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<ct>**Discoursing on Slums: Representing the Cosmopolitan Subaltern**

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<a>**Slum Dwellers and the Crisis of Rights**

<fo>Slum dwellers are among the most disadvantaged, socially excluded communities in the twenty-first century, living at odds to or outside national and international codes of justice, experiencing diminished or non-existent human rights – whether individual, collective or cultural – inequality and dehumanization in the workplace. New levels of poverty, violence and precarity – the experience of ‘ambient insecurity’ (Horning n.p.) caused by the transfer of state responsibilities for welfare and development to market forces – exist for disenfranchised subjects whose living conditions are produced by and inserted into the production of globalization. As Gayatri Spivak points out:

<q>Economic restructuring . . . removes the barriers between national and international capital, so that the same system of exchange can be established globally . . . But now, with state priorities increasingly altered, redistributive justice through constitutionality is less and less easy, if not impossible. Philanthropy is now coming top down from the international civic society – the state is being *de facto* (and sometimes *de jure*) unconstitutional because it is asked to be managerial and take free-market imperatives. (52–54)

<fo>The unevenness of globalization and the precarious positioning of citizens’ rights between the state’s responsibilities and the interventions of global governance are

nowhere more evident than in economically liberalized India, where rapid deindustrialization and land investment and speculation have led to widespread dispossession and forced displacement of marginalized communities, widening the traditional agrarian–modern IT, rural–urban divide. New slums in cities like Calcutta, Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai have sprouted up alongside large-scale developments such as international hotels, airports and highways, resulting from privatization and growth of infrastructure. Meyda Yegenoglu argues that subaltern resistance resides in the search for greater opportunity and the need for long-lasting roots within existing local and national perimeters, and that the nation-state should therefore engage with the subaltern’s search for inclusiveness (104, 106). Yet systemic political corruption and state indifference restrict social mobility for the slum dweller and limit the opportunities offered by the technological revolution. Globalization allows for more flexible accumulation of capital, including privatization, but slum labour such as scavenging, scrap-trading and garbage collection, sorting and recycling takes place in the wastelands of transnational and global operations at subsistence levels; rather than opening up to individual growth and cultural capital, it closes down development and communication.

The state’s withdrawal from management procedures and provision of social security, education, healthcare and public security has created a civil society of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international aid organizations and human rights institutions, whose intervention remains complicit with the free-market ethos, Eurocentric cosmopolitanism and liberal human rights discourses that provide temporary solutions to structural inequalities. Partha Chatterjee, by contrast, identifies a ‘political society’ of collective action in which subaltern groups interact with the state in identifying entitlements and presenting subjects’ needs as conditional claims

rather than formal rights through a form of political brokerage (47, 73). Yet some sectors lack engagement with the apparatus of governmentality and rights to legal title, hence citizenship can be challenged, entitlements do not always reach the right people and the ad hoc nature of operational procedures often verges on illegality in squatter and refugee colonies (69). The civil society has its counterpart in what social activist Jai Sen identifies as the ‘incivil’ society: the lower classes, castes and people of colour who manage to survive by resorting to ‘unauthorized’ and illegal activities in order to earn a living (Sen qtd. in Dhawan and Randieria 571–572). For such populations threatened by the neo-liberal ethos of privatization and redistribution, access to and participation in the domain of citizenship with its discourses of rights, ideals of belonging and urban identity are limited. Basic property rights of collective identities formed by claims and entitlements for shared living space are threatened by powers of expropriation for civic improvement and urban development, and subject to accusations of illegality, encroachment and criminality. According to David Harvey, slum dwellers’ ‘right to the city’ (4), like minority and indigenous rights, is ‘a collective rather than an individual right since changing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization’ (18). For Nivedita Menon, when considering questions of universal human rights, indifference to these dilemmas demarcates barbarity from civilization (220); by contrast, for Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the idea of universal rights suggests globalization from above or globalized localism, requiring transformation into an insurgent cosmopolitanism (11, 14). This call for urban activism in the form of a collective resistance recognizes that globalism from below is a necessary response to liberalization, and recalls Sen’s definition of the incivil society that scrutinizes causes

of the denial of rights and challenges the power structures dominated by the civil society as an insurgent one (59–60).

