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Moving Rape: Trafficking in the Violence of Postliberalization

Sareeta Amrute

The protests initially provoked by the gang rape and murder of a physiotherapy student on a bus in New Delhi are a profound sign of dissent and disruption in contemporary India. To briefly recount the details of this case, on December 16, 2012, after robbing a carpenter, six men picked up a woman and her male friend in a private, off-duty bus. The men attacked both and raped the woman while driving around Delhi’s streets, finally brutalizing her with a metal rod taken from the bus’s luggage rack and pulling out her intestines before dumping the two naked by the side of the road. The female victim was flown to Singapore, where she died in a hospital thirteen days after the attack.¹

The days following the rape saw an upsurge of protests on Delhi’s streets against sexual violence and major coverage in Indian national and international news media. International press accounts, in particular, focused on what was called India’s “rape culture,” explaining the attack in terms of prevailing attitudes toward women in public as sexually available, police collusion in rape, and cultures of shame that blame women for their own violation (MacKenzie 2013). Meanwhile, the Delhi protests brought together several different voices, includ-

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1. As this article was going to press, new and equally spectacular rape cases surfaced in other Indian metropolises, including a gang rape of a photographer who was documenting abandoned factories in Mumbai. This case, too, I would argue, resonates with the politics of gender, class, violence, and urban space I detail here. For an overview of the aftermath of these cases and accompanying protests, see Hundal 2013.



Public Culture

1 ing those of Indian feminists who used the popular support around this case as
2 a platform to argue that women's rights needed to be articulated for all women,
3 rural and urban, in a language that moved beyond women's protection and toward
4 freedom of movement and of female desire (Krishnan 2013; Phadke 2013; Venu-
5 gopal 2013; Walia 2013).

6 While the recent enactment of strong antirape laws by parliament is a sign
7 of the ferocity of these protests and their ability to affect legal practice (Mand-
8 hana 2013), the Delhi rape case may be read in conjunction with similar violence
9 against women returning home in call center cabs that replays the drama of men,
10 women, and class mobility in contemporary India. This reading militates against
11 understanding these rapes as primarily part of a traditional "rape culture." Violence
12 against women in cars reveals the limits of the vehicle as a space protective
13 of privatized economies and private middle-class pleasures at the same time that
14 such violence enacts an overturning of the "right to privacy" through the viola-
15 tion of a woman's body. The car—as symbol and conveyance for modern urban
16 Indian life—is a space of "violence and desire" where "displacement collides
17 with dreams of a better life" (Baviskar 2004: 98). The violence of the moving rape has therefore to be understood within the contradictions of a postliberalization moment (fig. 1).



Figure 1 The ghostly presence of a clean, unmarked call center car on an otherwise dusty and cacophonous street. Photograph by author

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33 urban middle classes were driving the Delhi protests in the main, it remains the
34 challenge of these protests to at once recognize the limits of liberalization in India
35 and call for the protection of the rights of women who are not urban and upwardly
36 mobile to the same degree as the most publicized victims (Dutta and Sircar 2013).
37 The politics of class in contemporary India run through both sexualized violence
38 and the protests that respond to it.

1 In India, the postliberalization period began after 1991, when a series of well-
2 publicized legislative moves lowered barriers to foreign investment, abandoned
3 protectionism, and abolished the byzantine governmental procedures regulat-
4 ing business. Postliberalization has a fractious relationship with what it replaces.
5 Though more goods are available in India than ever before and wealth is being
6 generated in software, mining, and other sectors of the economy, questions of
7 access and corruption, wealth distribution and inequality, continue to make “liberal-
8 ization” an unfinished business. Once it was assumed that liberalizing the econ-
9 omy would produce more wealth for all Indians, but now many wonder whether
10 it has produced only greater degrees of inequality instead (Gupta and Sharma
11 2006: 292).² Like other “posts” before it, postliberalization suggests that orienta-
12 tion toward “the market” is continuous, ongoing, incomplete, and ambivalent.³

13 This essay reads the case of rape in moving vehicles against the texture of an
14 unfinished liberalization. I argue that the violence of this gang rape and similar
15 cases is firmly tied to the question of lower-class incorporation in contemporary
16 India. In moments of violence, the privatization of business and the private sphere
17 of consumption meet, and the figure of the lower-class male moves to the center
18 by means of the violation of a middle-class woman’s body. To explicate the link
19 between economic liberalization, class, and gendered violence, I track the figure
20 of the lower-class, periurban male across three vectors of incorporation.⁴ First, I
21 turn to private space, especially in cars and buses, as an example of the discursive
22 suasion of neoliberal philosophy in India that nevertheless contradictorily inserts
23 a labor relation into the politics of middle-class enjoyment. I use ethnographic
24 accounts about the car solicited from call center managers to explore how the
25 car becomes a moving semiprivate space that frames women as dependent on
26 their drivers for protection, at the same time that the public space of the road is
27 framed as a space of navigable danger for men who drive. Second, I look at the
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30 2. Although this critique of economic policy is familiar from general discourses of neoliberalism,
31 I keep here to the language of postliberalization to stress that the growth of the Indian economy after
32 1991 has produced multiple kinds of mobility that are not easily written as a story about “neoliberal-
33 ism” writ large. This essay, then, is in keeping with anthropological studies of neoliberalism that
34 stress it as a form of governmentality that intersects and compromises with already-existing modes
35 of caring for populations (Collier 2011; Boyer and Yurchak 2010).

36 3. For a penetrating account of these two modes of the “post,” see Hall 2006.

37 4. I follow Satish Deshpande’s (2003) discussion of class here as a relational construct that is
38 mobilized in multiple ways. While class and caste status often align, it is often the case that class
39 mobility complicates caste orders, especially when that mobility is differentially spread over gender
40 divisions. I refer here to “periurban” populations to mark a zone of indistinction between urban pro-
41 letariats and rural farmers that is often undertheorized in the literature on caste and class in India.

1 practices of control over periurban, lower classes through the disciplining of the
2 behavior between female call center workers and male drivers. I describe drivers
3 as “distanced bodies” as a further elaboration of Michel Foucault’s (1995) notion
4 of “disciplined bodies” to indicate how lower-class subjects are incorporated into
5 new flexible and informal kinds of work regimes. “Distanced bodies” are respect-
6 ful of social distance between themselves and others at the same time that they
7 maintain job-required ties to undisciplined, nondocile tactics. Third, I consider
8 drivers as a category of “watchmen,” border figures with an extended genealogy
9 on the subcontinent, meant to protect the new spaces of middle-class consump-
10 tion. Together, these three examinations allow me to make (partial) sense of this
11 violence as a form of mediation among central and peripheral subjects in liberal-
12 ized India. While the cases I discuss are specific to India, they resonate widely
13 with sexual violence against women in urban environments in many places. As
14 women enter contingent arenas of work in neoliberal economies, they are subject
15 to violence that at once sexualizes them, reinserts them into the private sphere, and
16 cheapens the value of their labor (Salzinger 2003; Wright 2006; Fitzsimons 2012).

