murray's (2012) conceptualisation of the 'adaptation industries' with the advancements made to Bourdieu's field theory in the sociology of media. In this chapter I draw mainly on the concept of 'meta capital' developed by Nick Couldry (2003, 2012) and Rodney Benson (2006). In Chapters 2 and 3, I have explicated the role of the literary journalist as a writer who is successful in exploiting the convergences of the fields using case studies. Couldry's 2003 article primarily deals with the capacities within Bourdieusian field theory to deal with this question of convergences between fields. Couldry (2003: 24) asserts that Bourdieusian meta-capital is the type of capital that is not produced by the workings of any specific field but exerts influence over the "definitions of prestige" within multiple specific fields . Furthermore, Couldry asserts that media meta-capital not only operates in the way what Bourdieu suggests, but its influence also "radiates into social space generally… through the general circulation of media representations" (Couldry, 2003.: 25).

The key contribution of Couldry's work to my thesis is its focus on understanding media as "both a production process with specific internal characteristics" (2003: 3) and as "a general frame for categorising the social world" (2003: 2). The case studies in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are good points of departure for a

conceptualisation of media processes following Couldry. In their role as writers who write about marginalised figures from developing countries in English, the authors I discuss in these chapters – Aman Sethi and Sonia Faleiro – are evidently involved in providing a frame for defining these subjective realities for a global English-speaking audience. However, the forms of middlebrow writing they engage in also entail specific processes of producing these representations in order to engage a globally dispersed audience. I would argue further that one of the most salient themes in scholarly work about literary journalism as a form of writing foregrounds both the challenge it poses to the existing media frames for describing social reality as well as the processes of its production which sits at an intersection between the 'literary' and 'journalistic' fields.

For example, in the introduction to the anthology *Global Literary Journalism: Exploring the Journalistic Imagination*, John Tulloch and Richard Keeble explore the "fuzzy boundaries between the literary and the journalistic". In the first chapter in the book, "*True Stories: A Century of Literary Journalism*", Norman Sims (2007: 9) proclaims that: "In the last century and a half, literary journalism has developed as a creature with parents in both camps", meaning literature and journalism. Moreover, there is a sense within this body of scholarship that due to the extended capabilities of literary journalism in engaging audiences, it is better than traditional hard news formats at representing social reality. For example, an article by van Krieken and Sanders (2016) claims that, "Compared to traditional journalism, narrative journalism, thus, has the capacity to provide a meaningful context to news events and situations. The production of literary journalism, the existing literature on the topic seems to suggest, involves some processes that cannot be explained using just the logics of either literary or journalistic fields. Moreover, its capacity to contextualise subjective realities renders it a form that can reach and engage diverse middlebrow audiences at a transnational level.

Couldry's concept of meta-capital is useful in approaching the role of the literary journalist in the cultural sphere with an emphasis on questions of authority and legitimacy. When considering literary journalists as middlebrow writers, my main contention in this thesis is that their influence extends beyond the publics that read their published works. Therefore, the sites where their authority is consolidated must also be seen to exist beyond the borders of their published books or articles. I draw here upon Beth Driscoll's work on middlebrow reading (2014) to conceptualise the ways in which literary authority accords contemporary writers the legitimacy to become commentators on major political or social issues. In several instances a

discourse analysis of interviews of literary journalists reveal a reluctance to assume this role which often extends their authority to the political field. However, most authors in engaging in the field of production of 'literary' texts are obliged into these public enactments in order to be consecrated in a news environment, which following Hermida (2010: 301) can be referred to as an "ambient media system".

Hermida defines this system as an "ecosystem" that is "always on", and in which information may exist at the periphery of a user's attention but can be brought to the centre as and when required. The emphasis of producers of media content in such an environment, therefore, is to create a certain "atmosphere", made up of information that does not necessarily attract attention, but works together to create an "awareness system". Authors, in this environment, therefore must constantly engage in phatic communication, on platforms such as Twitter. This is discussed in more detail in the previous chapter (Chapter 4), but here it is important to highlight the similarity of this assertion, following Hermida's conceptualisation of the space where media is produced and consumed, and Murray's (2012) claim about the demands on the digital-era author. According to Murray,

> Instead of the broadcast era's authorial phasing in and out of public consciousness according to the publicity cycle for a new book, the digital-era author now aims for consistency and 'stickiness' in reader-writer relationships.(323)

This proposed normative role as a social, political or cultural commentator for the contemporary author achieves its "stickiness" primarily by providing evidence of emotional authenticity in support of their published works, an acknowledgement that they care about their subjects. The concept of 'intimate publics', that was introduced in the previous chapter, can be used to account for how certain authors can achieve this consistency in the public consciousness. As explained in Chapter 4, certain actors are legitimated within the middlebrow networks by aligning themselves with the issues that concern the publics within those spheres; they also are able to draw upon their own subjective experience and expertise to express an emotional connection to the issues, thus acting as authentic spokespersons for their audiences to connect with and around.

Secondly, this role for these authors to perform could also serve to strengthen media's meta-capital and its influence on the literary field. It does so by claiming the figures of literary authors, as well as the space in which this authorship is produced and consumed, as an "extended space in which news gets generated" (Couldry, 2012: 146). This is evident from the proliferation of video interviews with authors

conducted by reporters and distributed on YouTube (and embedded in other social media posts, blogs, emails to news subscribers, etc.). An example of this is the interview of Aman Sethi conducted by online news and critique website, *NewsLaundry*. These interviews are mutually beneficial for both these actors: *NewsLaundry* is legitimised as an actor which facilitates middlebrow literary engagement within the network and Sethi is able to gain exposure to new audiences, and an opportunity to engage them. These audiences in all likelihood might not have read his books or journalistic articles before watching his video interview, but now can connect emotionally with his public facade and the issues the interview positions him as representing, i.e., public healthcare and working and living conditions for casual labourers. Moreover, the privileging of a certain author over others who might have been approached to undertake this role, is a way in which media wields power over other fields of cultural production; this accords these authors with greater symbolic power in the field comprised of middlebrow literary networks. This is an indirect influence which Couldry (2012: 141) also includes in his formulation of media meta-capital. It works, he says, "through the media's legitimation of influential representations of, and categories for, understanding the social world".

One of the major ways in I diverge from Couldry's works that I refer to in this chapter is by conceiving of the spaces where media power is constructed as dispersed, in flux and comprising of performances that are often not meant to draw attention, but rather to blend in and be normalised. Perhaps Couldry (2003: 32) foresees this development in conceiving media spaces in the future as he draws attention to the need to consider the "long term impacts of less centralised means of media production and distribution (especially the Internet) on both media field and media's meta-capital)". Moreover, his articles, being mainly theoretical and not dealing with empirical analysis, do not address directly the question of actors' agency and its relation to the concept of media-metacapital. Rather he asserts that this meta-capital operates at a "macro-institutional level" and therefore shares a weak causal link with "media-related action in any particular field" (Couldry, 2012: 235). Lastly, in this chapter I contend that, despite Couldry's earlier scepticism (2003: 32), media industries that operate at a global level have indeed ensured that "the key social fields of contestation are operating on other than a national level".

Consecration in an ambient news environment

In choosing the figure of the literary journalist as a point of departure in exploring questions of authority in the contemporary cultural sphere, this thesis must bring together research that attempts to tackle this ques-

tion from the fields of journalism and literary studies. That there is an observable affinity between Hermida's "ambient news environment" and Murray's "adaptation industry" is indicative of the fact that the effects of mediatization are felt on a global scale, as well as of a growing trend in the adoption of new media systems in both developed and developing economies. Cumulatively this is blurring the boundaries between categories of production, as well as motivating researchers in these areas to redefine the ways in which they conceptualise these relations and processes. I do not mean to propose here in a techno- deterministic manner that these new technologies of cultural production, distribution and consumption have radically changed the ways in which we write, publish, read and discuss; instead I argue that theorising the everyday use of these technologies for the aforementioned purposes pushes to the fore questions of how existing frames that define social reality and the processes and relations involved in their construction are legitimised, challenged and gain or maintain authority.

Zizi Papacharissi, who researches the Internet and its social and political influences, takes this position in the foreword – entitled "We Have Always Been Social" – of the journal *Social Media + Society* (2015). In it she argues that the term 'social media' is often used in contemporary discourses in a way that is "temporally bound", when in fact media has always been social. However, in this article she also mentions that the mainstream adoption of the term "social media" allows her to command a good platform to put forward her own position. Similarly, I find that most researchers whose work I include in this chapter share an interest in exploring the fuzziness involved in the constantly evolving workings of the cultural sphere rather than creating binaries between 'old' and 'new' media or categories. Another recent article by Papacharissi (2015) introduces the concept of "hybridity" that is central to the conceptualisation of the cultural spaces discussed in this thesis, which she defines as "blurring boundaries between information, news, and entertainment" which creates "subtle but important shifts" in power in the construction of media products. She draws from Hermida's (2010: 29) article which I have cited earlier to characterise the networked spaces where storytelling takes place as "prodused, ambient and hybrid". Produsage is defined by Papacharissi as an ecology in which the practices of producers and consumers are blended in the process of storytelling (ibid.). This usage of the term is reminiscent of that in an article which utilises actor-network theory to talk about the transformation of the process of photography with the introduction of iPhone cameras and the various technologies and social relations surrounding it (see Cruz and Meyer, 2012).

