

address. “Portraiture” is worth problematizing, yet the word remains problematic, weighted by assumptions of individuation, personality, and intimations of an interior world. I see in front of me the image of memento dolls in Japan, each made to share the “character and appearance” of a person lost in the tsunami.⁴ A typology of individuality need not be representational, but must suggest the individual.⁵ This is the ambiguity Lefèvre strives to make us understand, and yet never is it the core ambiguity he helps us find in South Asia.

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Mumbai Fables: A History of an Enchanted City. By GYAN PRAKASH. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010. xi, 396 pp. \$29.95 (cloth); \$19.95 (paper).

doi:10.1017/S0021911812001660

Through the twentieth century, Bombay exerted a pull in the Indian imaginary as the locus of a definitive modernity. And if the stream of labor migrants that continues to pour, unabated, into the nation’s largest city is any indication, its mid-1990s rebranding as Mumbai has marked no diminution in the intensity of that appeal—notwithstanding the identity politics behind the name change, a demagogic nativist populism that famously boiled over in the Shiv Sena-orchestrated anti-Muslim “riots” of 1992–93. Yet the character of the modernity the image of the city evokes has indeed changed. To track the contours of that image over the decades—and to relate them to events on local, national, and transnational levels—is a multifaceted challenge for a historian. Gyan Prakash has reached for the prize with a generous grasp and a sure touch, and *Mumbai Fables* is an ambitious and rewarding book.

In designating Mumbai as an “enchanted city,” the book’s title cites the popular Hindi epithet *Mayapuri*, City of Illusion. In this long-enduring formulation, the glitter and glamour projected by India’s commercial and media capital are conceived as *maya*—“illusion” in the classical Indic sense that reduces the phenomenal world to the play of appearances that enmesh the desiring subject. But Prakash’s idea of how Mumbai works its enchantment on Indian selves is, in fact, neither philosophical nor religious, per the Hindu (never mind Weberian) concept. Rather, his study centers on the representation of the city through narrative—stories that verbalize and circulate historically

⁴From an NHK documentary.

⁵Sheldon Nodelman, “How to Read a Roman Portrait,” *Art in America* 63 (1975): 3–33.

nested, iterative, and contending visions of urban modernity. His archive of Mumbai fables is impressively, and engagingly, eclectic: among the texts that contribute to his collage-portrait of the city are comic books, news reports, and editorials; policy documents and architects' plans; and works of cinema, poetry, and contemporary art. The interests voiced in these sources join a concert (albeit frequently discordant) of diverse social groups that speak in the name of more broadly conceived identities laying claim to the city as a whole. Indeed, the discursive terrain surveyed here maps well, in the main, onto *public culture*, that "zone of cultural debate" theorized by Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge between the nation-state and the domestic sphere. The evident applicability of this category to Mumbai owes much to its authors' own experience of life and work in the city.

Prakash himself is not a native. Like so many others on whom Mumbai works its fascination, he grew up in Hindi-speaking North India. A theme woven through the first half of the book is the dissemination of the city's image through what is perhaps Indian public culture's primary channel, the Hindi-language film industry, or Bollywood. (The capital B, the distinguishing mark that Indianizes, here works also as the carrier of a certain nostalgia in that B stands, of course, for *Bombay*, as opposed to *Mumbai*.) Hindi cinema as the modern engine of the *maya*-machine has long been an important site of Indian cultural-studies analysis. But in introducing his own discussion through his memory as a boy growing up in provincial Bihar, Prakash revitalizes a well-visited theme. His approach—tacking between the urban modernity constructed in the "golden age" films of the 1950s–60s and the historical demise of that vision—is at once acute and affecting; to quote a line featured in perhaps every Hindi screenplay ever filmed, *zamana badal gaya hai*, "the times have moved on."

Among the book's other highlights is an account of the fortunes of the English-language tabloid *Blitz*, which peaked in 1959–60 with the adoption as a cause célèbre of the photogenic Commander Nanavati, convicted in a sensational trial of murdering his wife's playboy lover. Also notable are several crises in the city's development and expansion the author frames as conflicts between the technocratic vision of planners and architects—whose state-sponsored projects share a telltale rationalizing tendency across the milestone of 1947—and a host of rival interests.

Less successful is the chapter called "From Red to Saffron," which documents the epic contest for the allegiance of the Marathi-speaking working-class population between the communist-led labor movement and the nativist (and opportunistically Hindu nationalist) Shiv Sena party. Here, to cite another ubiquitous (and infinitely recursive) screenwriter's line, *yeh kahani purani ho gayi*, "We've heard this story before." Prakash's narration seems uncharacteristically dry and reductive, limited perhaps by reliance on English and Hindi over Marathi sources, and by a historiographical emphasis on textual expression over ethnographic description. A consideration of aspects of cultural practice among urban subalterns, for example the religious practices that mark specific neighborhood sites as sacred ground, could have enriched the book's analysis

of the pivotal Mumbai fable: the contemporary rise to ascendancy, via successive bloodlettings, of the Shiv Sena as the five hundred-pound gorilla of Bombay—make that Mumbai—politics.

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From Hindi to Urdu: A Social and Political History. By TARIQ RAHMAN.
 Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011. xix, 456 pp. \$55.00 (cloth).
 doi:10.1017/S0021911812001672

Fly from Delhi to Karachi and back. Take Pakistan International Airlines one-way, Air India the other. If you do, you will hear mutually unintelligible flight announcements, one in Urdu and the other in Hindi. But these flight announcements are saying the same thing and, if the airlines were really concerned about passenger safety, they could be easily crafted to be intelligible to all passengers, regardless of whether they call Delhi or Karachi “home.”

This is an example that Tariq Rahman uses to encapsulate his argument that the distinction between Hindi and Urdu is a social construct. Presently the Director of the National Institute for Pakistan Studies, Rahman wrote *From Hindi to Urdu* to consider the delineation of Urdu as a distinct language. What emerges is an encyclopedic discussion that ranges broadly from questions surrounding Urdu’s origins to its uses in present-day Pakistan and India. The work is exceedingly helpful as an overview of key issues surrounding the social construction of Urdu and would serve well as a preliminary text for scholars and students who wish to explore the politics of language in South Asia.

The first four chapters of *From Hindi to Urdu* introduce questions and debates concerning the origins of Urdu. After the introduction, chapter 2 examines the names given to the precursors of Urdu, such as Hindi, Hindvi, Hindui, and Dehlavi. The term “Urdu” itself arrives only in 1780. Chapter 3 probes the potential age of the ancestor of Hindi-Urdu, while chapter 4 examines how “the historiography of Urdu has been under the domination of identity politics” (p. 97), with notable recent examples being the effort by Pakistani nationalists to claim that languages such as Sindhi and Siraiki are the true precursors of what is today called “Urdu.”

The core of Rahman’s argument comes in chapter 5, “Identity: The Islamization of Urdu.” Initially, the move to define Urdu was located in the class sensibilities of a nervous Muslim aristocracy—not only was Persinate vocabulary emphasized, but there was a distinct preoccupation with “correctness” (*fasahat*) in expression.

As chapter 6 diagrams, Urdu moved from being a class marker to an emblem of religious identity with the rise of groups such as the Ahl-i-Hadith and the Deobandis, which preached a return to a “purer” form of Islam. Urdu began to be