This essay asks how far the conditions of inequality, precarity and limited rights – consequences of neo-liberal globalization that among others have led to new conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism and subalternity focused on the everyday lives of non-elites – are articulated in contemporary representations of the disenfranchised, fragmented slum dweller. Recent theorizations of the concept of ‘subaltern cosmopolitanism’ suggest the existence of a convivial or sociable dimension informed by emerging subjectivities, alliances and inter-ethnic relations: these are enabled by new forms of connectivity, solidarity and interactions of globalization rather than belonging and rootedness (Marayam 10–11; Glick Schiller, Darieva and Gruner-Domic 4–6). The state’s indifference in the management of slum neighbourhoods might encourage such collective identities which are based on a shared sense of dispossession and displacement rather than individual ones. However, it is questionable whether new affective ties and loyalties encouraged by mobility, the deregulated labour market or recent entitlements under local governments can overcome restricted agency due to individual curtailment through disability, unemployment or poverty. The second half of this essay examines two such (re)constructions of the subaltern in film and fiction. It argues that they are indebted to the field-work approach to the everyday experiences of the non-elite as practised by urban ethnographers and cultural and social anthropologists, and that the interdisciplinarity or ‘interdiscursivity’ (Huggan, ‘Introduction’ 418) of social science disciplines and creative arts underpins Western mediations of subaltern images. Developed within current representational structures, they show a limited articulation of subjectivity such as the individual’s wish to rise above his or her socially

determined status, although not necessarily a political subjectivity that extends to collective self-empowerment for all slum dwellers in precarity.

### **<a>Textual and Visual Discourses on Slums**

<fo>Slum communities and slum poverty are subjects of contemporary feature films and fictions like Letife Tekin's *Berji Kristin: Tales from the Garbage Hills* (1984), stories of Turkish slums, Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* (1996) about the Delhi slums during the 1975 National Emergency, Gregory David Roberts's *Shantaram* (2003), Kalpana Sharma's *Rediscovering Dharavi: Stories from Asia's Largest Slum* (2000) or the English director Roland Joffe's *City of Joy* (1992). In the genre of the slum narrative, slum dwellers appear as ruptured subjects with limited citizenship, deprived of basic rights to education, health and shelter, lacking human dignity and subject to unregulated working hours. This essay's focus is on Danny Boyle's celebrated film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), which illustrates neo-liberal processes and globalization's facility to reward the subaltern's mental endeavours, and Katherine Boo's *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death and Hope in a Mumbai Slum* (2012), a 'literary nonfiction' about 'the failure of social welfare provision in India' (Bornstein 180). As narratives dealing with the plight of slum children or young adults, presented as universal images of injustice and inequality in which dreams of possibility interweave with foreshortened hopes, they have captured the popular imagination in ways comparable to Charles Dickens's novels about the urban poor in industrial Victorian England. The two can be read together as contemporary accounts, promoting images of self-empowerment and committed to documentary formats of social realism, notably in using social science methodologies of empirical research such as the interview, ethnography and case study.

Boyle's visual postmodern fantasia offers the miracle of transformation of which all slum children dream and which Boo's empathetic narrative drawn from real-life conditions suggests is impossible. The film was criticized both as a form of slum tourism, promoting stereotyped images of extreme poverty (Jaikumar 24) and reinforcing the structure of material inequality, and as 'the West's celebration of its neoliberal present' (Sengupta 610). Its subaltern hero's rags-to-riches trajectory from the local slums to the global sphere of the television reality show 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire?' enacts a narrative of progress that can be linked to India's economic liberalization in the 1990s and synthesizes the contradictory aspects of the nation's neo-liberal globalization. Jamal Malik's memory aids him in successfully answering the quiz questions, marking him out from the collective as an imaginary model to which to aspire.

Boo's close-up view of the slums of Annawadi in Mumbai reveals a site of conflictual coexistence, corruption and mismanagement that renders individual dreams and aspirations fragile and life precarious. The disputes that she recounts and her portrayal of doomed youth are comparable to *Slumdog Millionaire's* scenes of slum life, in which Jamal's mother is murdered in the 1992–93 Muslim–Hindu attacks and the Mumbai riots following the destruction of Babri Mosque in Vyodhya. Only bare survival is possible for Boo's hero, Abdul Husain, a young Muslim refuse-sorting worker from Uttar Pradesh in the north of India, whose working energies are commodified for his family's existence. Defined by his earning capacity, Abdul is valued only for his labour; yet his body is not merely 'a site of production' (Sharpe 292), but becomes a site on which physical punishment is inflicted. Imprisoned for a crime he has not committed and beaten by prison officials, he nevertheless dares to hope that he might become better than the others around him. Boo charts the growth

of subjectivity, but there is no expectation of any miracle such as Jamal achieves. The themes of youth, hope and possible agency in both texts are universal, and the Western concern for the fate of the underdog gives them an emotive force that is comparable to the testimonies of other victimized children, such as the Stolen Generation of Aborigine children in Australia (Schaffer and Smith).