Cruz and Meyer (2012: 13) point out that not only do the new socio-technological introductions give the photographer more control over the whole process of creating the images and distributing them, but does so

while bringing together different social actors in a way that has been unprecedented using previous technologies . These interactions between different actors within the new networks of photography has given rise to a new "social meaning" of photography. It is easy to see parallels between this article and the claims that Papacharissi makes about hybrid news narratives utilising social media networks. This network where the lines between producers and consumers are increasingly blurring, the new social meanings that emerge in this space can be characterised as middlebrow, as discussed in Chapter 4. It is therefore important to identify the new processes in which consecration takes place within these networks of produsage.

Anthea Garman's (2014) discussion of the South African writer Antjie Krog emphasises the field theory-derived term 'consecration' in her understanding of meta-capital. It considers how the concept can be used to understand the influence of a writer who has over her career written across genres, her authority even spilling over into the field of politics in South Africa. However, she declares that this term is often diluted in meaning when used by media theorists and seeks to redress this tendency by utilising conceptual tools from media theory, i.e., news values, framing, agenda-setting.

> A reading of Bourdieu's work seems to elicit a particular meaning which is, that someone established in a field confers legitimacy upon an individual at a key, or ritualised, moment in order to enhance their status. But Bourdieu also says that there is a "process of consecration" or a "series of signs of consecration", implying that as an individual moves through a field seeking to "win prestige", there will be many moments in which the person experiences "consecration"…In the examination of particular moments in Krog's life I am going to keep in mind the etymological roots of the word "consecration" in its religious use, i.e. the components of ritual or ceremony must be present, the act and/or words of a consecrator must be a factor, and there must be a noticeable transition in position and trajectory for the consecrated as well as the attention of the media. (Garman, 2007: 5)

This approach raises an important question for any analysis of authority in the ambient environment which the cultural adaptation industry exists in: what are the processes involved in the consecration of an author in this hybrid contemporary space? Garman (2007: 7) details a series of mediated public pronouncements by "consecrators" over the years in Krog's career that cement her authority as not just a famous celebrity author, but also as a producer of symbolic value about South Africa. For example, in 1989, by quoting from Krog's poem *My Mooi Land*, political activist Ahmed Kathrada, in his address at being released from detainment, conferred "political legitimacy" on the writer. Garman describes how the media framed the news

event as a particular moment in the anti-apartheid struggle where political change is imminent, and Krog's work and persona as a "voice of that struggle". Garman's work, therefore, is an important illustration of the way in which media meta-capital can be said to operate in the mediated socio-cultural space. Moreover, its relevance to this thesis is the way in which it utilises Bourdieusian concepts of consecration, entry and distinction/emergence towards an analysis of a contemporary literary personage.

However, I diverge from Garman in my selection of the type of authorship to be analysed; the literary journalists in my dissertation are well-known transnationally but cannot be said to be consecrated in the same way as Antjie Krog. In short, these writers enjoy the authority to talk about, and sometimes for, the Indian marginalised to a globally dispersed privileged audience due to the tendencies in the cultural sphere that Brennan suggests gives rise to the "general author". In short, my point here is that although these authors have gained significant consecration by traditional agents in the journalistic, literary, academic and political fields who confer it, their engagement with the hybrid media environment characterised by "produsage" also plays a part in their authority in this space. This is the engagement that Garman's paper does not address; therefore, this thesis diverges from the focus on media frames in Garman's analytical framework and concentrates instead on the construction of emotional authenticity involved in the assembling of the contemporary middlebrow authorial persona.

Chapter 6 provides a theoretical and empirical grounding for charting the performance of legitimacy and authority on the basis of emotional authenticity and transnational empathy in the digital public spaces on Twitter. But it is not only on Twitter, or even in online space more generally, that such authorial performances are produced, perceived, or consumed. The "always-on" nature of author-audience engagement described above by Murray finds the most prominent expression in the digital spaces which theoretically allows for lesser barriers for audiences to gain access to or even become producers. However, the convergences of formats of cultural production, and the flexibility required of the authors of cultural products to move between them, implies that authorial engagement now must take place in varied geographical spaces, as well as be aimed towards varied audiences and publics. There is a celebratory nature to the fact that such authorship, and the associated cultural products, are "denationalised" and can easily be transformed to take on a variety of meaning (Murray, 2012: 326). "Entry" as an author in the adaptation industry is therefore conceptualised in this thesis as the ability to translate one's specific capital in a field of production to produce symbolic meaning that lends itself to be co-opted in formats that engage varied publics; "emergence" is understood as the ability to both distinguish oneself from existing voices, often based in mainstream media, as well as the ability to put forward a corresponding representation of marginalised subjects that challenge the most prevalent discourses.

In the analysis in this thesis, media meta-capital is useful in addressing the question of symbolic power and how it operates on subjects (or audiences) who cannot be said to be a part of any of the fields of cultural production. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the thesis follows Couldry in claiming that social reality is mediated through media representations; symbolic power in the field of media therefore has a greater influence over publics outside the field as well. However, Couldry also allows for a divergence from that of pure representation (for example, an analysis of the representation of particular marginalised subjects in the narratives). Chapters 2 and 3 consist of narrative and discourse analyses of the context and content of the literary journalism of two relatively well-known writers, Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi. These chapters serve to illustrate how authors of literary journalism are able to engage and stay relevant to geographically dispersed and demographically varied middlebrow audiences across platforms. However, it is not just their positions within the media field (given that most literary journalists start out as working journalists) that are responsible for their widespread influence. This brings us to the core of Brennan's question about what forces are responsible for writers being considered experts in certain spheres of human, social and political experiences. According to Couldry (2012: 142), "the key causal mechanism…is not the format itself but the conferring and confirming of authority and category membership within the format". This emphasis on consecration is what is evident in Garman's article, summarised below.

Garman (2007, 2014) showcases brilliantly how cumulatively Krog has been able to accumulate symbolic power based on various consecrators in the media field according her with renewed "category member-ships" (whether as a renowned author of books, or as a voice of a new political activist turn) throughout her career. In previous chapters I have highlighted the ways in which the literary journalists make a bid to con-solidate authority in different roles within the socio-cultural space. What is important to recognise here is that in this thesis, unlike in most scholarly accounts of literary journalists, the literary and the journalistic are not positioned as dialectically opposed. Instead, the 'literary' is understood both as being produced, of-ten through a performance of authorship, in the field of media, as well as existing as a field (of literature) which is increasingly becoming influenced by the logic of the meta-field of global media power. The key difference in the use of the concept of "consecration" between Garman's (2007, 2014) article and my the-sis, therefore, is my focus on studying consecrators whose agency is more dispersed, and perceived in a more uneven manner, than what is generally assumed to be the effect of mainstream media on its audience. Chapter 4, moreover, underscores this focus by highlighting that the authorial figures of such writers gener-ally exist to challenge and critique the authority of mainstream news narratives. In fact, the discourse

around literary journalists who gain some celebrity status in mainstream television or print news formats also draws a clear line between such works and general journalistic news writing, often highlighting the inadequacies of ways of representing marginalised subjects in the latter format. For example, in an interview with a writer for the American online publication, *Columbia Journalism Review* (29th April 2015), Sonia Faleiro mentions that the reason that she co-founded *Deca*, a collective of journalists who write and publish long-form narrative journalism, and published her e-book single *13-Men* with Deca, is because she felt that a mainstream magazine would not have done justice to the nuances of that story. Ironic as it might seem, this very ability of the field of media to turn into "news" or "media story" celebrity that is formed at a site of its own critique, and that exists outside the journalistic field, points towards media meta-capital, or the power to influence "other forms of power" (Couldry, 2012: 235).

The ability to launch such a critique, whether aimed at popular media, political institutions or social norms, in a way that gains significant attention, relies significantly on the fact that the literary journalists occupy significant symbolic capital as journalists, within the media field, in the first place. This relationship between occupying a certain position within the journalistic field and legitimacy in the public sphere is explored in Chapter 6 in a case study based within the digital platform Twitter. This legitimacy, conferred, contested, and performed in these spaces is what I propose comes closest in the ambient, hybrid space of contemporary cultural production to the concept of "consecration" as put forth by Garman, following Couldry and Bourdieu. Although such consecratory agency is at times dispersed within such a system of production and reception does not mean that it is in any way "diluted"; rather such agency is dispersed, and its influence only be properly understood using an analytical framework that embraces this characteristic.

Spaces between Fields

When discussing issues regarding authority and category membership, the question of where exactly this work of consecration happens will inevitably arise. This is especially true when using field theory in conjunction with the conceptualisation of the contemporary cultural sphere as dominated by the adaptation industry. Gil Eyal's (2013: 160) concept of "boundary work", defined as a "relational account of the differentiation between fields", is useful in thinking through this question. The convergences between fields of production does not imply that the fields have all become delineated and have lost their specific relationality; it

merely points to the tendency within the adaptation industry to impose upon its produsers a sort of relationality that shifts and is constantly in flux, being made and remade. The reference to assemblage, drawing upon a Deleuzian or Latourian metaphor, refers to this key tendency of the contemporary cultural sphere. I will discuss this concept in more detail a little later in this chapter, however, it is easy to see why "boundary work", and the forces involved in performing it constantly, are so important. Eyal (2013) is quite useful to think about these issues, in conjunction with the concept of meta-capital introduced and discussed earlier.