17 The car—and other modes of private transportation—is a useful site from which
18 to theorize mobility and its limits in contemporary India. The car is a necessary
19 supplement to liberalized economies, where the public transportation infrastructure
20 cannot meet the demand of industries, such as the call centers discussed below, for
21 on-time and late-night travel. The private car is a kind of mobile infrastructure in
22 the Indian city that simultaneously helps focus theoretic attention to the “messi-
23 ness and fluidity” of cities (Amin 2013), the “leakages” and unintended uses of
24 urban infrastructures (Anand 2011), and the spaces of overlap between material
25 culture, economic shift, and social process (Calhoun, Sennett, and Shapira 2013).
26 The car also is a site where class frictions are lived. In the private vehicle, the
27 working-service classes on which such industries depend are visible in their labor,
28 a necessary component to the smooth “flow” of workers to and from information
29 technology (IT) headquarters and the shopping malls, cinemas, and other sym-
30 bolic venues of middle-class pleasure. Finally, the car stands in for mobility in a
31 more general way, as it moves through streets sometimes choked with daytime
32 traffic and sometimes eerily empty late at night, laying bare the mobilities and
33 immobilities that liberalization has engendered in urban India. By making the
34 car central to the understanding of violence, this essay calls on all of these asso-
35 ciations, highlighting at once the economic, representational, and performative
36 aspects of movement that the car embodies. Considering the lower-class man,
37 the upwardly mobile woman, and the space of the car lays bare the contested
38 space between the economic and social meanings of the private (Kaviraj 1997;

1 Gal 2002; Thompson 2009). As a mobile and privatized urban infrastructure, the
2 vehicle in motion is a heightened space in which the lines between public good
3 and private right are blurred, reworked, and made subject to violent appropriation.
4

5 **Privatization and the Private**

6 The landscape of urban India is dotted with new kinds of privatized spaces. The
7 poor continue to occupy sidewalks and parks, while the wealthy erect gated com-
8 munities and shopping malls. Liberalization has enabled the middle classes to
9 strategically withdraw from the public sphere (Baviskar 2004; Nair 2006). These
10 governing classes set up the gated enclave, the air-conditioned multiplex cinema,
11 and the shopping mall as the singular yet representative space of the new India
12 (Fernandes 2006; Srivastava 2014). At the same time, the poor continue to claim
13 the right to use and reside on public lands. The occupation of underpasses and
14 overpasses, railroad yards and riverbanks, is the most visible sign of a politics that
15 demands that the state care for its population and a response that the state delivers
16 in the form of both laissez-faire negligence and state welfare and philanthropic
17 gifts—these spaces are internal borderlands from which the state has withdrawn
18 its duty of care (Chatterjee 2004; Gupta and Sharma 2006). One may be tempted
19 to conclude that a kind of détente has been reached, leaving the pavement to the
20 lower classes and the glass arcades to the upper classes, the public to the people
21 and the private to the cosmopolitan citizens. But categories of inclusion and exclu-
22 sion are too broad to encompass the multiple ways that access to new spaces and
23 practices of private consumption are being negotiated in India today.

24 Class as social process unfurls in an unmarked space between two senses of the
25 private. *Privatization* in its economic sense signals a further withdrawal of care
26 from public responsibility and the conversion of unionized jobs into unprotected
27 private-sector work and informal labor arrangements (Agarwala 2006; Chatterjee
28 2004). Meanwhile, *private* as an ideological term aligns family and nation in
29 opposition to, but also supporting, markets and states (Gal 2002; Chatterjee 2004;
30 Kaviraj 1997; Warner 2002). The history of public-private distinctions suggests
31 that the two spheres are inexorably bound up together and congruent, the one
32 helping define the other by negative comparison (Gal 2002; Kaviraj 1997; Warner
33 2002). Equally important, the boundary between public and private space in daily
34 life is porous and agonistic. As Sudipta Kaviraj has detailed, in India in particular,
35 public and private ideologies are sutured to existing ideas of inside and outside
36 such that the meaning of public space is highly ambiguous.
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38 During the colonial period, while retaining connotations of a space that was

1 “inhospitable and full of danger of offense,” the public sphere was also the space
2 of “the large-scale operation of modernity, a world of freedom rather than restric-
3 tion” (Kaviraj 1997: 94). The particular evolution of an inhospitable yet free public
4 sphere in India during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries yielded the
5 concept of a *pablik*, a plebian space that at once signals the democratization of
6 the public sphere and its abandoning by the middle classes in favor of developing
7 their own private enclaves (ibid.: 108). Today privacy is increasingly defined as a
8 mode of governance of the middle class, where the right to spaces of enjoyment
9 is linked to the rights of being a productive Indian citizen—making urban space
10 once again a battleground for claiming rights in the city.

11 Middle and upper classes intervene in the politics of poverty by making argu-
12 ments for clearing hawkers from the pavement and demolishing slums on the basis
13 of the right to unobstructed use of public goods (Chatterjee 2006; McQuarrie, Fer-
14 nandes, and Shepard 2013). The shopping malls and gated IT parks are at the same
15 time staffed by the ranks of the “public” hired as private armed guards, cleaners,
16 and drivers. In this way, the privacy of private spaces is policed by the very public
17 it is meant to shut out, for their own good and in their name. While the middle
18 classes utilize the discourse of public good to claim ownership of public space in
19 the name of the average Indian citizen, lower classes take up and indigenize the
20 notion of the private to similarly claim ownership over space.⁵ The guard who
21 secures the shopping mall and the driver at call centers are figures who give clear
22 expression to this process.

23 Helen Thompson (2009) notes that the public is in the first instance opposed to
24 a private defined as a sphere of economic transaction, and then this sense of the
25 private is subsequently further divided into the realm of the market and the realm
26 of the familial. The car as a mobile infrastructure collapses and makes blurry
27 those distinctions. Within the car, gendered logics both define men as those who
28 drive and women as those who are driven and make the body of the female pas-
29 senger a site on which the politics of class and the violence of hypermasculinity
30 (Hansen 2001) are enacted. As such, bodies are gendered through the enactment
31 of “moving rape” in homology with how the landscape of sex, danger, and eco-
32 nomic prestige is traversed by the private vehicle as a sign of wealth and consump-
33 tion in the “new” India. In addition to the intersection of class and gender that is
34 worked out in the car, the economic and political geography of the car’s private
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37 5. Here the middle class not only is the face of new Indian prosperity and thus has a hegemonic
38 function but also is an oppositional group to lower-class politics of the kind Partha Chatterjee (2004)
describes.

1 movements suggests that violence at once participates in logics of lower-class
2 masculinity, pleasure in consumption, and femininity as transgressive of class
3 boundaries and subject to violent appropriation.

4 The specificity of class, gender, and economy in contemporary India occurs
5 against a particular historical and spatial texture that is highly local.⁶ The ill-
6 defined space between the privatized and the private—in the sense of both the
7 economic and the domestic—is productive of newly gendered labor roles. In
8 the call center industry, women are given mobility and status but are inscribed
9 in the domestic through a structure of opposition between work and family that
10 divides times of day (day and night) and types of space (private and public) into
11 gendered domains (Patel 2010). Women working at night are considered good eco-
12 nomic actors but troubling gendered ones, as they seem in their person to collapse
13 these structuring oppositions. Lower-class men, in contrast, are written out of the
14 corporate umbrella and forced into quasilegal realms. For urban and periurban
15 lower-class men, privatization entails an increase in irregular and unregulated
16 kinds of work, such as in call center industry driving.