The creators of both film and novel draw extensively on the interview and case-study formats used by anthropologists and urban ethnographers in researching subaltern subjects, to develop narratives about slum children using as frames of reference international justice, global citizenship and human rights. Simon Beaufort, the script writer of *Slumdog Millionaire* who adapted *Q and A*, the novel by Vikas Swarup on which the film is based, made three research trips to India (to the Juhu slums in Mumbai) in order to meet slum children and develop a new thematic strand out of the original: the hero's slum origin.<sup>1</sup> The film's co-director, Loveleen Tandan, scouted for talent in the slums, streets and non-governmental shelters of Mumbai. Boo lived in the slum of Annawadi in Mumbai for three years (2007–11), undertook surveys and recorded interviews with residents using a variety of means such as videorecordings, photographs and audiotapes, enlisting several Annawadi inhabitants (some of whom appear in her story) and translators, including a sociology student from the University of Mumbai who became 'a co-investigator and critical interlocutor' (Boo 251).

Comprising hybrid genres – for instance, documentary realism, literary non-fiction, journalism, fantasy – and combining Western responses to precarity in their attempt to construct the voices and positions of the disempowered, the narratives can be read in terms of political comment, sociopolitical critique and entertainment. As Western scriptwriters, film-makers and journalists, their creators reflect current

thinking on the subaltern subject's ability to undertake embodied acts of articulation. As Rosalind O'Hanlon outlines, referring to the aims of the Subaltern History project, in keeping with the liberal humanist ethos the subaltern is to be presented 'as a subject in his own right, by reclaiming for him a history, a mode of consciousness and practice which are his own' (80). Both film and novel mediate subaltern voices variously through Western discursive structures of popular narrative and cinematic modes, and they represent subaltern enablement through techniques of the visual and written media such as narration, emplotment, interview, flashback and close-up, deploying images of subalternity through the distinctive aesthetic practices of their different media.

*Slumdog Millionaire* is formulaic and self-consciously artificial in its postmodern handling of the documentary image in order to problematize normative visual constructions of social reality and represent the globalization of culture. The film's combination of a television formula (the reality TV show) within a movie formula plot shows the economic logic that underpins all reality TV shows, that 'anyone can make it'. A binaristic moral vision underpins the fantasy of overturning the abjection that comes with poverty and not mattering, and acquiring sudden wealth by winning the television quiz. Jamal's success seemingly rewards moral probity and persistence: he refuses to buckle under the torture of the police officers employed by the television show's crooked host, Prem Kumar, and he replies correctly despite being given the wrong information. Participating in India's global technological advance through the changing opportunity structure, he represents neo-liberal social and cultural aspirations; his knowledge of the new technologies helps him outwit his opponents (Paratharasay 3–5). Boo's equally complex tale of rivalry, dysfunction and dishonesty aims at transparency of fact, as her afterword, an 'Author's Note', claims:



‘the events . . . are all real as are all the names’ (249); several of the children she interviewed died, and the novel concludes by questioning this waste of life. Boo addresses ethical dilemmas of corrupt politics, individual gain and dishonesty, seen as disabling influences on children who she found were more reliable witnesses to events than adults and showed ‘ethical imaginations’ in the face of a contracting ‘moral universe’ (253).

The moral orientation of both narratives against official forms of power and hegemonic control points to the destabilizing of the state as the centre of power and authority, and the rise of a peripheral worldview. The stress is on survivorship. In the adaptation of the methods of field-work research on marginal communities as practised in disciplines such as urban ethnography, social and cultural anthropology, human geography, international law and sociology, both film and novel offer a position for Western viewers and readers similar to that of the ethical, liberal cosmopolitan.<sup>2</sup> The attentiveness of Boo’s account, the sensationalism of Boyle’s story and the film’s mobile cinematography encourage audiences and viewers to become interested in the fate of the ordinary ‘other’. Offering arbitrary insights into the processes of memory and articulation of selfhood through everyday activities as well as social drama, they construct images of a changing urban subalternity under neo-liberal globalization.