Of particular interest to this chapter is the idea of "translation" that Eyal (2013: 162) defines as "recruiting allies", who have been convinced by a strategist to temporarily align their interest with hers. The theory of translation in the Latourian tradition is the theory of how power operates in society, similar to the Bourdieusian field theory. However, Eyal also hypothesises the problems inherent in what he refers to as an "externalist" explanation of the process of translation - it does not address issues of what motivates the strategist to form her own interest in the first place in the absence of a concept like habitus. Bourdieu's idea about interest formation, as Eyal rightly surmises, is a complete opposite of the role of the strategist, as the former is vigilant against privileging any one actor within the process. Although Bourdieu's field theory-derived explanation seems more plausible as well as more relevant in describing the actions of and relations between actors involved in the cultural sphere, there is some value in the Latourian concept of translation as well. In other words, I contend here that although all the individual actors within the processes I describe in this thesis are motivated by goals that are specific to their habitus, and thus a product of a particular field of relations, the extent to which they are able to deploy their agency within a network or set of social relations is uneven, and certain actors are able to strategically advance their goals more than others. Michel Callon (1986) further develops this idea in a sociology of translation, a process which he breaks down into four stages of problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilisation of allies. Since Callon elaborates his thesis using a bounded example of a scientific project involving specific industry and community stakeholders, a more thorough adoption of it to explain the workings of the ambient cultural industries is not possible to address within the scope of this thesis.

However, it is possible to surmise an adjacency between this process of translation as elaborated upon by Callon and the mechanisms utilised in the middlebrow engagement between actors in an ambient news environment. One of the problems facing marketing a cultural product in such an environment is that it is no

longer adequate for the publicity cycle to be bounded to a timeframe just preceding and following the release of the product. Users immersed in this environment would deem such a news event as too inauthentic; in the previous chapter I discussed in more detail the characteristics inherent in middlebrow literary practices and the centrality of 'authenticity' to these. However, this tendency has consequences for the industry publicity practices inherited from the broadcast era, which now must be updated. In addition to this, there is a problem of authority in this space, where "produsage" has blurred the lines between producers and audience. I contend in my thesis that in order to address these issues authors have been "recruited" as allies to aid in the publicity process. This requires them to stay constantly engaged in this network; this engagement, therefore, can be said to be strategic in a move towards the goal of publicity for their own works. However, even if looking through a Latourian lens their engagement with users in these spaces cannot be said to be purely geared towards self-promotion, i.e., they are not the "master strategist" or the "fact builder" (Eyal, 2013: 171) in this network. In fact, some authors express publicly a reluctance to participate in this process, which highlights to a large extent the obligatory pressure that the publicity interest exerts on these actors. Also recruited into the process, albeit utilising more indirect pressures, are other actors in this space, often activists, social workers, journalists, bloggers, scholars, editors, publishers, etc. For example, Shivam Vij and Neha Dixit in the previous chapter could be seen as actors who are indirectly influencing the publicity of these literary journalism narratives within the public sphere to further their own interests. Whilst neither of them are published authors in the way that Aman Sethi and Sonia Faleiro are, both Vij and Dixit are invested in promoting this emergent field, as it benefits their own position within their field of journalism, as well as connects them to the middlebrow network which gathers around the issues that these authors represent and speak out for.

This thesis argues that the author plays a key performative role in this network, that of the "spokesperson" (Callon, 1987). In the previous chapter I discuss the discursive ways in which these varied actors are mobilised, using the universalising logic of sentimental politics (Berlant, 2008). It is important to highlight an interesting point that Callon puts forth in his chapter regarding the role of the "spokesperson" that finds a parallel in that of the author. He claims that, "the groups or populations in whose name the spokesmen speak are elusive. The guarantor (or the referent) exists once the long chain of representatives has been put into place. It constitutes a result and not a starting point" (1987: 202). This implies, therefore, that the performative aspects of an author's public life are not only serving the commercial purpose of publicising books to a set demographic target, i.e., readers, but it also brings this audience into existence. The figural author can be seen, therefore, to be a focal point around which a global privileged public converges,

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to be a potential audience for the adaptation industry's products that cross formats and genres. This Latourian methodological lens allows for the precarity of these relations to be revealed, as networks can be seen to tend towards being solidified, whereas fields are mainly solidified relations whose permanence is challenged by internal and external forces. In this extended public-facing role, authors now have a much greater and more direct access to their audience unmediated by institutionally aligned mediators. Their reliance on these institutions, at least to these ends, therefore, has eroded significantly.[23]

Although many scholarly works concentrating on this trend discuss whether it will alter or render unnecessary certain roles within these cultural industries, it is more interesting for the aims of this thesis to note the effect these weakening institutional ties have on the ability of actors in this ambient and hybrid space to construct themselves as trans-sectoral authors moving between formats, content, and geographical contexts. However, it also opens them up to be more influenced by forces external to the field, and their specific capital originating in the field suffers as a result. This then might explain the actors' interest in being recruited as allies in the processes of news-making, thus accumulating media meta-capital.

To conclude this section, it is important to contemplate further how the concepts from Callon's sociology of translation align with the concepts discussed in the first part of this chapter. Eyal's (2013) partition between "jurisdictions", "fields to Bourdieu and spaces between them to Latour" is sound insofar as certain liminal practices at the boundaries of fields are to be explained. For example, if literary journalism was conceptualised in this thesis as merely existing in the overlap between the fields of literary production and journalistic production, then this explanation might suffice. But however in flux these relations in the cultural sphere have become, the wide-scale nature of these changes (e.g., transnational audiences gaining greater access to public figures like authors regardless of where they are located), within the context of the adaptation industry, make it impossible to label these practices as liminal.

If Bourdieu's field theory offers us the conceptual tool of "consecration" to talk about practices geared towards maintaining the continuity of certain relations of power through ritualistic transference, the

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[23] This is not to say that institutional control is not exerted over the presentation of authors on these platforms however. As an article appearing on the *Book Business* website illustrates (Parsons, 1 Oct 2013), publishers view assisting authors with their social media strategy one of the aspects of their role in promoting the book: "Tanya Hall, CEO of Greenleaf Book Group, notes that a smart author should always take direct responsibility for creating and maintaining his or her own social platform. "An author's platform development is mission critical … the more involved he or she is with social media, the more authentic the communication and the stronger the brand." However, she also notes that the publisher has an important support role. "At Greenleaf Book Group, we'll do a very thorough social media strategy document to give an author a primer on using social media along with specific recommendations to help them manage and build social media engagement."".

Latourian-derived concept of "boundary work" that Eyal (2013) introduces can be used to talk about practices based on strategic alliances, and mobilisation of these allies, to gain entry within these relations which constitute power, and in the process posing a challenge to the stability of those particular relational ties. Both these tendencies are evident in the discourses constituting the figures of the authors of literary journalism. Moreover, these tendencies also seem to be mirrored in the characteristics of middlebrow reading that Driscoll (2014) lays out. The middlebrow, she says, is in equal measure reverential towards as well as critical of highbrow culture. Literary journalism, therefore, can be said to occupy this space of contestation between highbrow and lowbrow cultural productions – a space which pays a fair amount of tribute to established "truths" and the hierarchies of power supporting these, while at the same time being invested in challenging others. As the relations within this space of contestation are constantly shifting, it is more useful to use Latourian concepts of weak relational networks to describe the space, rather than concepts suggesting strong relations constituting Bourdieusian fields.

Eyal (2013) refers to this space as a possible "space of opportunities": "Such a space may be significant and long-lasting because it provides those in adjacent fields with the opportunity for a "raid" strategy: incursion from another field, rapid amassing of profits, and rapid retreat into one's original field where these profits may be reconverted into currency that will improve one's formerly marginal position within it.". He also proposes that perhaps the liminality of the space external to the fields might be considered advantageous: "it is also possible, that the in-between status of the space between fields is valued for its own sake – not as a base for creating a new field or return to one's home field – and its fuzzy nature is therefore actively cultivated and reproduced". Based on the empirical analyses in Chapters 2 and 3, it seems that both of these explanations that Eyal proposes might be true in the case of literary journalists accumulating authority and legitimacy. Both Faleiro and Sethi, having gained international acclaim and recognition for books, have gone back to publishing journalistic works, which presumably have a much larger audience because of their greater authority and visibility within the public sphere. It can also be argued that although currently publishing works of journalism both actors enjoy their 'liminal' positionality; they strategically position themselves as 'journalist' or 'author' depending on whichever role allows them the greater ability to express and extend their agency.