17 Although most recent studies of class in India focus on middle classes and
18 Dalits, or “untouchable” caste groups (Brosius 2010; Fernandes 2006; Pandey
19 2009), the lower-class urban (and periurban) subject is key in understanding
20 wealth and social inequality in India today. In other words, the study of inequal-
21 ity in India is often dominated by a binary division between the independent
22 cultural practices of rural lower-class and lower-caste subjects and the totalizing
23 aspirations of middle classes, defined by their ability to regulate cultural norms.
24 This lacuna in the literature is scholarly counterpoint to the ill-defined place of
25 irregular urban and periurban working classes in everyday life. In contemporary
26 India, what Rina Agarwala (2006: 419) terms “the informal working classes” have
27 no definable place. Casual workers who do not earn regular wages and receive no
28 social benefits from either employers or the state have largely replaced unionized
29 workers across India, but their relationship with the state and with the narrative of
30 postliberal progress is ambiguous. While men remain undistinguished as mem-
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33 6. This essay combines critical reflections from gender studies on structures of violence and sub-
34 jectivity with a consideration of the importance of space highlighted by critical geography. Kimberlé
35 Crenshaw (1993) posited an approach to the study of gender, violence, and race that has since been
36 built on through careful comparative analysis. I follow Amanda Locke Swarr and Richa Nagar (2004:
37 514), who argue, “Extending intersectionality therefore necessitates that we reconceptualize differ-
38 ence as constituted and (re)configured in relation to place-specific struggles over rights, resources,
social practices, and relationships.” I would add that the use and right to types of space is also an
important site of struggle.

1 bers of a poorly delineated “informal” working class, women from similar back-
2 grounds can be absorbed into middle-class imaginaries through their incorpora-
3 tion into white-collar or, better, “pink-collar” work in health and IT industries.
4 Indeed, the discussion of the Delhi victim as a “medical student” in Indian and
5 international newspapers (she studied physiotherapy) and the corresponding lack
6 of emphasis on her underprivileged background (her father worked as a laborer at
7 the Delhi airport) suggest that lower-class women attain social mobility through
8 access to these jobs.

9 The “moving rape” on the Delhi bus and the call center driver rapes can be
10 understood through this twinning of the upwardly mobile lower-class woman and
11 the dangerous lower-class man. Urban and periurban lower-class men are neces-
12 sary and dangerous subjects in the new India. Threatening behavior is both part of
13 their job description as drivers who maneuver in the service of private companies
14 on crowded and dangerous roads and is a means by which they claim the right to a
15 share in the economic growth of the middle class. Violence mirrors back the lack
16 of protection offered such workers and produces for casual workers a place within
17 what heretofore has been defined as middle-class pursuits. The moving rape lays
18 claim to the private space of the car and to what is perceived as middle-class
19 pleasures, the “pubs, movies, and restaurants” and the pleasures “of being out in
20 mixed-gender company at night” (Patel 2010). The car, at once a status symbol
21 of middle-class consumption practices and a mode of transportation for the call
22 center industry that relies on men who drive, negotiates access to “middle-class”
23 consumer pleasure. The body of the class- and caste-crossing female student and
24 call center worker is targeted for the uneven politics of mobility across gender
25 that such jobs afford. In the moving rape, the dangerous behavior of drivers is
26 turned toward the interior of the car, inscribing on a woman’s body and in the
27 privatized space of this mobile infrastructure a muscular politics of access to
28 pleasure through violation.

29 This inversion of the enclaved private sphere and the policed border is under-
30 written by economic privatization and the development of worker control through
31 dispersion, which operates through modulation of existing givens rather through
32 disciplinary practices that shape individuals according to a predefined model
33 (Deleuze 1992: 6). Lower classes are incorporated into privatized economies by
34 simultaneously calling on these bodies as guarantors of liberalization and naming
35 them figures of unrest located outside the privileged locales of the new economy.
36 As the following sections will make clear, these moments in which the car is
37 commandeered through violence are made possible by the very cascading logic
38 of privatization that a neoliberal India repeatedly enacts.

The Private Car

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3 Indian consumers have a complex relationship with cars. A proliferation of pri-
4 vately owned and driven cars and two-wheelers currently ply Indian roads, while
5 manufacturers such as Tata produce cheap four-wheelers aimed at a middle class
6 with global aspirations and increased consumer drive. As a symbol of the buying
7 power of India's middle classes, the car is a private conveyance that can shield its
8 passengers from the heat and dirt of the streetscape.⁷ At the same time, the car
9 participates in the renewed chaos of the road as vehicles compete for space and
10 car crashes express the volatility of Indian automobile culture.

11 Ravi Sundaram's meditation on the car in contemporary Indian cities captures
12 much of this sense of wonder and dread. Sundaram (2009: 170–71) narrates “a
13 traumatic collapse between inner worlds and the shock of public encounters” as
14 highly publicized car crashes in Delhi in the 1990s brought together the human
15 and the machine as a traumatic new turning in city life. If the car crash and its
16 spectacular reproduction in the media resonated with the everyday experience
17 of speed and danger in the city, it also served as a lever to exercise control over
18 lower-class male bodies through the figure of the driver. Sundaram writes of a
19 Supreme Court order in 1997 in response to a road accident in which a private bus
20 fell into the Yamuna River, killing twenty-eight children. The legislation ordered
21 that buses needed to stop at bus stops and that drivers had to be authorized, have
22 photo ID cards, have at least five years' experience without traffic offenses, and
23 wear uniforms (ibid.: 163). Through this ruling, the state cares for its people by
24 relinquishing partially its practices of control to private enterprise. When the
25 state cedes to private enterprise the right to shape its citizenry, public space is
26 itself privatized. To wit, the High Court judgment addressed private buses, tacitly
27 admitting that these vehicles were necessary supplements to overloaded public bus
28 and transportation systems.⁸

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31 7. In this sense, the car is a private space. As Raymond Williams writes, cars are “private shell[s]”
32 arranged “so that private mobilities can proceed safely and relatively unhindered” (quoted in Gilroy
33 2001: 81). In addition to Ross (1995), other useful overviews of car culture include Ladd 2008, Har-
34 tstein and Liepelt 1961, Stotz 2001, and Uteng, Priya, and Cresswell 2008. A social history of the
35 car in India awaits its author.

36 8. Sundaram (2009: 163) concludes this passage, citing Foucault's elaboration of neoliberal gov-
37 ernmentality, by arguing that “practices that were ordinarily part of the pastoral power of govern-
38 ment were suddenly rendered visible through dramatic civic judgments.” Yet, rather than this pas-
39 toral power (which is exercised through the continuous calculation and management of risk) being
40 “ordinary,” it is fractured, precisely because the state privatizes its care of the people, creating care
41 at a distance, rather than extending its management over the population.

