

SALMAN RUSHDIE:
A CRITICAL STUDY OF HIS NOVELS

THESIS

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PREMA ANGELA ROCHA

823.914
ROC/Sal

Guide

DR. K. S. BHAT

(Head, Dept. of English, Goa University)

T-462,

Co-Guide

DR. NINA CALDEIRA

(Reader, Dept. of English, Goa University)

GOA UNIVERSITY
TALEIGAO PLATEAU

JULY 2008

Certified that all the suggestions of the
referees have been incorporated in the thesis.
Date: 24/8/2010
Signature: [Handwritten Signature] 24/8/2010

DECLARATION

I, Ms. Prema Angela Rocha, hereby declare that this thesis entitled **Salman Rushdie: A Critical Study of His Novels** is the outcome of my own research undertaken under the guidance of Dr. K.S. Bhat, Head, Department of English, Goa University. All the sources used in the course of this work have been duly acknowledged in the thesis. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other University.



Prema A. Rocha

Date: 28. 07. 2008

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the thesis entitled **Salman Rushdie: A Critical Study of His Novels**, submitted by Ms. Prema Angela Rocha for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, has been completed under my guidance. The thesis is a record of the research work conducted by the candidate during the period of her study and has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this or any other University.



Dr. K.S. Bhat
Research Guide
Head, Dept. of English
Goa University
Date: 28. 07. 2008

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Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy.

- Salman Rushdie (Imaginary Homelands 15)

I

Of Imaginary Homelands: Introduction

“‘We are. We are here.’ And we are not willing to be excluded from any part of our heritage.”

-Salman Rushdie (*Imaginary Homelands* 15)

This study aims at coming to grips with Salman Rushdie’s engagement with the history, politics and identity of the Indian subcontinent, from his distinct location of a postcolonial migrant writer drawing culturally from multiple spaces, even as he belongs to none completely. A close textual examination of Rushdie’s major fictional work has been undertaken in order to expound how a selection of thematic and structural patterns can be traced in the corpus of his major fiction, namely *Midnight’s Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001) and *Shalimar the Clown* (2005). The study attempts to chronicle the development of the writer *vis-à-vis* a critical examination of these six novels. *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008), Rushdie’s latest major work of fiction was published as this study was nearing completion. It thus enabled the inclusion of examples into the discussion herein. A study of Rushdie cannot ignore his linguistic ebullience. Therefore, it takes into account the manner in which he reinvigorates narrative and the English language. The central thesis can be summarised and situated thus: Rushdie’s *oeuvre* engages with the history, politics and identity of the Indian subcontinent shaped by the perspective of a migrant postcolonial. The study also takes into consideration his remarkable contribution to narrative and language.

The experience of being uprooted fascinates Rushdie, and his fiction is informed, enriched and contextualised by his experience of displacement as well as exile. Despite the density and complexity of his work, certain ideas and

preoccupations clearly resonate through his corpus of writing. The focus of the study is to scrutinise the recurrent concerns articulated in Rushdie's major novels which are largely shaped by a diasporic consciousness. The texts lend themselves to the postulation that Rushdie's novels are interconnected on a thematic and formal plane. Interestingly, his work seems to have kept pace with his geographical dislocation. The locales of his texts reflect his physical and geographical dislocation from India to England to America. However, he has repeatedly harked back to the imagined Indian homeland while negotiating a postmodern narrative mode and mindscape. Rushdie draws upon the Indian experience in his narratives. His work gives expression to the broad cultural, historical, religious and political experiences of the Indian subcontinent in the main.

Rushdie's non-fictional essays indisputably and explicitly serve as an annotation to his concerns and can be considered his fictional manifesto. Most of the essays collected in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981- 1991* and *Step Across This Line* a collection of articles from 1992 to 2002, deliberate upon a range of issues including his particular location as an expatriate writer. The essays provide a valuable reading aide to his work. Hence, the opinions expressed in his non-fiction, interviews and other literary work merit due attention and have been taken into account where deemed relevant.

The tenor of this study endeavours to remain analytical rather than accusative or defensive towards the writer. It has mainly analysed the predominant concerns revealed in his fiction, and the design and evolution of his writing. The postcolonial, postmodern context has provided a theoretical referent for the study. Rushdie's narrative strategies are also closely examined in the postmodern, postcolonial space in which he writes. Nevertheless, this study is not a reductive reading. It does not

attempt to circumscribe Rushdie in a particular mould, for, with a writer like Rushdie who has constantly defied precincts, not only would such a task be confining, it would be virtually impossible. The French critic Guy Astic lays stress on examining Rushdie's work as a whole. As he puts it, this Indo-British writer "is not an individual defined by a single work, nor is he just the face of a fatwa".¹ The present attempt to critically analyse the novels of Rushdie is an endeavour in this direction.

Midnight's Ancestry and Progeny

India has had an extremely rich tradition of story telling, a testament to which is its mythology, folklore and umpteen languages and cultures. But prose fiction as we practise it, is basically a legacy of the West. It was Macaulay's infamous "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) that led to the introduction of education in English by the British. As a result, Indians naturally began to try their hand at writing in English. Indo-Anglian fiction as it is frequently referred to, has a fairly young history dating back to about two hundred years. In the course of this span and particularly in the last few decades, it has established its presence in the international arena. From its early modest beginnings, Indian English fiction (the most popular component of Indian English literature) has come a long way, winning almost every significant literary award in recent years. Indian English fiction incorporates literature written originally in English by authors of Indian ancestry, nationality or birth and hence it is also associated with members of the Indian diaspora. It took a host of writers to beat new paths for themselves and those to follow. To understand the course Indian English fiction has taken, it is necessary to look at the gamut of work by Indian writers in English.