Hence it is worth highlighting here that media meta-capital seems to influence power not just within the inner workings of the fields, but also in the boundary space between them. Unlike Garman's analysis that

charts Krog's ascendancy within various fields, the analysis in my thesis, following the assumption that these fields of cultural production are hybrid, ambient and dominated by practices of 'produsage', gives equal emphasis to the accumulation of power within these liminal boundary spaces. Within the media logic that operates in these spaces, authors or other public figures can be consecrated as having an 'authentic' voice supporting a popular movement. An example of this can be found by recalling a tweet from Neha Dixit that I discuss in the previous chapter; in it she says, "Unfriended/blocked several this morning. They were happy that #peshawar and #mumbai met the same fate. #Scum". This personal reaction from a journalist about a big news event about the killing of children served to make her visible, and deemed 'authentic', by intimate publics within Twitter who previously might not have known of her work and profile. The interest (or prestige) that she gains from Twitter users who engage with her on this public platform can be hypothetically transformed into meta-capital that allows her to engage publics as an activist by virtue of such power not being tied directly to her work as a journalist. Hence the concepts of literary celebrity, middlebrow readership, intimate publics as expanded upon in the previous chapter occupies such a central position in this thesis. In cultivating what Carolyn Pedwell (2014) refers to as the "transnational politics of empathy", literary journalists are able to claim a 'universal' voice that despite coming from such liminal spaces takes on a form of symbolic power in the space mediated by hybrid media 'produsers', mobilising allies within various adjacent fields as well as those that do not belong to any fields of production.

Literary journalism and agency

Since media meta-capital operates at a macro institutional level (Couldry, 2012: 235), it poses a problem when conducting an empirical analysis using field theory. (Recall that Benson (2006), evaluating the potential for field theory when used in conjunction with new institutionalism, claims it is a mezzo level analysis). Nowhere is this discrepancy between the two approaches more evident than when talking about agency of actors in an analysis, as I do in this thesis. Couldry sums up the distinction thus: "(meta capital) would be quite distinct from, although linked to, media-related capital for action in any particular field." However, he also hypothesises that "the greater the media sector's meta-capital, the more likely the salience of media-related capital for action in any particular field" (ibid.). Thus, Couldry's article still places the capacity to act, or exercise agency, within individual fields of production, even if there are extra-field forces of power influencing agency within particular fields. One of the main reasons for this might be because of the centrality of habitus in field theory. Eyal's (2013: 182) ideas about spaces between fields similarly do not do away with a reliance on habitus to explain the behaviour of actors inhabiting these liminal spaces. Instead,

he suggests that perhaps actors' motivations are formed within the habitus in the fields they are originally placed within. They then presumably carry this forward to drive their actions within this field of origin as well as in other fields, with the use of symbolic power that can be translated to capital recognisable in other fields. In an attempt to adapt the field theory approach and vocabulary to an understanding of the cultural sphere characterised by the adaptation industry in an ambient news environment, a few questions may arise.

Primary amongst them is the question of how actors gain entry and adopt the habitus of the first or original field of production. The answer might be pre-empted in Bourdieu's (1984) claim that a field of production seeks out its homologous field of reception. Benson (2006: 190- 191) explains the relation between the two in Bourdieu's works as such:

> For Bourdieu, the spaces of production and reception are "homologous," meaning simply that they constitute distinct but parallel social spaces, organized around the same basic divisions between economic and cultural capital. With or without conscious coordination, cultural production seeks out its homologous space of reception, that is, an audience predisposed by education, wealth, and social background to readily accept the kinds of information and ideas being proposed to it. During the classic era of omnibus or "mass media" from the 1950s through the 1970s, such close attention to the audience might have paid few scholarly dividends, since the audience in fact was so broad and heterogeneous. Omnibus media during this time period—such as the national television news networks—sought out, and in a sense constructed, a cultural realm acceptable or at least minimally offensive to the largest numbers of people. The dynamic for print media has always been a bit different.

In the hybrid space of "produsage", however, the distinctions or boundaries between these two spaces, of production and reception, especially for the kind of works that feed into the adaptation industry, are constantly contested. For example, with the rise of middlebrow online publication, like *Scroll.in*, that publish op-ed style pieces, has resulted in articles by authors important to the middlebrow networks, journalists discussing the works of those authors in context of current political and social issues, as well as readers who write a response to those narratives from a personal viewpoint, to all appear on the same platform. As producers and audience are both categories that become interchangeable in this converged hybrid space, the habitus for all the actors inhabiting it is thus more or less shared or similar. Producers, thus, cannot be said to entirely hold the power to create or "propose" ideas to the audience. Rather the resulting "constructed

cultural realm", representations and assumptions from which in turn forms the basis of habitus for these actors, are formed both as a result of field-specific Bourdieusian struggles for dominance based on distinction, as well as the struggles involved in "boundary work" between the spaces of production and reception. Bringing the discussion back to media meta-capital and its relationship to agency, in the aforementioned site of struggles, following Couldry, it can be assumed that the more an actor has of the former, the more purchase they are likely to have when moving between not just various fields of production, but also between the homologous spaces of production and reception. Thus the phenomenon of micro-celebrity is useful in understanding the ways in which actors in hybrid socio-technical spaces (like the one used as a case study in Chapter 4) leverage meta-capital gained from their interaction with the field of media to gain entry into different fields of production in which the media field's influence is more salient. Meta-capital, therefore, affords these actors agency to not just gain entry into a field of production in the first place, but also ascend in importance in the field, and eventually be able to move across various fields of production, thus aligning themselves to the interests of the multinational adaptation industry.

Contemporary literary journalists in particular, as stated in the introduction to this chapter, are agents who are successful in not only gaining entry into the field of journalism, but also capitalising on their symbolic power gained in this field to extend their agency outwards towards other fields in the space analogous to the ones they start out in. In terms of an empirical analysis, with the use of case studies, this implies that each actor will have a different starting point and hence a different trajectory. However, the fact that they are all urban, middle-class, English-speaking, with multiple transnational links, whether in their education or place of residence, is key to their entry into the sphere of cultural production. The case studies also showcase how different actors in the field collaborate to assemble an authorial figure that is distinguishable from others (for example, novelists) in the literary field, but not independent from the media logic pervasive throughout the cultural sphere. In fact, the agencies of the network(s) that constitute the assemblage of such figures is influential due to its submission to media logic. Hence the struggles for dominance and distinction that are internal to the literary field, in this case at least, by virtue of becoming a site of news becomes accessible to a wider (middlebrow) audience.

'Authorial agency' might be embodied by individual authors, but in order to exercise such agency these actors must participate in networks which allow its expression. The distribution of power within these networks might provide a more informative illustration of the way various forms of capital operate within the literary field. This brings to mind Callon's (2006: 10) conceptualisation of agency as performative, similar

to language, which following the semiotician Austin's assumption might be characterised thus: "there is no language, just acts of language." Agency is therefore conceived in this thesis as being discursively performed. Through such performances symbolic power is mobilised and realised. In fields where media meta-capital holds significant sway these performances occur on mediatised spaces. Thus a discourse and narrative analysis of these performative acts or expressions of authorial agency is key to disclosing how media meta-capital operates within various fields of production as well as reception. The question of how meta-capital operates then does not remain one which necessitates a macro-level analysis, but can be answered using meso-level field theory analysis of relations between different forms of capital held by various actors, whether human, technological, or institutional, that take place in the form of a discursive performance that embodies the effects of all forms of symbolic power. The analyses in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 try to connect the micro-level of individual authors producing these narratives and the macro-level forces that influence the ways in which these narratives gain social meanings. The meso-level analysis in these chapters also includes an exploration of the ways in which individual authors negotiate their own positions within the field of production and strategise to accumulate symbolic capital and extend their power towards their own goals.

Globalisation and media meta-capital

On the topic of globalisation and authorship recent scholarly works have focused on the rise in pervasiveness of multinational corporations within the field of publishing. An example is Suman Gupta's book, *Globalisation and Literature* (2009: 163):

> With economic growth and increasing affluence in the relevant section of the Indian population at the turn of the century this perception has changed. Towards the end of the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first, therefore, the number of publishers within India who were publishing literary books in English for Indian market had increased many times – in terms both of independent firms…and of international publishing conglomerates, and later, multinational corporations with bases in India.

Many of these accounts point towards a duality in the position of authors generally categorised as 'postcolonial authors', mainly arising from the contradictions between the national or marginal status inherent in their position and the universality that literature produced in an industry that is global in its scope might

aim for. The contribution of such scholarly works to this thesis, and to this chapter specifically, is that it iterates the complexities of global flows and the effects on the ways discourses around authorship are shaped within these in spatial terms. For example, Casanova in her seminal book about "world literatures" (2004: 122) claims that writers arising from "polycentric areas…where there is competition between two capitals, peripheral literary spaces are subject to a dual form of domination". This spatiality in the conceptualisation of the author is key to placing the contemporary literary journalist as not just a trans-sectoral cultural producer but also as a transnational actor. However, in this chapter I am not interested in understanding the figure of the transnational author figure in relation to that of a 'national' author, as Casanova (2004) does. Instead, in this section of the chapter I concentrate mainly on how the concept of meta-capital can be useful in mapping the transnational author figure.