1 Private buses, like the one on which the Delhi student was raped, ply the road
2 as part of a host of privatized automobiles that make use of the readily available
3 pool of semiskilled labor to act as drivers. Unlike in postwar France, where the
4 car signaled simultaneously Americanization and modernity, challenging the pre-
5 war status quo and catapulting the bourgeois couple with their car into the center
6 of a French life (Ross 1995), the domestication of the car in contemporary India
7 replays the dramas of middle-class home worlds through a master-servant relation-
8 ship (Ray and Qayum 2009). While the domestic couple and family occupy the car
9 on weekends and for outings, during the work week the private car—and private
10 bus—is a transportation supplement to middle-class economies, chauffeuring call
11 center workers to night shifts and transporting schoolchildren to school buildings,
12 circumventing through private means the less reliable public transportation system
13 of India's metropolitan spaces. The car embodies a contradiction between middle-
14 class autonomy and its reliance on a cadre of workers who guard the boundaries
15 of their private spaces.

16 Aditya Nigam (2013) writes, voicing this fractured nature of the car:

17 Before the 1990s we rarely heard of something like rape in a moving
18 vehicle or mowing down of sleeping pavement dwellers by speeding cars.
19 In the period since the 1990s the car has become a virtual space for the
20 playing out of desire—exhilarating and liberating on the one hand and a
21 space of darkness and crime on the other. The car became an extension of
22 the male self—a vehicle for the display of sexual prowess and displaced
23 sexual gratification through speed.

24 In addition to the car as extension of male aggression, it is command of priva-
25 tized consumption that is produced through rape. Violence unfolds from the infor-
26 mal economies that exist alongside formal ones and, at the same time, mirrors
27 the privatization of space in reverse, taking out and exposing what is deemed the
28 most private of space, the insides of a woman's body. The private space of the bus
29 mirrors the gated community and the shopping mall, its tinted windows allowing
30 for a horrible intimacy, its continual movement through the city streets a safe-
31 guard against having that private sphere interrupted. Although any reading of the
32 embodiment of violence is speculative, the gruesome details of the rape, where a
33 metal rod was used to eviscerate the victim, seem to replay this impulse of reverse
34 privatization. The metal rod turns her insides out, making the female victim's pri-
35 vates part of the accessible semipublic space of the vehicle.

36 In other moments of sexualized violence, such as those that accompanied the
37 intercommunal violence of Partition, women's bodies were subject to differently
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1 weighted violations. According to accounts of Partition violence, women were
2 abducted and raped, their breasts and noses were cut off, their genitals muti-
3 lated, and fetuses ripped from their wombs in an effort to prevent them from
4 bearing new Muslim, Sikh, or Hindu subjects. Women became spoils in a war
5 among communities of men, and their bodies were violated for their generative
6 capacities—their ability to reproduce (Butalia 2000; Das 2007). The number of
7 rapes after Partition is much higher than in the cases of moving rape I discuss,
8 allowing researchers to establish a pattern of embodied violence. What may be
9 said of the latter cases is that they noticeably do not conform to the pattern of
10 violation in intercommunal violence. In the case of the Delhi student, she is not
11 treated as the property of an enemy nation available for plunder. Rather, she is
12 marked as a standard-bearer of new class relations that define the middle class
13 through consumer citizenship embodied especially in the “modern and urban”
14 young woman.

15 Middle-class women’s sexuality is problematized as part of a growing con-
16 sumerist ethic (Lukose 2009). As the Indian market showcased increasing
17 amounts of consumer goods and the buying capacity of certain segments of the
18 public—especially those involved in IT jobs—similarly increased, consumption
19 replaced duty as the glue holding together citizen and nation. This “consumer
20 citizenship” repositioned women simultaneously as bearers of a pure Indian tradi-
21 tion untouched by consumer culture and as a condensed sign of a new consum-
22 erism marked by modern dress and sexuality (ibid.: 54–131). As women of lower
23 caste and class backgrounds find roads to upward class mobility through pink-
24 collar jobs, they simultaneously are increasingly sexualized, not because they
25 are forced to enter the “sexually charged” space of the car and the street, but
26 because these very spaces increasingly figure as the borderlands of a respect-
27 able middle-class imaginary of consumption taking place behind office park
28 and residential compound walls. The right to pleasure, where sex and desire is
29 sutured to middle-class consumption (Mazzarella 2003: 59–148), materializes
30 when men commandeer a private bus to, in the words of one perpetrator, “have
31 some fun” (Mandhana and Trivedi 2012), “fun” perhaps signaling the transfor-
32 mation of the private from the space of domestic reproduction to the space where
33 the fruits of privatization are enjoyed.

34 Within these spaces the rising discourse of consumption comes full circle.
35 Lower-class subjects claim the right to enjoyment and become an internal border
36 impinging on what it is meant to protect. In these moments, the invisible guar-
37 antors of middle-class consumption claim center stage in its field of desire. The
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1 smoked-out windows are at once a sign of the intimate space behind the glass and
2 an invitation to claim that space as one's own in the "off-hours."⁹

3 Private space is claimed for the masculinized *pablik* through acts of violence
4 that take up and invert the lack of defined place for lower-class subjectivity in
5 postliberalization India. The next section demonstrates how violence unfolds from
6 a cascading logic of microdiscipline that differently mobilizes middle- and lower-
7 class citizens.
8

9 **The Transformative Space of the Car**

10 The four-door sedan in India is simultaneously a middle-class conveyance, pro-
11 tecting the occupants from the dust, noise, and inconvenience of public transport,
12 and a space of labor, where the first steps toward imbrication into the Indian
13 neoliberal economy (exemplified here by software services) must be taken by its
14 lower-class and middle-class workers. It is at once a modern convenience and
15 something else—a stressed space of transformation where the realities of the
16 global software clock are impressed on local conditions. These two demands on
17 the car invert the usual formula for vehicular privilege: driving oneself is a luxury,
18 while being driven is an imposition on white-collar workers caused by the con-
19 ditions of their employment and the conditions on the street. Ironically, while
20 companies use drivers to circumvent an inadequate transportation system, they
21 also contribute to the inhospitable street by making the street a dangerous space
22 of speed and volatility.
23

24 The rape of the physiotherapy student in Delhi resonates with attacks on
25 women by their drivers in the Indian call center industry. Though I do not wish to
26 conflate call center rape cases with the Delhi rape, there are certain similarities in
27 the manner of their unfolding that may be carefully teased out.

28 In the Indian city of Pune (about ninety-five miles southeast of Mumbai), a
29 twenty-two-year-old woman who was the employee of Indian IT giant Wipro was
30 raped and murdered on November 1, 2007, by her driver and another man. The
31 first man had been hired as a driver; the second man got into the front seat of the
32 car somewhere en route. The victim was driven to an isolated area near a village
33 outside of Pune, where she was raped, disfigured by blows from a rock to her
34 face, and strangled with her *dupatta* (scarf). The night she was murdered was her
35 last day of work. According to the prosecutor in the case, the perpetrators, aged
36

37 9. In this sense, as Kavita Krishnan (2013) reminds us, "rape is an assertion of patriarchal power,
38 not of sexual desire."