### **<a>Globalization, Cosmopolitanism and Subalternity**

<fo>Recent thinking on cosmopolitanism has moved away from the universality and Eurocentrism of the Kantian model, including cosmopolitan elites, transnationals and ‘citizens of the world’. Subaltern cosmopolitanism has emerged as a critique of the denial of rights to the marginal and exploited (Gidwani), yet celebration of the

interconnectivity and solidarity found in the new operations of labour, capital and mobility (Jaikumar 24). By contrast to older, humanist forms is ‘cosmopolitanism from below’ (Kurasawa 2004), which emphasizes the roles that ordinary individuals and social groups play in making a new cosmopolitan order: for example, Appiah’s ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ of loyalties to significant local communities or civil associations referenced within a wider cosmopolitan sphere (qtd. in Berman 144); Spivak’s notion of critical regionalism, which describes a ‘transnational structure of belonging’ that draws on local categories and allegiances across a region outside the nation-state (qtd. in Berman 148); James Clifford’s notion of ‘discrepant cosmopolitanisms’, groups like servants and migrant labourers who work within and against national structures, for, he claims, the nation-state is now only one horizon in the different degrees of entanglement of national, transnational and global orders (Clifford in Cheah and Robbins 364–365); or a ‘postcolonial cosmopolitanism’ (Kumar 560–561) that functions in the lived spaces of local, vernacular or discrepant cultures. Current reconceptualizations of vernacular cosmopolitanism concerning the dynamics of mobilization include the abject cosmopolitan – that is, the abject class of global migrants (Nyers) – and refer to transnational migration and diasporic perspectives that are below the nation-state and market forces. There is also ‘provincial cosmopolitanism’, a legacy of colonialism associated with rural India that concerns the local resistance of individuals to the global circulation of products and people (Loh 119-120). The focus is now on the relocalization of marginal, borderline peoples, migrants, refugees, the dispossessed, homeless, rural and working-class poor – and on new forms of belonging outside the nation-state (Yegenoglou 105).

For Minhao Zeng, the oxymoronic concept of subaltern cosmopolitanism helps ‘theorize social and political agency of a wide range of peripheral subjectivities

and broaden the possibilities of resistance and empowerment against hegemony of various kinds' (140). Nyers, for example, addresses the national cultures of asylum from the optic of abject cosmopolitanism. However, as Morley and Robins point out, globalization 'recontextualises and reinterprets cultural localism' in 'equivocal and ambiguous' ways (118). Convivial cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitan sociability, as outlined by Shail Marayam and Nina Glick Schiller et al., might celebrate new subjectivities emanating from local alliances, coalitions and inter-ethnic affiliation, as ways of anticipating democracy, citizenship and justice, but overcrowded ghettos and slums also foster uneasy entanglements and inter-ethnic rivalry in which negotiations break down. These failures are reinforced by the denial to the slum dweller of the collective rights and entitlements of the city, and by the neo-liberal 'withdrawal of support for collective forms of action' (Harvey 8–9).

Both narratives dramatize the tensions between disempowerment and resistance, between abjection and aspiration, in emphasizing the child's vulnerability to corrupt practices, social dysfunction and sabotage. In *Slumdog Millionaire* the orphaned brothers, Jamal and Salim, only just escape the clutches of a gangster who blinds children to make them more sensational as singers. Boo recounts the accidental suicide through self-immolation of the Muslim One-leg Fatima, an act of vengeance towards her neighbours, the Husains, which leads to the imprisonment of Abdul, his sister and father following Fatima's false accusation of their crime; the family's savings disappear in bribes to officials of the hospital, morgue and prison. The narrator points to the 'great web of corruption' (Boo 115) that exists as a source of opportunity and increases the chances of survival of those whose livelihood depends on such malpractices.

