Preface and Acknowledgements

My interest in studying cities began in my MPhil years at the University of Hyderabad, and for my work I chose to look at the representations of the city I know best: Calcutta. It was at that point convenient for me to work on familiar things. Growing up in the city, I was not conscious of its quintessential Bengali-ness or unselfconscious linguistic parochialism till I moved out. Most people I met in Hyderabad had written off the city as decaying and half-dead, and I must confess it was an emotional response to choose to go back to Calcutta and continue working on Calcutta.

Through this research I have attempted to show the plurality of the city of Calcutta, and though in my work I have examined many different forms, my ultimate text is the city itself. My own personal narratives and landscapes of memory have created a palimpsest with layers of “objective” analyses of texts in the following pages, and in the course of my research, I have come to understand and appreciate this complex and multi-layered city a little better.

A dissertation often gives the impression of being a sole researcher’s labour, but it never is. The present work has gained immensely from support and contributions from several people.

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