1 twenty and twenty-six, thought that her absence would therefore go unnoticed.
2 On September 17, 2012, the Bombay High Court sentenced the two men to death.
3 High Court justice V. M. Kande released a statement: “The manner in which the
4 offence was committed and the deep impact it has had on the society have been
5 considered by us. Any woman will now think twice before taking a cab alone”
6 (*Times of India* 2012). The verdict underlines the transformative privatization that
7 was taking place in the proliferation of the newly private space of the car, a space
8 that loosened the disciplinary structures holding apart workers and drivers.

9 Talking with the on-site logistics manager of a call center located in the area
10 of Kalyani Nagar, a district on the outskirts of Pune, in December 2010, I asked
11 why call centers used drivers. I was in Pune investigating how the burgeoning IT
12 industry was affecting lower-class workers in the city, and I focused on those men
13 and women who were drawn into service jobs adjacent to programming and call
14 center work, like cleaning, catering, and driving. My attention turned to the ques-
15 tion of safety for call center workers because most of the companies I visited had
16 recently implemented a plan to increase safety for women after a series of rapes
17 and murders of female call center workers by the men who drove them to their
18 work in the IT centers of India, including Bangalore and Pune.

19 Call centers rely on drivers to bring workers to and from night shifts. To be
20 clear, both men and women work in call centers. In the centers I visited, about
21 one-third of the staff were men. I focus on women here because exploring the
22 dynamics of the call center industry reveals, I believe, a gendered division of labor
23 that is barely noticed but extremely important—the support staff made up mostly
24 of men who drive and provide security for the new spaces of economic growth
25 (like call centers) and symbolic spending (like shopping malls) in contemporary
26 India.

27 Drivers collect workers from their homes at multiple points around a city in a
28 particular order determined in advance. According to this facilities manager, there
29 were at least three reasons for using cars and drivers rather than having workers
30 find their own way to the office. First, call center workers would not be able to find
31 reliable transportation to and from the office because shifts usually started at eight
32 in the evening and went until four the next morning. Second, call center managers
33 needed to ensure that their workers would be there to answer phone calls from
34 the beginning to the end of their shift, starting on time and ending on time. Most
35 managers felt that workers could not be relied on to be punctual enough for the
36 industry, but that timeliness could be assured by using drivers. To facilitate timeli-
37 ness, drivers were instructed to wait no more than five minutes for each worker,
38 giving them a courtesy call while waiting. If a worker missed the pickup, it would

1 be noted in her time sheet and she would be responsible for getting to work. Third,
2 call center staffing worked on a “just in time” workforce model, where there were
3 only enough workers in the office to field the current call volume. As a result, time
4 schedules were calculated to the quarter hour, and the drivers were key to making
5 sure the shifts were populated with enough workers to handle call volume, but not
6 so many that workers were sitting idle. At times, call center volume might increase
7 unexpectedly and drivers could be sent out quickly to collect additional staff. In
8 this way, the call center was able to offer its clients the discount prices on customer
9 service calls that kept the Indian customer support industry competitive.

10 These three reasons—availability, timeliness, and adaptability—figure the car
11 as a space of microdiscipline, where whoever the call center worker is before
12 and after work is transformed into the punctual, tireless phone answerer of her
13 shift. The disciplined call center worker answers the phone often with a Western-
14 sounding name, always speaks in the dialectically appropriate (British, Austra-
15 lian, or American) English, answers calls efficiently, is polite to the customer,
16 and can make small talk. Such a worker is a different sort of subject from the
17 kind of person she is at home. When she enters the car, she takes the first steps in
18 becoming the call center worker. In other words, control over call center workers
19 is definite and temporally bounded, creating a worker subjectivity (including a
20 temporary Anglo name and accent) that does not have to be maintained outside of
21 work. Entering the “homogeneous space” of the call center demands a transforma-
22 tion from “India” to “the United States” or “Britain” (Nadeem 2011). The driver
23 is key to this transformation.

24 Though not recognized as such, drivers are equally “call center workers,” sub-
25 ject to a different sort of discipline. Getting the workers to the office on time
26 means driving at breakneck speed, not getting enough sleep or sleeping in the
27 car on breaks, and performing late at night and early in the morning. A driver I
28 spoke with acknowledged that the pace of the work was grueling. It was difficult
29 to stay awake during the night shift. At his company there was no common break
30 room, so he took short naps in his car, and when things were particularly bad,
31 he drank cups of tea bought from tea stalls along the road to keep awake. These
32 methods encourage drivers to flagrantly flout traffic laws and drive in danger-
33 ous conditions, including being very sleep deprived. Indeed, many high-profile
34 car crashes in Mumbai and surrounding areas have been attributed to call center
35 driver recklessness. The strict propriety of the call center worker is thus under-
36 girded by the encouraged scofflaw driving habits of the drivers; both contribute
37 to the microdisciplinary space of the car, moving the subject from home to office,
38

1 from the local space of life in the everyday to the international space of life on the
2 phone line to Britain or America.

3 In the car, driver and worker are linked by the imperatives of industry, relying
4 on each other to keep their place and their paycheck in the new economy. At the
5 same time, their roles are in counterpoint. While the call center worker has to
6 maintain the strict protocols of international customer service work by speaking
7 professionally and with a correct regional accent, the call center driver is encour-
8 aged to treat public, national laws as a nuisance. They are thereby asked by compa-
9 nies to downgrade the discourse of the “public good,” elevating corporate interests
10 above them. The dismantling of the “license Raj,” the ongoing act of liberalization
11 that “opened” India to corporate interests and reduced their legal impediments, is
12 here enacted through the dangerous practices of call center drivers.

13 In the wake of the call center worker murder discussed above and others in
14 Bangalore and Noida (Patel 2010; Nadeem 2011), the call center worker-driver
15 dyad moved to the center of disciplinary attention. Paradoxically, one of the many
16 reactions to the murders of call center workers by their drivers was to strengthen
17 a link between the two. A director of security for a call center told me that the
18 killings were unconscionable, but the problem was that drivers and female workers
19 were getting too comfortable with one another. They came from the same commu-
20 nities, he claimed, and would naturally start talking. It was inappropriate, he went
21 on, for drivers and workers to fraternize, because “men could take advantage.” He
22 had decided therefore that in his firm the same driver should not drive the same
23 passengers repeatedly.

24 This intervention conceptualizes the driver and the female call center worker
25 as similar across the scene of violence. In the moment they are separated out as
26 male aggressor and female victim they are also reconstituted as members of the
27 “same community,” meaning of similar caste background. This similarity sepa-
28 rates call center workers from other people in the IT industry, like programmers,
29 who are almost always from high-caste and upper-middle-class families (Amrute
30 2014; Fuller and Narasimhan 2007). The facilities manager’s read of the situation
31 suggests that the newness of the call center car is that it is throwing together men
32 and women whose sexuality should be policed by the bonds of socially sanc-
33 tioned unions. The car figures here as an intimate space away from proper parental
34 authority, where the routine of pickups and drop-offs allows bonds of sociality
35 to develop over time. Though I do not have the data to test whether victims and
36 perpetrators were indeed from the same community, posing the problem of rape
37 in this way implies policing women’s bodies to rein in men’s sexuality. In this nar-
38

1 rative, men’s desire is portrayed as a natural urge, while the problem becomes one
2 of channeling such desires appropriately, toward the correct women in the correct
3 settings (Das 1996: 2418).