In the good-luck story of Jamal in *Slumdog Millionaire*, by contrast to the bad-

luck story of the Husains, plural, intersecting cosmopolitan perspectives can be identified, illustrating the divergent articulations of the concept under globalization. Jamal's life, recalled through flashbacks, points to a regional or vernacular cosmopolitanism because he is rooted through ethnic solidarity and loyalties to his friends, 'The Three Musketeers', within the geographical and cultural borders of the nation. Minimally educated and lacking a range of reference, he draws on the information he gained as a slum child – common knowledge available to the rural poor who watch TV reality shows – not the official information produced through educational institutions (Parthasarathy 2–3). However, his social, geographical mobility, border crossing and transgression, practices of thinking and interpretations of knowledge in reaching the correct answers in the global TV reality show are those of the subaltern cosmopolitan. Orphaned and expelled from the Mumbai slum of Dharavi, Jamal's trajectory through Mumbai society is associated with migrancy, dislocation, affective ties (with his brother, Salim, and Latika, with whom he falls in love) and interconnectivity. In his skill at assuming different roles and guises and performing new identities, he resembles the mobile street performers (*bahurupiya*) of north India, identified by Craig Jeffrey and Colin MacFarlane (420). For example, in playing the part of tour guide to the Taj Mahal, he misleads a gullible British couple by assuming the semblance and voice of authority; and when working as a chai wallah in the IT call centre, he imitates a Scottish accent for a client calling from Scotland, so mocking the processes of 'national identity management' whereby workers mask their accents in order not to reveal the neo-liberal exploitation of Third World workers (Poster qtd. in Diaz, 'Being In-dependence' n.p.). His body becomes a record of a particular journey, while his recollection of earlier episodes of his life speaks of an emerging selfhood through his pathway to the television show; they also suggest

subaltern cosmopolitanism's capacity to restore to memory the amnesia of Asian elites about those non-official 'suppressed and other silenced urban imaginaries' (Marayam 21).

Jamal embodies both earlier and recent subaltern articulations of the cosmopolitan as he is coopted into the global neo-liberal order. The film's saturation of the global with insignia and images of the local suggests the local/national dimensions of a rooted cosmopolitanism, yet the TV reality quiz show also emblemizes the globalization of culture with new images of collectivity to provide a more universal dimension. The plush television room suggests the sphere of liberal cosmopolitanism,<sup>3</sup> one of contestation and resistance where liberal modes of articulation are discovered and honed in the rhetoric of the show. It gives the illusion of a cosmopolis, a Kantian federation of diverse audience types and viewers: the unseen global television audience that watches as well as the audience of the film itself are knitted together into a single, democratic community of reception. Similarly, the Jai Ho dance on the railway platform in the film's conclusion suggesting the shared benefits of Jamal's new world of opportunity points to a regional, vernacular cosmopolitanism, globally enhanced by the recurrent images of viewing and performance inherent in the status of the television show.

### **<a>Recovering the Subaltern via Discourses of Oral History and Storytelling**

<fo>Researchers have long used oral narratives in contemporary studies of the slums in order to recover subaltern experience, and the format of the interview informs the methods and practices used in both film and novel. In line with the ethical stance of the disciplines of anthropology and urban ethnography, such techniques of interview break down the hierarchical subject–object, interviewer–interviewee relationship,

approaching the subaltern not as an object of analysis but as a condition of subjectivity (Cho qtd. in Zeng 142). Both *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers* draw on the perception that retrospective narration can enable subjects to realize a degree of subjecthood and ownership of their life. Interviews with victims of slum demolition and resettlement in Delhi following the National Emergency in 1975 revealed that the element of choice involved in narratives concerning the sterilization policy – lacking in narratives about the demolitions – led to a conception of self-agency (Tarlo 10–11, 225). Social anthropologist Cressida Read traced the use of narrative emplotment devices by which the speaker/listener is linked into a set of events, with comments by the speaker, interpreting these as stories in an ‘idiom of survival’ (88). Her interviewees reappraised their decision to take the sterilization option 30 years earlier as retrospectively the right one; they had negotiated a degree of self-agency and acquired a plot of land at a time of no state support, casualization of employment, diminishing government jobs, privatization and social or domestic disintegration. Such narratives that ‘emplace’ the speaker ‘with a form of legitimacy within the history of the locale’ (89) and its contingent matrices of power and knowledge offer a model for representing subalternity in film and novel.