Larissa Buchholz's (2016) article is useful in bridging the gap between an analysis of the author as an actor in the cultural field at a global level and the author positioned in between and in varying fields within the adaptation industry model discussed in the first part of this chapter. She argues that field theory offers conceptual resources from the "imaginary framework of western nation-states" and therefore cannot be unproblematically expanded to fit the realities of an analysis of the cultural space at a transnational level. She introduces the concept of "relative vertical autonomy" which works alongside "functional autonomy" to develop "global field analysis". She differentiates these two components of "relative autonomy as follows:

> To delineate the latter for global field analysis, I suggest that it is necessary to distinguish between two types of autonomy: first, what I term functional autonomy, which designates how social spheres are differentiated by functionally different types of interests, practices and their logics, corresponding to Bourdieu's original conceptualization (Bourdieu 1996, 2013). Second, vertical autonomy, which accounts for differentiation in relation to other field-levels of social organization in the same realm of specific interest and practice. (Buccholz, 2016: 10)

The transnational author is therefore a set of social relations within a relatively autonomous global field that is at once differentiated at a level of practice (i.e., journalism, literature, art, etc.) but also at a level of social organisation, which might be nation-state, for example.

Identifying the mechanisms that has given rise to a global art field, and which might be transposable to the formation of other global fields, Buchholz (2016: 13) lists:

> a) the formation of global institutions for cross-border exchange; b) the rise and institutionalization of a field-specific global discourse; c) the rise of genuinely global evaluation mechanisms, which I conceptualize as institutional transnational or global forms of capital.

Points a) and b) are addressed in the introduction to this thesis which maps the nascent field of literary journalism comprising of shifting institutional relations and discursive trends; I liken the "institutional global forms of capital" in point c) to media meta-capital in the discussion here. This is because meta-capital is described by Couldry (2003) as having the capacity to define symbolic power and its logics in the field that it holds sway over. Linking Buchholz's (2016) concepts to meta-capital, therefore, also serves to answer the question Couldry (2003: 32) poses regarding the operation of media meta-capital at a global level. It also explains how workers (mainly journalists) within multi-national media institutions serve to legitimise, and thus add to the symbolic power, of other workers within the cultural industry. It also explains to a large extent how actors who start out in the field of journalism at national (as opposed to MNC) news organisations are able to gain influence over transnational reading audiences. The process of accumulation of such capital is of course unique to each actor and their strategic positioning and negotiation of the logics of the fields within the cultural spheres with varying levels of relative autonomy. But the manner in which these fields relate to each other and can be re-scaled to a global level of analysis is illustrated in the case studies in the previous chapters. To reiterate what I have argued in these chapters, positioning of literary journalism narratives within transnational networks of sentimental politics serves to elevate them beyond an actor within national-level fields; the prestige that an author gains from participating within these networks therefore acts as a global form of capital.

> Timothy Brennan in his influential work on cosmopolitan authorship, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* (1997: 203), bemoans that as "third world literature" is genrified "the work pours forth authors tend not to exist as individuals but as elements in an intertextual coterie that chooses them as much as they choose it". This view of the individual writers' agency being subsumed by the established concrete structure within the field is appropriate to a certain degree when talking about discourses being solidified when discussing certain authorships. This can be seen when Faleiro mentions that when she was a reporter for a mainstream news publication, she could not write about things she wanted to write about; it can also be

seen in Sethi's boredom of the norms and formulae that have come to dominate longform journalism. However, to a large extent being subject to media meta-capital implies that there is always a flux in the ways in which these discourses take place, and hence (see my discussion of these discourses as symptomatic of agency) a re-imagining of authorial agency. In the cases of Sethi and Faleiro, for example, publishing their own books has given them the autonomy and increase symbolic power to publicly detach themselves from those norms of the fields of their origin, and experiment with new ways of writing, as well as position themselves differently within the cultural field. This is usually a result of the push to create the literary as a site of news making, and hence endowing it with difference and novelty. In Chapters 2 and 3 I have discussed how the agencies as discursively performed in the processes involved in the construction of Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi as figural authors are reimagined constantly; their works and the ways in which they position themselves in the cultural sphere are constantly evolving.

The classification that follows them around as 'Indian' authors is something that they embrace and eschew at various points to different degrees within the authorial discourses that tie them to their works and the constructed public-facing subjectivity as authors. To illustrate this point we can refer back to a TEDxAmsterdam talk by Sonia Faleiro, discussed in some detail in Chapter 2. In it Faleiro positions herself as someone who is born and raised in India, and currently living in San Francisco, as well as someone who writes about "people from subcultures who live outside of the mainstream". She does not refer to herself in her introduction to this international middlebrow audience as an 'Indian writer' or a writer of stories from India. The content of her talk that follows is drawn from her reporting on the farmer suicides in Vidarbha, as well as the bar dancer Leela's experiences from Faleiro's book *Beautiful Thing*; and within her talk she draws upon her knowledge of the Indian state and society, as well as these Indian marginalised subjects. This tendency is discussed in the works of several scholars of postcolonial authorships, for example, Sarah Brouillette (2007). The main way in which my analysis differs here, although it does not challenge the claims made in these works, is in my imagining the individual writers in the adaptation industry as akin to Callon's (1986) strategic actor that maintains the ability to lend themselves to processes involving certain agency but also has the power to reshuffle or realign themselves with others. This is due to the fact that I view the choice of actors like Faleiro to not express any strong views about being classified in this way as a part of their strategic positioning within the global field of cultural production, as well as a choice that allows them to space to position themselves differently in the future.

Conclusion

Through a series of bids to achieve more vertical and functional autonomy, the set of relations that form the authorial function within the cultural sphere seek to gain more authority, stability and influence. Focusing upon the author figure, its consistency or lack thereof, during the process of accumulation of meta-capital reveals the strategic alliances, movements and transformations that the cultural sphere operating at a transnational level necessitates. Through these nebulous relations therefore the mechanisms of symbolic power and the nuanced but hegemonic and opposing ideologies operating within the contemporary global cultural field is made clear. The concept of meta-capital is useful in examining the ways in which consecration takes place within this global cultural field, which is discussed in earlier in this chapter. The literary journalists are essentially actors who are successful in acquiring strategic alliances and thereby constructing sets of relations that increase their power within the global cultural sphere. My main contention within this chapter has been that the author figure can no longer be seen as a relatively stable point within this sphere; nor can cultural fields be seen to be a set of stable relations. Within the "adaptation industry" model of cultural production, operating at a global scale, the independence of actors identifying as authors depends upon their capacity to move between fields, while still retaining transposable meta-capital that they accumulate in specific fields.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Empathy provides a pertinent entry point to interrogate these transnational dynamics because, of all the emotions, it is the one most frequently conceptualised as an affective bridge between social and cultural differences and an emotional means of achieving social transformation on an international scale.

- (Pedwell, C., 2014: 21)

At the start of this thesis I began with a quotation from journalist and author, Sonia Faleiro, who expressed a desire that her writing might make a difference in the way her middle class audience saw the marginalised individuals she wrote about. The case studies I discussed in the previous chapters exemplify the centrality of this sentiment within the transnational networks of cultural production in contemporary times. As a caveat to my contention here I would like to remind the readers that individual actors within the field might be wary, even critical, of positioning their works as what Pedwell in the quote above refers to as an "affective bridge" (ibid.). In chapter 4, for example, I have quoted Aman Sethi as attempting to distance his work from being motivated by an attempt to produce empathy for casual labourers in India. However, my main argument in this thesis focuses on the tendency of the cultural field to discuss and position these narratives as performing an affective function of bridging the gap between their transnational middlebrow audiences and the Indian marginalised subjects. The first half of this chapter sums up some key assertions and arguments presented within the dissertation in the previous chapters. The second half discusses some possible lines of future research building on points which have been explored here less fully.

At the start of this project my aim was simply to look within as well as beyond the borders of the text to investigate the ways in which these literary journalistic texts about the Indian marginalised, as well as their authors, were being positioned within various media and cultural spaces, i.e., literary award ceremonies, book festivals, book reviews in publications with an international audience, news interviews. My curiosity arose from the fact that these authors were being positioned within these spaces as experts who can speak

about certain marginalised people and groups with some authority. Thus I was interested in exploring how such authority and legitimacy is constructed within these networks, which were often transnational. The literature that I initially came across within literary criticism was excellent in engaging with questions of how postcolonial writers grapple with the power structures within an uneven global literary field to be consecrated by international literary institutions, and noticed by cosmopolitan audiences throughout the world. There was also, within this scholarly field, significant discussion about the representation and voice of the postcolonial marginalised in literary works. These works provide a clear basis for a critical scholarly engagement with these newer forms and genres of writing and the construction and legitimation of the author figure within the field of cultural production. However, as I started gathering my case studies and looking closer at the authorial figures of Faleiro, Sethi, as well as other writers of Indian origin dabbling in literary journalism, like Rohini Mohan, Naresh Fernandes, Samanth Subramanian, I began to note that one of the key elements of their engagement with cultural intermediaries and audiences as authors involved the theme of performing and evoking empathy.