4 After the rape and murder case in Pune, Pune police issued a list of suggestions
5 for female riders. Call centers across the city began issuing these guidelines to all
6 female employees on hiring. I, too, was handed a sheet by the director of security
7 called “Safety Awareness among the Female Employees,” given to all women call
8 center employees in the firm I was studying. According to the bullet points on
9 this sheet, I was directed to (1) have at least two to three speed-dialing numbers
10 stored in my mobile phone; (2) avoid/restrict usage of mobile while traveling and
11 be alert / monitor the traveling route; (3) only be dropped off at the proper place;
12 (4) if I was the first person picked up, not board the cab without the presence of
13 an escort during odd hours; (5) not ask for a lift from unknown cabs/persons; (6)
14 not ask for drop-off/pickup directly from a vendor supervisor / driver without
15 interacting with the transport department; (7) avoid personal interaction with a
16 driver/supervisor; (8) escalate [send up the chain of supervisors] any issue related
17 to a driver’s behavior/misconduct in a timely manner (even though not of a seri-
18 ous nature); and (9) not discuss/share personal matters with a driver or with fellow
19 passengers while in the cab.

20 In such advisory documents, the female passenger as much as, if not more so
21 than, the male driver is being taught how to behave in the space of the car. Women
22 are told that the car is not private in the sense that it is not a space of domesticity;
23 it is not a place to discuss private matters. The car is construed in the list like the
24 public space of a bus, in which the female passenger needs to be on guard from
25 unwanted male attention. The privatization of transportation is accomplished by
26 absorbing lower-class men into the space of the car, where they are ambiguous
27 figures that internalize the public space of the street in the private vehicle.

28 According to the staff of vendor firms (companies to which work is subcon-
29 tracted), drivers had to follow certain rules if they were to remain employed.
30 They had to wear uniforms and keep their cars clean. They were forbidden from
31 decorating the inside or outside of their cars. According to the vendor manager I
32 spoke with, it was important that they had a neat and clean appearance at all times
33 and practiced good hygiene. They were also trained in manners and etiquette.
34 Drivers needed to get out of the car at each stop and open the door for passengers,
35 saying “good evening, ma’am,” and close the door after the passenger got in. They
36 were also forbidden from engaging in unnecessary conversation with passengers.
37 Finally, every week, the fleet manager held a meeting with drivers to discuss any
38 problems that had arisen.

1 Training in etiquette, hygiene, and appearance, “techniques of the body,” use
2 comportment to instill in drivers a professional attitude toward their work and
3 toward the passengers (Mauss 1973). These bodily practices rely on a long history
4 of training the body to internalize discipline (Foucault 1995, 2007). Important
5 here is the strict bar placed between driver and passenger, a factor that is stressed
6 for both drivers and call center workers. The disciplining of call center worker
7 and driver mirror each other, with the call center employee being instructed in
8 discretion and the driver in respectful distance. Together, they suggest that both
9 the female employee and the male service worker need to be trained in how to be
10 exemplary citizens of postliberalization India. The aftermath of such cases as the
11 call center rape and murder is the consolidation of this dyad as in need of training.

12 Distributed management—such as that practiced through outsourcing driving
13 to vendor companies—offers a kind of organization that can adjust rapidly to
14 industry needs and removes responsibility for worker well-being from the com-
15 pany’s hands. The subject herself is responsible for safety, risk, and conduct, while
16 “dangerous” subjects’ behavior is managed, not reformed. In drivers’ free time, it
17 is accepted that they will do what they want (within limits), and the solution is to
18 disassociate them from the company. This way of organizing service labor recuses
19 corporations from being responsible for the molding of working-class bodies as
20 good subject-citizens of the state. As long as they are performing their work prop-
21 erly, they can be left to flourish or to exhaust themselves on their own (Povinelli
22 2011). The nested outsourcing of labor interpolates drivers in contemporary India
23 as dangerous subjects who at once are within and beyond state and corporate con-
24 trol. The scaffolding of hierarchies in the new economy supports control that need
25 only be asserted in certain spaces that belong to the corporation (Deleuze 1992),
26 while responsibility for time outside of work is uncaptured.

27 28 **Distanced Bodies**

29 The ambiguous position of drivers on the edge of the private intensified in the
30 wake of call center violence. After assaults on female call center workers by their
31 drivers, the industry further reorganized to distance drivers from call centers by
32 outsourcing driver functions. Many companies stopped running their own fleets
33 of cars. Instead, drivers were organized by intermediary businesses. One such
34 business I visited that was typical for this operation was a travel company that
35 organized trips within India and also rented cars. Another, nonvisible side of this
36 business consisted in running a call center driving service.

37 I interviewed the manager of the travel agency in his air-conditioned back
38

1 office, where he outlined how the call center driver industry had changed to mini-
2 mize damage to firms. First, he told me, call centers began using intermediaries
3 like him to organize the drivers. He was responsible for recruiting drivers, mak-
4 ing sure that they ran on time, and making sure that they behaved properly with
5 the passengers. By “outsourcing” drivers, high-profile companies could distance
6 themselves from driving, reduce exposure to accidents and crime, and minimize
7 responsibility for driver behavior. The manager indicated that having cars owned
8 by third parties was also a means to distance call centers and travel agencies
9 from the actions of the drivers. Before the rape in Pune, travel agencies used to
10 operate their own fleet of cars, but now the drivers organize cars themselves. The
11 driver fleet operators contracted directly with drivers, who had to find their own
12 third-party car owner and make an off-the-books transaction with them. When
13 I asked the manager who these third-party operators might be, he indicated that
14 underworld (mafia) money might be involved, saying that the rumor is that local
15 dons bought fleets of cars and arranged deals with drivers as a means to launder
16 money. Finally, he told me, because the industry does not want to be associated
17 with these drivers in off-hours, travel agencies and call centers do not want their
18 cars with their attendant labels and stickers to be in the hands of drivers. As the
19 manager put it, “We cannot control the actions and movements of the drivers when
20 they are not on call, where they go or park the cars.”