Both narratives draw on the interview format to frame and develop their representations of subaltern subjects through reflection, speech and enactment of a modified agency, although the techniques differ according to narrative requirements, the aesthetics of their media and their ideological orientation: Boyle aims at entertainment, Boo at exposing the injustices suffered by the poor. Boo’s increasing concern with the limited rights of slum dwellers in the areas of penal servitude, justice, health and education, evident in her embedded political critique, led to a more extensive data collection. Using the Right to Information Act she gained access to

over 3000 official records from state agencies such as the Mumbai Police, the state public health department, state and central educational bureaucracies, public hospitals, courts and the morgue (Boo 250). This data is assimilated into a narrative that uses the affective techniques of fiction to blur the boundaries between information and characterization, the narrative voice of which bridges the gap between the neo-liberal Western consciousness and discourses and the practices and sounds of the subaltern who is emerging into representation (Gajarawala 45). Boo also deploys third-person narration strategically to draw attention to the gap between human rights law, how it should operate and the abuses inflicted on it. In delineating Abdul Husain's growth of understanding in prison, as he realizes that he is the victim of institutional corruption, the narrative voice intervenes:

<q>The idea was to get terrified prisoners to pay everything they had, and everything they could secure from a moneylender, to stop a false criminal charge from being recorded. Beatings, though outlawed in the human rights code, were practical as they increased the price the detainee would pay for a release.

The Indian criminal justice system was a market like garbage, Abdul now understood. Innocence and guilt could be bought and sold like a kilo of polyurethane bags. (107)

<fo>Abdul recognizes that his life of labour through scavenging both defined him yet inured him to feeling: 'In captivity there was nothing to preserve – nothing to buy, sell or sort. Later he realised it was the first long rest he had had, and that during it, something had happened to his heart' (129). When human rights delegates visit the

prison, he is uplifted by the story told by ‘The Master’: Abdul considers he had been virtuous and hopes he might improve. Such affective moments include a shift in self–other relations: Abdul understands the plight of corrupt captors and officials as resembling his own, and he sustains affiliations with other scavengers and garbage sorters. The narrator stresses his imagery of water and ice, and in the ‘Author’s Note’ reaffirms it as a likely wish for other slum children:

<q>He wanted to be better than what he was made of. In Mumbai’s dirty water he wanted to be ice. He wanted to have ideals . . . one of the ideals he most wanted to have was a belief in the possibility of justice . . . How – to use Abdul’s formulation – do children intent on being ice, become water? (218, 254)

<fo>Through Abdul is glimpsed a dream of transformation that is comparable to that which Jamal achieves: he gains self-knowledge and a conviction of moral worth as superior to the rewards of labour, but there is no change in his fortunes at the novel’s end.<sup>4</sup> *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers* uses a moral matrix to register the alienness of the slum dwellers who survive by marginally legal activities such as scavenging and thieving, but even more alien, ominous and destructive are those who cause personal tragedy and cancel hope for a better future. This is equally true of the numerous villains who are ‘othered’ in the black-and-white moral universe of *Slumdog Millionaire*, where the hero’s winning of the prize can be explained by actions that signify universal values of honesty, goodness and love.

It is an index of the difference between the two narratives that Boo’s account should show the inconsistencies and hazards of the interview format for the subaltern.



Her subjects had variable attitudes towards the processes of memory retrieval: some Annawadians, like the Delhi subalterns interviewed about slum demolitions during the National Emergency, reordered their narratives to acquire more control over their experience than they had had at the time; for others, memories that could anger potentially hostile authorities or that were negative or painful were treated as disempowering and better forgotten (Boo 252). By contrast to this limited articulation of selfhood, Jamal's memories, keyed to answering the quiz questions successfully, allow him to command a presence in the public domain through the presence of the global television show. This recalls Spivak's argument about the need to recognize the subject's singularity and the ability of the sovereign subject to make an embodied act of articulation and hence be recognized in the public sphere (Morton 122). Jamal himself represents the interlocking nature of what Emmanuel Renault defines as the three spheres of recognition (or *la reconnaissance sociale*): the peer group of family and friends who evaluate the individual; the workplace where he confirms his usefulness to society; and finally in his being identified with the nation, its shared principles and values, on the nationally broadcast quiz in the showroom (Renault qtd. in Kral 116). By contrast to the novel, where subjective drives towards self-knowledge and empowerment do not translate into any collective agency for slum dwellers' precarity, the film's concluding scenes of rejoicing suggest that Jamal's success widens into an optimistic arc for others in his peer group.