Like Pedwell (2014: 21), quoted above, I also started to find that empathy was a more natural and "pertinent entry point to interrogate these transnational dynamics". One of the reasons for doing this is that it allowed this analysis to step back from privileging conventional institutions of literary consecration, and the institutional logic that they impose upon the field. Instead in this thesis I was able to explore the opportunities offered to these writers by what I have referred to in Chapter 5 as the spaces within the fields, following Gil Eyal (2010). This thesis, therefore, builds upon works on affect and power within the cultural field by scholars like Driscoll (2014), Berlant (1999, 2008) and Pedwell (2014). Driscoll's 2014 work, moreover, provided the framework of the literary middlebrow to examine the modality of these works, as well as the role of affect in certain actors accumulating legitimacy, authority and symbolic power within the field of cultural production. Later over the course of my analysis I was able to link the conceptual "spaces within fields" that Eyal discusses in his 2010 paper and the focus on mobility and transferability that characterise the contemporary cultural field according to Simone Murray's 2012 book on the adaptation industry. The contemporary Indian writers whom I discuss in this thesis seem to capitalise on this dynamic of the present cultural field. By moving between different roles within the cultural field and strategically re-inventing themselves through their writing and public engagements throughout their career they are able to stay relevant as cultural producers within a transnational public sphere. I contend in this thesis that the way in which these actors have achieved this fluidity as well as stickiness with their middlebrow audiences is by virtue of their positioning within this sphere as agents who empathise, as well as help their audiences to feel

sentimentally engaged, with marginalised individuals. By "stickiness" I am referring to the role of the author as being constantly engaged with their audiences in the adaptation industry (Murray, 2012), a concept I introduced first in Chapter 1.

The view taken in analysing empathy and sentimental middlebrow publics in this thesis highlights the well-meaning but problematic aspect of this tendency within the cultural field. It is noteworthy that the sites where this empathy (as well as resulting outrage) can be seen to be expressed and shared are inaccessible to the individuals towards whom these feelings are being directed due to socio-economic, technological and linguistic divides. So then, one might enquire, to what end are these empathy-evoking narratives, and resulting vocalisation of sentiments like sorrow, outrage and empathy from the middlebrow audience, being produced or deployed? Perhaps the popularity of these narratives within these spaces is due to their effectiveness in absolving certain privileged publics from a sense of guilt arising from their relative prosperity and comfort when others around them undergo suffering and pain. To use a quote from Pedwell's book once again to vocalise my discomfort with this characteristic of the literary journalism from India that is being celebrated:

> When empathy is understood as the experience of 'co-feeling', it is suggested, this not only invites problematic appropriations or projections on the part of privileged subjects, but it also risks obscuring their complicity in the wider relations of power in which marginalisation, oppression and suffering occur. (Pedwell, 2014: 10)

Of course I do not claim here that empathy has no potential to bring about radical change in the social, political and economic spheres. Rather I critique its use within mainstream public spheres, as well as its deployment by neoliberal economic forces within cultural industries, in the hope that the radical potentials of empathy are not co-opted by the latter.

Key Assertions and Arguments

In the previous chapters, firstly, I consider how the assertion that these stories are more independent (*The Caravan* claims that the reportage it features is "rich, nuanced and fiercely independent", for example), and "go far beyond normal news reports or op-eds" (*Fountain Ink,* About Us), is one of the major ways in

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which its positioning within the marketplace is able to garner a sense of sentimental identification amongst its various audiences. Chapter 4 builds on this claim with a case study that looks at how three Indian writers who have authored long-form stories about marginalised subjects interact and promote their work on Twitter. Most importantly, this chapter showcases how these actors position themselves in opposition to, and independent of, the mainstream, mainly broadcast, media, and the effectiveness of this strategic positioning in appealing to a cosmopolitan audience within India and abroad.

Particularly when speaking about their writings about marginalised subjects in interviews, the literary journalists I discuss in Chapters 2 and 3 cite their main motivation in penning these stories as an attempt to bring a way of looking at lives at the margins which is not represented in the mainstream media stories. For example, Sonia Faleiro admits in a 2014 video interview titled *New Journalism in India* that she conducted (featuring other longform journalists like Prem Panicker) that:

> When I was working at a mainstream publication that prided itself on doing in-depth stories I was actively discouraged from doing them and the only way I could do an investigation that was meaningful to me and I think to other people was by writing a book and once I wrote my book I was able to write longform journalism independently.

While these actors are typically well aware of the limitations of their agency in representing the points of view of marginalised individuals, the cultural capital associated with working as a journalist nonetheless adds legitimacy to the truth-claim of their works. Furthermore, I also postulate that the emotional connection between the author and the subjects that is portrayed through narrative means both within these works and discursively constructed as a part of the authorial persona in the public spheres, lends itself to the favourable reception of these works by a cosmopolitan middlebrow audience. The postcolonial author based in cosmopolitan centres (like Mumbai, London, Los Angeles, etc.) here acts as bridge between the narrated experiences of the postcolonial marginalised subjects and the empathetic identification of cosmopolitan elite readers. Multiple reviews of literary journalism books posit the author as a guide who introduces the readers to a world and stories that are hidden from the latter. Thus a break from the journalistic institutional protocol of maintaining an objective distance from their subjects that these authors claim to take to write these stories also serves to legitimise these narratives within this transnational sphere.

The second key argument that I put forward in this thesis is that the transnational nature of these works is not just due to globalised distribution processes and consumption patterns, but reflects to a large extent the growth of generic narrative forms and the processes of authorial production that are both international and

cosmopolitan in nature. Within these processes the sensibilities and training that inform the production of the stories are not claimed to derive from any particular national writerly tradition, but rather are situated as contemporary and "cosmopolitan". The authors as represented in bios accompanying these stories live, work, study and publish within various middlebrow networks and cite their literary influences as being similarly eclectic. In an NDTV TV panel discussion on artists and Indian soft power in 2013, Dayanita Singh, photojournalist and author of a 'photo-book' about a Delhi-based eunuch, *Myself Mona Ahmed*, proclaims that she has "never been in favour of nationality based art and…worked hard to say 'Look at my art and forget about my nationality'". Ian Jack in the introduction to *Granta's* India edition calls works like Singh's photo-book one of the "fashionable literary forms" written by "a number of Indian writers who have been influenced by Columbia Journalism School". The website of the online magazine *Indian Quarterly,* for example, proclaims that:

> *IQ* is a national and international magazine. We hope that just as The New Yorker exhibits a distinctly Manhattan sensibility and always contains articles about New York City, IQ will manifest the fact that it is edited and published in Mumbai through its cosmopolitan and open-minded perspective on the world and on India.

This quotation captures "the essence of cosmopolitanism" as "a discourse of the universal that is inherently local—a locality that's always surreptitiously imperial" (Brennan, T. 2000).

These narratives of marginalised subjects act to anchor the discourse of universal middlebrow values and emotions mediated by and surrounding the figure of the author to localities such as Mumbai. In the same televised discussion mentioned above, Homi Bhabha, renowned postcolonial theorist and the director of an Indian art institution, the Mahindra Humanities Centre, suggests that "there is a scale that is not the national scale and not the global scale which we all relate to – it is the city." He then goes on to say that "when we talk about great coteries of culture what we actually talk about is London in a certain period,

Paris, New York, Tokyo…so I think that the way in cities mix things up – the national, regional, and international - that's where you look for a location, not the nation." This sentiment, prominently voiced by Indian contemporary cultural actors, dictates the approach that I take in this thesis to tackle the question of the global and the local. By focusing on the authors of literary journalism writings, and the way in which the author-figure is constructed in the contemporary field of cultural production, this thesis is able to approach the question of local/global through the lenses of power and legitimation associated with the transnational cosmopolitan audiences. In Chapters 2,3 and 4 I analyse authorial performances of selected literary journalists to understand how they navigate their way around local and global consecratory institutions in a field that is being rapidly globalized, in order to accumulate cultural capital. Specifically, I concentrate on the role that narratives about marginalized subjects play in their positioning within the field.

The analysis in these chapters derives from Bourdieu's field theory, and Chapter 2 explicates in detail the methodological considerations that inform the analyses in the chapters following it. The key benefit of using a Bourdieusian framework here is that utilizing field theory enables us to understand the nuances of strategic positioning by various actors within the fields as they negotiate various centres of power whilst not being fully subsumed within these structures of power. This is quite useful when writing about literary journalists who write about marginalized individuals and groups, as often they are driven by a genuine motivation to improve the living conditions of the latter, or at least by a sense of sympathy for them.

Lastly, I contend in this thesis that in order to map the structures of power within the current cultural industries, it is important to look beyond modernist conceptions of how media narratives are produced, distributed and consumed. To this end I have employed concepts from Simone Murray's seminal work published in 2012 on the understanding of contemporary media and cultural industries, *The Adaptation Industry:The Cultural Economy of Contemporary Literary Adaptation.* This allows the critical analysis of representative case studies to embrace the nature of stories as ones that are produced to be translatable, or rather adaptable, across multiple media formats. Brouillette and Doody sum this dynamic up quite succinctly in their (2015: 140) paper: "In the adaptation economy 'literary' experiences are not limited to a single platform, printed physical books, a single format, a book (even e-books), or a single audience, readers". In this thesis I put forward the notion that the success of authors in the current cultural economy increases directly in proportion to how easily adaptable their work, as well as their persona is, across a variety of media platforms.