21 Taken together, these measures reorganized the driver-firm relationship in
22 the direction of increased distance. They carried the outsourcing model to the
23 service industry; operations were outsourced that were seen as peripheral to the
24 main business of a firm or as a potential liability to a series of firms, from soft-
25 ware companies to travel agencies. This development suggests diffused oversight,
26 where drivers are controlled by a chain of intermediaries rather than by the firms
27 themselves. At the same time, in this model of driver control, latitude is given to
28 the activities of drivers after work. Rather than try to create drivers who will be
29 disciplined at all times, diffused oversight makes certain that drivers are “docile
30 bodies” while at work but “distanced bodies” during their off-hours. The sugges-
31 tion of mob presence in buying call center cars connotes two kinds of illegality. It
32 hints that drivers already operate in shadowy worlds that have no place in the call
33 center industry. It also suggests that there is something vaguely criminal in the
34 company’s attempts to eschew moral and legal responsibility. At the same time,
35 and as an indicator of how the IT economy operates in practice, it betrays the reli-
36 ance of these globally reputed industries on a large infrastructure of only partially
37 accounted-for free-floating money and labor. Criminality is enfolded into normal
38 business practice as a way of distancing the company from liability. The injunc-

1 tion to remove decoration on cars and anonymize them speaks to the imperative
2 to represent companies as clear, efficient, and modern. In the manager's opinion,
3 car sanitization also creates distance between a firm and the activities taking place
4 in the cars of off-duty drivers by "unbranding" the vehicle. The effect is a ghostly
5 presence of clean, unmarked four-door sedans on an otherwise dusty and cacoph-
6 onous streetscape, ironically highlighting rather than hiding the call center car.

7 The unadorned call center car presents a distinct contrast to the tradition of
8 vehicular art in South Asia. The brightly painted slogans, devotional messages,
9 in-vehicle shrines, and lights that adorn buses, trucks, taxis, and rickshaws across
10 the subcontinent "constitute a network of unauthorized or semi-authorized spatial
11 insertions" in the Indian streetscape (Chattopadhyay 2009: 121). Vehicular art
12 closes the distance between middle classes and lower classes by giving voice to
13 a lower-class presence in public through a shared vocabulary of slogans, icons,
14 and images (ibid.: 129). The sanitized call center car suggests the erasure of the
15 visible politics of lower-class agitation from liberalized spaces. The unadorned
16 car aligns the roadway with the concerns of private business as corporate persons
17 with a right to infrastructural domination. It sits alongside demands for roadways,
18 water, and electricity that IT companies make on the municipalities of IT hubs like
19 Bangalore. These demands counteract the road as a shared communicative space,
20 where competing claims to the public jostle against one another.

21 **The Sacrifice at the Border: A Reworked Violent Masculinity**

22 In the politics of call center work, and in the mobile infrastructure of the private
23 vehicle that underwrites economic liberalization in India, women and men are
24 linked through their economic roles, and their gender is coconstructed in ways
25 that cut against established class identities. As the previous section argued, class
26 mobility and infrastructural mobility are collapsed such that women are class
27 mobile but rely on men to be spatially mobile. The distinctions of class mingle
28 with the production of gender distinctions to assign men and women of the
29 same class backgrounds opposite roles in industry (Roychowdhury 2013). While
30 women answer phones and perform other "pink-collar" service work, men drive
31 and work in building maintenance and operations (for similar cases, see Wright
32 2006; Freeman 2000).

33 Several authors writing about urban, rural, and periurban populations across
34 India have noted the repertoires of masculinity that have emerged in the wake
35 of market liberalization. These forms of masculinity both respond to the disen-
36 franchisement of lower-class men and enable the growth of economies that rely
37
38

1 on large cadres of informal workers who fill in the gaps in public service even
2 while they cut costs in private enterprise. Lower-class masculinities are articu-
3 lated in opposition to the performance of femininity and, often, in competition
4 with upper-class and upper-caste masculinity. Vinay Gidwani and K. Sivaramak-
5 rishnan (2003: 193), for instance, detail how Dalits and tribals (their term) reject
6 their historically servile position through alternative employment and through
7 forms of consumption that were previously only attainable by upper-caste groups.
8 In the agricultural cotton fields of South India, Priti Ramamurthy notes, boys
9 do night work and are also given a portion of their earnings as pocket money,
10 while girls work during the day and are expected to have their earnings fully
11 absorbed into the household economy. These two moves both “police girls’ sexu-
12 ality because they are not allowed to go ‘roaming around’ at night” and help
13 reproduce a masculine ideology of personal consumption and occupation of pub-
14 lic spaces (Ramamurthy 2004: 761). For these young men, masculinity defined
15 through consumption sits alongside masculinity defined by being a breadwinner
16 (Osella and Osella 2006), two forms of being masculine that Ritty Lukose’s (2009)
17 lower-caste informants also struggle with as they make the transition from college
18 life to adulthood. Meanwhile, Thomas Blom Hansen’s study of the Hindu nation-
19 alist Shiv Sena party in Mumbai in the 1990s details the rise of a hypermasculin-
20 ity that simultaneously exaggerates and boasts of physical prowess, command of
21 public space, and ritualized violence. For Hansen, this violence is performative.
22 It creates a martial Hindu male identity by being retaliatory, spectacular, popular,
23 and purifying (Hansen 2001: 65).

24 Elements of a consumerist, performative, public, and oppositional masculin-
25 ity present themselves in the violence of the moving rape. The twinning of the
26 lower-class male driver and the upwardly mobile female worker enacts a “failed”
27 masculinity that is recuperated through the violence of rape that makes of a wom-
28 an’s body an object of consumption while it codes masculinity through sexual
29 violence. This violence redraws “unambiguous” boundaries between powerful
30 perpetrators and their victims. Added to these tropes of masculinity is another
31 one—the violent masculinity of the patrolling border guard. The car driver as
32 border guard is another way that class-specific masculinity is being revisited,
33 urbanized, and dispersed. The border guard represents the ambiguous incorpora-
34 tion of necessary violence in the policing and protecting of the private spaces of
35 neoliberal accumulation.

36 I have argued that private company and government responses to the case of
37 call center rapes target those in the undefined spaces of liberalized India. Nei-
38 ther elite subjects driving development nor needy subjects receiving development,

1 these workers are an uneasy necessity in contemporary Indian economies (Batt,
2 Murty, and Ramamurthy 2010: 128–29; Roy 2007). The disciplinary practices
3 discussed in this article suggest that they are being interpolated as modulated sub-
4 jects, capable of adhering to tightly controlled work practices but still remaining
5 beyond the ethical compass of the middle class. At the same time, such workers
6 are disciplined not as separable subjects but as those that exist by definition in an
7 unequal dyad with call center workers representing the middle class more gener-
8 ally. This points to a mode of power that while it erects clear boundaries for the
9 purpose of disciplining bodies, blurs boundaries for the sake of efficient utility.
10 This blurring, however, leads not to mobility across jobs but rather to the prolifera-
11 tion of spaces and times of overlap, which then in turn are subject to appropriation.
12 Within this relationship the historical legacy of watchmen has been renewed to
13 shape lower-class men as the guards of middle-class privacy. In the new India, the
14 proliferation of border guards is palpable. At every office park, there is a guard's
15 station; at every shopping mall, uniforms patrol its arcades; in every gated com-
16 munity, there is a watchman. The violence of rape is linked to a history of protec-
17 tion and its counterpart, the threat of violent appropriation. In the current moment,
18 historically specific forms of violence as protection are made into a generalized
19 and anonymous practice.