The interview format in the film appears only in the questions asked according to the formula of the TV reality quiz and in the autobiographically informed answers. However, the original narrative of *Q and A* that Simon Beaufort adapted in the screenplay is framed by an interview structure that recalls social science techniques: the protagonist is taken into police custody under suspicion of cheating and is visited

by a lawyer determined to help him by extracting the truth of how he won. He confesses, 'I did not go to school. I did not read books', and she understands that she must listen to his life story: 'I want to listen to your memories. Can you begin at the beginning?' (at question one); the meaning of each episode is discussed in relation to the answer (Swarup 24). Neither frame nor female lawyer appears in the film script, but their function in the novel, in linking the questions asked by the TV host to the remembered images, offers a more mediated version of Jamal's miraculous win, in ways comparable to the narrative interventions in *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*.

In the highly formulaic film, memory fragments help Jamal reconstruct a past and come to the correct answer. Here the visual medium constructs a multidimensional representation of the new kind of cosmopolitan subaltern subject who overcomes his abject origins in a Sheherazade-type fantasy by finding access to the correct answers through memory and storytelling. The film exploits the global television reality beamed from the entertainment channels in programmes such as 'Millionaire Survivor', in which the subject has to acknowledge the interpellating influence of the gaze within the layered television environment. The asking of questions and Jamal's reconstruction of episodes from his past effect a past-present coordination that constructs a cohesive image of subjectivity; Abdul's partial transformation towards self-agency in *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers* follows a similar structure. The fragmentation of knowledge presented through this formulaic method recalls how interviews are used for reconstructing and recycling the past, not just in order to illustrate cause and effect, but for what Vivienne Jabri, in defining the 'fragment' in narratives of resistance, calls 'a temporality of the ideographic; a picture extracted from a landscape, . . . for the hesitant insights it can provide on subjectivity' (34).

Boyle's anti-realist style of film-making appears in how he both locates the documentary image and questions its alleged veracity and objectivity. This foregrounding of the narrative act and stress on subjectivity to imply that so-called reality can be transformed are among several formal and narrative devices used for postmodern metafiction. To make Jamal more visible as the subject of enunciation, his subjectivity is given intensified visual representation: for example, the grainy close-up shots of his face in the opening scenes when he is interrogated by the police officer overlap the frame, highlighting the selectedness of the shot and imaging him as vulnerable yet thinking (Boyle and Tandan 56"–1'.32"). The fragmented narrative and mobility of the camera emulate the way in which the human brain moves when assembling memories, jumping from one setting to another, cutting and pasting, mixing factual versions of events imaged in documentary-like fashion alongside more fantastic ones (Diaz, 'Slumdog' 26, 32). In these ways the textual, or constructed, nature of the film is exposed and the audience is encouraged to participate in its interpretation.

*Slumdog Millionaire* confirms the presence of the cosmopolitan subaltern who, after exiting the social world of the slum, moves through different vocational roles from tourist guide to cyber coolie, benefiting from the new opportunities opening up in the service industries in the professional sphere, while his power of recall as subject is brought into focus in the global sphere. Yet like *Beyond the Beautiful Forevers*, the film reveals the limitations of liberal human rights practices in dealing with issues of collective and cultural rights; human agency in both narratives is individualized, not political, and it remains outside those political communities that demand new practices (Nyers 1076). Jamal's success recalls Harvey's comment that when collective rights are not supported, 'the neoliberal ethic of intense possessive

individualism . . . can become the template for human personality socialization' (8–9). The film offers a dream-come-true fantasy that matches the optimism of India's emerging globalization, just as Boo's story portrays its abject and neglected other. Read together, however, the film's emphasis on the neo-liberal capitalist myth of individual achievement and the novel's emphasis on more internally consistent collectivities suggest that 'no subjective position is closed, that no hegemony is complete' (Menon 221), and so both offer some grounds for a political position and practice.

#### <a>Notes

- 1 The hero, abandoned by his parents as a baby, is brought up by an English priest from York.
- 2 Jabri offers the Marxist/postcolonial meaning of liberal cosmopolitanism by which 'the operations of knowledge and power seek the transformation of subjectivity itself' (4).
- 3 Jabri defines liberal cosmopolitanism as political rationality, linking 'the terrain of the human and its constitutive discourses and the terrain of citizenry' (114–115).
- 4 The representation of Abdul as a more autonomous subject despite his unchanging circumstances may also be a consequence of the interview process (O'Hanlon 80--81, qtd by Lazarus 147).

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