Accordingly I propose that literary journalists, by positioning themselves as authors who through the utilisation of subjective narrative styles and sentimental investment in their writings appeal to a transnational middlebrow audience, achieve a stickiness which allows them to transcend the field of production they initially begin to garner recognition within. This tendency within the field can be illustrated using Faleiro's quote from the video interview *New Journalism in India* cited earlier in this chapter where she talks about one of her motivations for writing literary journalism. There she says that

writing a book allowed her to transcend the limitations placed on her agency within the field of cultural production because of her initial position being that of a mainstream news journalist working in India. Once she became a published author she "was able to write longform journalism independently", and could select topics and approaches that were "meaningful" to her. As outlined in Chapter 4, moreover, she has also subsequently been a part of panel discussions and events discussing writing about the marginalised more broadly as well as women's rights and issues.

The case studies that I have chosen are authors who have been able to not only successfully accumulate symbolic capital within a certain sub-field of cultural production, but also use it to gain entry within other fields. In this way they have come to gain recognition amongst a broader set of international audiences and play a role within the transnational public spheres as a public figure that goes beyond that of a media producer. The concept of media meta-capital derived from Bourdieusian theoretical frameworks and developed by Nick Couldry can be used to explain this permeability between different cultural production roles, and mutability of cultural capitals, resulting eventually in the middlebrow cultural institutions gaining purchase within the cosmopolitan public spheres and the discourses it is comprised of; Chapter 5 delves further into how this concept is used in this study. One way to encapsulate the manner in which this thesis approaches the study of contemporary literary journalism is by introducing some agents who constellate the sub-field around the production and circulation of these works 'from India' in Chapter 4, and by then outlining how some of these actors are more successful than others in accumulating symbolic capital and rising above the sub-field to prominence within adjacent sub-fields as well as the greater cultural sphere.

Ian Jack, the editor of *Granta 130*, mentions in an interview in the online Indian magazine *Scroll.in* (31 January 2015) that:

in 1997 it was really difficult to find non-fiction written by Indians in English. It was quite hard to find and that's the big change since then. It's quite plentiful now…This is a much more prosperous middle-class now than it was even 16-17 years ago. In that space of time, there has grown a flourishing publishing industry in Delhi.

Contemporary literary studies scholars also note this shift within the field of Indian literary production in recent decades. Suman Gupta, in his article linking processes of globalization with the publishing industry and commercial literature in India, traces this shift to the establishment of Penguin India in 1985 (2012: 46). Since the 1990s, he suggests in the same paper, there has also been "diversified channels of formal recognition through corporation-sponsored prizes, creation of celebrity profiles, adaptations into films" which serve to "concretise the Indian importation of a global template" (ibid.: 50). What he suggests in this paper, and also in his book *Globalisation and Literature,* is that the new genres in Indian English writing cater mainly to the new and prosperous middle-class that Jack mentions, rather than the literary fiction in English for an international audience as was usual before these socio-economic changes took place. As this thesis focuses on non-fiction and journalistic texts that are middlebrow rather than literary, I am not limited to studying processes of formal or economic/commercial consecration of new genres and authorships like the ones that Gupta mentions; rather a main focus of this study is to draw out the connection between affect, authorial legitimation and the transnational cosmopolitan public spheres, mainly performed on and through digital platforms. My analysis in the following chapters, moreover, goes beyond Graham Huggan's (1997: 306) description of how "code word 'India'" functions within the global consumer culture as texts and authors who can be consumed as "highly mobile capital good(s)". The chapters in my thesis illustrate how the distance and independence from institutional and governmental bodies that pervades the discourse around these writings is successful in emancipating these works from the particularities of time, personalities and space: the emotional aspect of these pieces similarly propel them towards being deemed as expressing universal values and being timeless.

Social Media and Affect

Since Trump's election as the President of the United States in 2016, there has been an explosion in scholarship interested in exploring affective networks on social media. Zizi Papacharrissi, who I cite

in previous chapters in order to discuss affective publics and the potentials of the virtual public space operating as a public sphere, authored an article on the subject of the "Trump phenomenon" (October 2016). Here she draws upon her research on sentiment, politics and social media to suggest an explanation for why figures like Trump get away with being a "bullshit artist". She says, "they use simple language and make emotional, not cognitive appeals. And well, those sorts of appeals are really friendly to platforms that possess affective architectures." These public platforms that she is referring to are increasingly being studied as spaces that allow people with shared interests to come together and "affectively connect" (ibid.) over a shared worldview, and perhaps common goals. University of East London has been organising an annual conference called "Affect and Social Media" since 2015 with an aim to study this aspect of digital cultures. The 2017 conference programme focused heavily on affective politics on these platforms "following recent events like Brexit and Trump" (Event webpage, UEL website, 2017).

My thesis fits into this emerging strand of digital cultural studies research by showcasing some of the ways in which the internet is acting as an extension of the political public space for a number of Indian citizens. The social media discourses in Chapter 4 are characterised by an affective response to Hindu fundamentalist factions being strengthened, and the rise of nationalist sentiments linked to *Hindutva*, following Narendra Modi's election as the Prime Minister of India. The chapter also points out to a certain extent the tendency within this discourse in the public space to create a link between Indian socio-political events and transnational news and ideas. The proponents of these discussions are aware of the benefits of using a platform that has the potential to connect different publics using affective means. Aman Sethi in his published correspondence with Pankaj Mishra (2015), that I have cited in Chapter 3, points this out:

> Over the years, in frequently hostile conditions, Indian feminists have continually produced ever more interesting thought that has been informed by their immediate surroundings while engaging with a wider international conversation. So when the horrific assault on a young paramedic in December 2012 ruptured patriarchy's seamless surface, there was a wealth of thinking available to young people in search of a politics and a means to interpret their realities. Suddenly, conversations about gender are everywhere – noisy, raucous and subversive.

An essential point to note from the quote above is that Sethi displays an awareness of the importance of having a "wealth of thinking", both local and international, available to citizens which allows them to mobilize to act collectively. The event he mentions above, otherwise referred to as the Nirbhaya or Delhi rape case, aroused an overwhelming affective response from the Indian public, and the protests and conversations that followed were covered widely by the media. Although studies I have mentioned in Chapter 4 have examined how journalists used social media to report on these political events following this news event, this thesis contributes to the understanding of social media and affective politics by building an understanding of how "soft structures of feeling" (Papacharissi, 2015) precede and feed into these political protests. In a way the focus of this thesis on literary journalism or longform news, rather than mainstream or hard news, is useful in understanding how trends in everyday politics in the digital public space depend on narratives that evoke affect and a sentimental engagement with various issues.

Papacharissi (2012: 266) details in her article how Twitter and Facebook were used by protestors and other citizens during the 2011 Egyptian protests that resulted in the resignation of Hosni Mobarak. In this paper, she writes that, "The resulting stream of news combines news, opinion, and emotion to the point where discerning one from the other is difficult and doing so misses the point." The texts and public discourses I analyse in this thesis combine facts, opinions, emotions and reflection in a similar way that is truly hybrid and warrants further discussion. One of the limitations of the scope of this project is that it does not include discourse analyses from multiple social media platforms, or ethnographic research from other physical sites like literary festivals and public lectures and debates that might further reveal the role that these narratives, and the intermediaries that distribute and circulate them, play within these public spaces. However, it is hoped that the mixture of media texts, including author blogs, interviews recorded by media channels during literary festivals, and published interviews analysed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, provide future researchers an adequate framework to extend this analysis to wider discursive networks.

Sentimentality and Transnational Publics

Pedwell (2014; 2016) are important contributions to understanding what she refers to as "transnational politics of empathy" (2016: 3). It refers to "empathy" or "affective ability" (ibid.: 2) as a means to bridge the gap between the publics with "different social and cultural" backgrounds, across "national and geopolitical boundaries". Pedwell provides an essential framework that can be built upon using the findings from my thesis. Since this work has not been discussed in the previous chapters let me outline the salient

arguments in it. Firstly, it expounds the urgency and importance of examining "transnationality" and its affective components critically. Moreover, it also provides a conceptual grounding for exploring the relationship between empathy which is constructed in discourses which are aimed to elicit a sentimental response from a demographic to whom Pedwell refers to as "a socially privileged subject" and those discourses which challenge the logics of these "mainstream liberal narratives" (ibid. 14). In suggesting that a clear divide between the two is impossible (ibid.), this article opens up the possibility of exploring the spaces where the tensions between "emotions and global capitalism" exist.

When Pedwell refers to the the processes which constitute "transnational politics", and where affective technologies are deployed, she is referring to a discursive communication circuit. In the wider project which informs this article her analysis encompasses "political communication, international development literatures, popular business and science books, postcolonial literary works, and feminist, anti-racist and queer theory" (2016: 3). This raises the question of how Pedwell's conceptualisation of affect in constructing transnationality tie in with mapping such discourses (constructing the literary journalist as an author) in the new media spaces. Pedwell's article does not specifically analyse digital discourses as I do in Chapter 4, but platforms like Twitter, of course, are sites where the politics of transnational discourse, especially ones which utilise affective tools to construct and engage diverse publics, take place. In the analysis in this paper, Pedwell's focus is limited to the textual narratives of two novels by authors from "the margins of normative postcolonial imaginaries" (2016: 1). The methodology in this paper is similar to the textual analysis I conduct in Chapters 2 and 3 of my thesis. These are just a few of the synergies that are evident between mine and Pedwell's work.