20 The figure of the border guard as a marker of caste distinction has a long his-
21 tory. The *vatan* (a hereditary right to land) in some cases demanded the ritual
22 sacrifice of a Dalit and the burial of the body at the borders of a village, an initial
23 sacrifice that endowed Dalit communities simultaneously with rights to land and
24 title and kept them in unremunerated service to the villages, the government, and
25 upper castes (Rao 2009: 257–59). These hereditary rights were also granted to the
26 so-called criminal castes and tribes, who established contracts with agricultural-
27 ists to guard their lands, according to Anand Pandian's account of *kavalkaran*
28 (protection). The authority of such watchmen was predicated on their ability to be
29 violent (Pandian 2009: 80). Finally, as in Anjali Arondekar's (2009) account of
30 precolonial and colonial sexual politics, such rights were also granted to *hijras* (a
31 third sex) as representatives of kingly power at the edges of the social order. The
32 *ves* (village border) marked these spaces as sites where the integrity of the inside
33 space of the village was maintained through the border guard, a figure endowed
34 with virility, policing the social while existing on its borders, at once organized
35 within and threatening to violently upend the social order.

36 The driver, office guard, and shopping mall security officer are heirs to the
37 complicated politics of the border. Such border figures exemplify what Rey
38 Chow (2006: 144) calls “the unavoidability and universality of violence, [which]

1 ironically implies a basic, incontrovertible evenness and equality among human
2 beings.” The founding of the border figure in violence and the possibility of the
3 violence of such figures are, according to Chow’s logic, two sides of the coin of
4 sacrificial violence that can sacrifice a figure in order to enforce social order and
5 can authorize violence as a leveler of social difference. Though Chow presents
6 a universalist reading of the meaning of violence, the dispersion of violence in
7 postliberalization India suggests a more historicized reading of the same.

8 Bundled together with the robust use of the guard is the long history of violent
9 appropriation as an assertion of lower-caste and lower-class agency. That is, the
10 figure of the watchman is both liminal and on the outside of the social order and
11 guarantees that order through the use of violence as protection. The implied vio-
12 lence of protection has also historically been used by lower-caste and other mar-
13 ginal subjects to assert, appropriate, and maintain authority, however fragile and
14 compromised. Yet the historical particularity of the liberalizing moment inclines
15 toward erasing the politics of class and caste in sexual violence and framing it as
16 the singular urges of savage individuals.¹⁰ As Veena Das (2008) argues, there is an
17 acceptance of violence enabled by the rhetoric of women needing “protection” and
18 needing to police their own dress and behavior and of rapists and men who move
19 against the norms of male civility. Within an extended politics of the border, driv-
20 ers and guards bring together lower-class, lower-caste subjects and middle-class
21 men, framing male savagery as the necessary guarantor of male civility. Longer
22 histories of violence, such as those embodied by the history of the watchman,
23 may be reenergized and put in the service of the many unfolding projects of lib-
24 eralization. The figure of the border guard comes to inhabit and haunt the clean,
25 air-conditioned, indeed sanitized spaces of contemporary India.

27 **Conclusion: Public Liberalization**

28 Liberalization is at once a renegotiation of terms of state protection for lower
29 classes and the reinstatement of the private as demanding social protection and
30 maintenance—often by the very public it has otherwise abandoned. Those sub-
31

32
33
34 10. Mackie 2009 offers a comparative, eighteenth-century case, where the twinned figures of
35 the highwayman and the gentleman both reinforced each other and allowed for the continuation of
36 violence and the violation of women’s rights and bodies as a reservoir of male identity. For a useful
37 review of Mackie 2009, see also Rosenthal 2012. For a discussion of necessarily dangerous indi-
38 viduals, see Foucault 1979. Although Foucault begins his discussion of pathology and the law with
a case of rape, he does not explore the specifically gendered dimensions of the crime as part of the
apparatus of judicial disbelief that he tracks.

1 jects who are ambiguously placed within a liberalized economy are configured as
2 in need of retraining, accomplished through management that acts at a distance
3 (Galloway 2010: 87). Both the female call center worker who can claim partial
4 membership in the middle class despite lower class and caste background (Patel
5 2010) and the male driver who is moved from being the domestic and public fig-
6 ure of authority over such women to being the border guards of their new lifestyle
7 need to be taught how to behave according to these new protocols.

8 Lower-class male subjects are meant to mark transition points between local
9 and global imaginaries and defend the middle classes' right to private space. In the
10 informal zones of labor organized through progressive rounds of outsourcing and
11 subcontracting, these border figures are not fixed members of a hierarchy—for
12 example, like the driver of a police superintendent who has a fixed position in
13 an established order of things—but are temporally rather than socially bounded
14 to their subordinate roles. The drivers make sure that the economy runs on time,
15 while the guards make sure that the shopping malls remain exclusive. These fig-
16 ures are neither the “have-nots” nor the “haves” of liberalization but guarantee
17 the privacy of the latter.

18 The court cases and calls for capital punishment in the aftermath of the Delhi
19 case have largely replayed discourses of male savagery and male civility through
20 which perpetrators are framed as “social savage[s]” who must be tamed (Das 1996:
21 2418). Similarly, despite the educational and situational characteristics (accompa-
22 nied, at a “decent” hour) that protect the virtuousness of the victim, the discourse
23 of the good and bad women continues to circulate: to date, the lawyers for the
24 defense claim that the cause of the Delhi rape was that the unmarried couple
25 was on the street at night, making the victim fall outside the circle of “respected
26 ladies” (MacAskill 2013). Continuing protests move the discourse away from vir-
27 tue and protection and toward the interrogation of systematic prejudice in the legal
28 and justice system. If they are to retain their radical edge, they must continue to
29 simultaneously let go of the rhetoric of the dangerous or victimized women and
30 begin to question the legitimacy of a middle-class privacy encircled by those who
31 guard it but do not partake of it—except in the form of violent appropriation.

32 Meanwhile, the response from the IT industry has been to provide guidelines
33 and tools of management to modulate the behavior of drivers. The goal of these
34 companies is to manage and minimize risk to their reputation and to the safety of
35 employees. One chief operating officer I interviewed suggested providing female
36 workers with the technological setup to work at home as a solution to violence in
37 public space. Such a solution would enfold women in patriarchal domestic space
38 through a technocratic rationale that sidesteps women's rights.

1 These contradictions point out the need to delineate more clearly the changes
2 wrought by liberalization beyond the dismantling of state protections in favor of
3 private regulation, especially in places where the protection of the state was never
4 extended in practice to all citizens. Though this article does not take the Delhi
5 protests and similar national protests as its object of study, it is in keeping with
6 the spirit of their politics. I offer these final thoughts not as a diagnosis of a “sick”
7 society with an entrenched “rape culture” (Baxi 2014) but as an examination of
8 the ongoing contradictions of postliberalization, which produce violence that is
9 socially productive (Appadurai 1998) and protests that are socially transformative.
10 In the interplay of privacy as the space of domestic intimacy and privatization as
11 freedom from government interference, the lower-class man and upwardly mobile
12 woman emerge as linked figures marking the limits of, as well as conditions of
13 possibility for, India’s liberalization.

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