There are a couple of differences between Pedwell's approach in this article and that of this thesis. Firstly, when discussing affect in this thesis, I still maintain a focus on the figure of the author and her construction in the field. This thesis contends that the author figure, although discursively constructed, is a key figure facilitating the cultural industry's stakes in the "empathy economy" (ibid.), which Pedwell links to transnational neoliberal capitalism. Driscoll (2014: 168) makes a similar claim about the role of authors in the production of affect felt by the reading publics: "The ephemeral and intimate connections with authors key into the emotion of the new literary middlebrow". Another difference between the approach in Pedwell's article and this section is in her conceptualisation of 'margin', which she relates to "distinctions of 'centre' and 'periphery'…at a time when distinctions between 'the West and the Rest'…remain salient (2016: 15)." This is in keeping with the main concerns of Pedwell's paper, which she explicates as "how

empathy expressed from the margins of dominant postcolonial social imaginaries might differ from mainstream liberal and neoliberal mobilisations, as well as how it might disrupt or refigure their affective logics (ibid.)". In this thesis I have not explored the radical possibilities of voices from the margins gaining entry into the new middlebrow literary spaces, however this is an area that would be of interest to me to research in the future, utlising the frameworks developed here.

Field Theory and Contemporary Media Studies

This thesis also contributes to the emerging studies on the use of Bourdieu's field theory to study new media practices (Willig, Waltorp and Hartley, 2015). In the editorial to the *MediaKultur* journal edition titled 'Bourdieu and The Media' (ibid.: 3), the aforementioned editors of the issue acknowledge the need "to develop the field theory framework to enhance our empirical understanding of new media and new media practices". In the previous chapter I have already discussed ways in which field theory can be extended to conceptualise and describe the ways in which actors accumulate power and gain legitimacy in multiple fields of cultural production in the contemporary adaptation industry, in which the boundaries between various cultural formats, platforms and audiences have become fuzzier. In this thesis I have not treated digital media platforms as being radically different from older media platforms; rather, I have shown how an individual actor's position and prestige within the latter platform translates to a greater visibility and legitimacy within the former.

New Authorship Studies

Within the sub-field of authorship studies, deriving from the tradition of comparative literary studies, there has been a tendency of foregrounding the position of Indian authors as postcolonial within the global literary field. Brouillette's 2007 book *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* is an example of this. Although it is extremely important to acknowledge and incorporate the perspectives arising from such works from postcolonial studies, however, this thesis complicates the study of authors' performativities within transnational public spaces even further. Focusing on the transversal movements that actors like Sonia Faleiro and Aman Sethi make within and between different cultural fields allows us to observe how they utilise the variety of middlebrow cultural processes available to contemporary cultural workers to publicise and re-invent their work and persona. These cultural processes are subversive in the sense that they have the potential of allowing certain writers to connect directly with different audiences, build an affective

connection with them and the issues that these publics connect around, and in doing so develop networks of reception for their work that bypass labels like "postcolonial" or "peripheral". Of course these new middle-brow cultural networks piggybacking on new media platforms still retain and reproduce to a fair extent the old structures of power, but future research projects can look to empirically map the new mobilities within the cultural industries including and not limited to traditional publishing circuits.

Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 1, the concept of "world author" is both significant yet limited in thinking about the authorial figures of literary journalists within the adaptation industry. While research-ing the contemporary cosmopolitan author figure within literary studies, I was influenced by Rebecca Braun's work on this topic, as well as the discussions and published works that have taken place within the UK-based research cluster "Authors and the World". In Braun's article published in (2015: 84), she posits the "world author" as neither merely a writer who has gained global acclaim, nor a writer arising from 'peripheries' of an anglo-American hegemonic literary industrial centre, but as a notion of agency and situated responsibility in relation to the systemic processes through which "world literature" is valued. However, Braun also cautions that although within this process (the making of the world author) the indi-vidual author figure is the most natural and stable point to begin an analysis on the basis of "authenticity, difference, identity and cultural politics", the concept of authorial agency is also relative and involves at least a translator who repurposes the text for a different readership (2015: 96). In this article, therefore, she calls for an expansion of the concept of agency to understand the figure of the world author between "global homogenizing forces" and as an agent of social change (against the effects of these forces). This is directly in line with the motivations of this thesis.

The concept of "world author" and how it has evolved within this scholarly literature has a few gaps or lim-itations when discussing the particularities of the author figure within a hybrid cultural sphere. Although Braun's analysis provides a sophisticated entry-point within questions of authorial agency in a circuit of production and reception that is global in scale, it doesn't quite address the complexity of the authorial fig-ure when also positioned within the contemporary fields of cultural production. If we expand our under-standing of authorial agency as she suggests, is that agency only formed between globalising capitalist forces and those that resist such forces, or are there more specific forces that function more autonomously, and can therefore be said to resemble a field dynamic? The scale of analysis in Braun's work, but also more generally in those works that attempt to theorise the phenomenon of "world authorship", prevents a direct

co-relation of the conceptual tools they suggest with those used in the meso-level field theory analysis as in this thesis.

<u>Transnationality and the Middlebrow</u>

Another area that this thesis does not explore in depth is the variety of approaches that scholars who are theorising middlebrow cultural studies utilise in tackling the subject. Focusing on Driscoll (2014), as I have done in this thesis, was prudent as her book provides a very comprehensive introduction to the term 'middlebrow' in the contemporary literary sphere. However, the fluidity of the term, and the ways in which the meaning of the term has evolved historically since the 1920s, has not been acknowledged so far in this thesis, nor the breadth of inter-disciplinary scholarship on the subject. Nicola Humble, the author of *The Feminine Middlebrow Novel* (2001) sums up her own confusion on the term in an interview (with D'Holker, E., November 2011) as follows:

> I am still not really decided about this and I find myself wavering between the position that the middlebrow is just about reception, or even, as I argued in a recent article, about reading posture, about how a book is read, and the idea that there is something more generic, more substantial to it, that there are certain characteristics of the middlebrow. Perhaps you could say that the middle-brow first of all refers to a cultural process that designates a book in a particular way. Factors like the publisher, the marketing, the number of copies sold, and so on: they all play a role here.

In this thesis I have used the term to encompass cultural processes that work to signify certain works as middlebrow, based on Driscoll's definition of the term (2014). This thesis does not textually examine works of literary journalism for characteristics of the middlebrow – perhaps this is a premise for a further research project. However, this thesis fills a gap in the literature within the growing field of middlebrow studies, as evidenced by the publications within the Middlebrow Network led by Faye Hammill (www.middlebrow-network.com). By focusing on transnational middlebrow cultural processes, this thesis adds to the existing scholarship that demonstrates a preponderance of British and North-American literature and authors, and does not discuss Indian authors or audiences at all. However, Indian novelist Pankaj Mishra's take on categorisation of cultural products and consumption in contemporary times published in *The New York Times* (29th July 2014) alongside that of novelist and professor, Thomas Mallon, suggests that Indian

literary actors are beginning to engage with this term on global public platforms; thus this thesis is timely as it provides a foundation for future work in this area.

It is also important to acknowledge my own agency within the transnational middlebrow cultural process as a PhD scholar researching Indian literary journalism. As a speaker in international conferences, and as a participant within international associations, I act as a cultural intermediary responsible for building awareness about certain literary works and consecrating them within these spaces. For example, following my talk on Aman Sethi and *A Free Man* in the ACLA annual conference in Harvard University, Cambridge, in 2016, my colleague Kate McQueen, who teaches global journalism in University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, wrote to tell me that she has included that book in her syllabus. Perhaps sharing an ethnic and national connection with the writers and subjects of these books of literary journalism also adds to my legitimacy within this international academic community; similar to some of the authors I have discussed in this thesis I find myself also benefiting from the visibility this accords my work. Additionally I also struggle to distance myself and my scholarship from being labeled as 'Indian', and hence excluded from works that being perceived as less 'local' are seen to grapple with issues that are more universal and canonical.

"Fucking Longform"

Whenever I feel boxed in a certain strand of scholarly discipline due to my ethnicity and choice of topic, I think of the authors I have written about in this thesis negotiating their space between similar categorisations. Whether by disagreeing with their work being classified as a novel (Sethi, 2012), or by starting a publishing collective formed entirely of longform journalists from around the world because "traditional models of journalism no longer allow for in-depth reporting" (Faleiro, 2014). To conclude I am reminded of Sethi's exclaim - "fucking longform!" - while we were discussing his writing within the context of global trends in newswriting (2015). Perhaps the main motivation that drive this group of writers from India is to break out of the boundaries and structures in the field of their origin, i.e., Indian journalism. This urge encapsulates the postmodern spurning of overarching structures, and characterises the relatively fluid media culture that we live in today. For such media workers, writing a book, or traversing the boundaries of national media institutions and gaining transnational reach, might have signified a way to free themselves of the forces within these fields. However, although they accumulate significant symbolic capital by moving between these fields, within their new field of cultural production they often find similar barriers to their agency.

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