The early foundations can be traced in the political writing of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Aurobindo, Mohandas Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Rabindranath Tagore's work leading to his receipt of the Nobel Prize in 1913. As in the shadowy beginnings of any genre, the beginnings of Indian fiction in English are cloaked in a certain amount of obscurity. Among the early Indian writers who published fiction in English, those that merit mention are Kylash Chunder Dutt's *A Journal of 48 Hours of the Year 1945* (1835), his cousin Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *Republic of Orissa: Annals from the Pages of the Twentieth Century* (1845) and Panchkouree Khan's *The Revelations of an Orderly* (1849).

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) enjoys the distinction of being regarded as the first published novel in English by an Indian. Therein, an emerging India seeks to find its voice in an alien language. Krupabai Sathianadhan, credited as the female pioneering counterpart has contributions like *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) and *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1895).

A desire for social reform characterised the Indian Renaissance of the nineteenth century. Consequently, issues of the day like social evils, the status of women and lower castes informed the plots of these early novels including Lal Behari Dey's *Govinda Samanta* (1874), Shevantibai Nikambe's *Ratanbai: A High-Caste Child-Wife* (1895), B.R. Rajam Iyer's incomplete work *True Greatness*, and A. Madhaviah's *Thillai Govindan* (1916).

M.K. Naik observes that many of these early novels are based on the historical romance or religious life, with some of it being manifestly autobiographical.² Attempts at the historical romance include Mirza Murad Ali Beg's *Lahun, the Beragun, or, The Battle of Paniput: A Legend of Hindoostan* (1884), Jogendra Singh's

Nur Jahan: The Romance of an Indian Queen (1909), Romesh Chunder Dutt's *The Slave Girl of Agra: An Indian Historical Romance* (1909), Svarna Kumari Ghosal's, *The Fatal Garland* (1915), and A. Madhaviah's *Clarinda* (1915). The autobiographical element can be traced in Toru Dutt's *Bianca* (1876), in addition to Madhaviah's *Thillai Govindan* and Nikambe's *Ratanbai*. M.K. Naik opines that the world described in these novels is a simple one with virtue and vice meriting just rewards. He also notes an inclination towards "authorial intrusion"³ into the narrative. The general consensus is that the writing of this period is largely nondescript. *Rajmohan's Wife* is perhaps the only novel that could be credited with some experimentation in terms of employment of Indian words, though at this stage they are limited to names of objects.

The 1930s witnessed a change in the scenario, with Indian writers trying to find their own voice and making a considerable contribution to the novel. Perhaps, the inspiration for this blossoming can be traced to the high pitch that nationalistic fervour had reached. The triumvirate comprising Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao were the pioneers who "established the suppositions, the manner, the idiom, the concept of character, and the nature of the themes which were to give the Indian novel its particular distinctiveness".⁴ The amelioration of society, the tribulations of the freedom struggle, the woes of the lower classes, the caste system and other such noteworthy themes now entered the arena of fiction.

A politically committed writer, Mulk Raj Anand's realism is stark. His passionate concerns include rural India, bleak poverty and the prison of caste. Prominent among his novels are *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) and *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953). *Untouchable* (1935) is acknowledged as Anand's finest novel. It is hailed for its

experimentation in terms of technique and the confident use of Hindi and Punjabi idiom. It encapsulates events of a single day, precipitated by a toilet cleaner from the untouchable class inadvertently touching a person from a higher class.

Located in the eponymous microcosm of Malgudi, the famous Malgudi novels of R.K. Narayan began with *Swami and Friends* (1935). His literary output has been prolific. Autobiographical content forms a significant part of some of his novels. Narayan's writing is marked by his keen perception of the Indian ethos and simplicity of language. His endearing characters are mainly simple folk in a changing world. Narayan's delicately etched world makes an impression on the reader in terms of its completeness. His focus on moral concerns has universal scope. As William Walsh puts it, "Malgudi is an image of India and a metaphor of everywhere else".⁵ A recipient of numerous awards, his admirers included Somerset Maugham and Graham Greene. Narayan's work has been criticised for his easy-going outlook on life. However, he holds sway as a doyen of the Indian English novel.

Raja Rao's *oeuvre* is imbued with the spiritual depth of Indian culture and centres on the inner evolution of his protagonists. He is best known for *Kanthapura* (1938). This Gandhian novel draws its strength from its typically Indian narrative rhythms and its Indian sensibility. It captures the pulse of Indian life and nationalism of the time as the plot concentrates upon the inhabitants of a rigidly casteist village that rallied to Gandhi's clarion call. *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) has been extolled as a striking contemplation on the *raison d'être* of existence. It is a search for spiritual truth.

With the end of the freedom struggle, the partition of India and Pakistan, the merger of the princely states into the Indian Union and the wars with Pakistan and China; a review of the freedom struggle and taking stock of the east-west encounter

were grist to the mill of the Indian novelist. The 'big three' - Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao honed the Indian English novel in the course of their rich output. Madhusudan Prasad is inclined to believe however, that the new novelists have a definite advantage in terms of sensibility and technique.⁶

G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) has been hailed as a masterpiece of the post-independence era. Regarded as one of the finest examples of literature in English, it has merited comparison with James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Rich in terms of theme and technique, it is the autobiography of a Eurasian eccentric called Hatterr and chronicles his quest to comprehend the meaning of life. A fine blend of Eastern and Western narrative forms, the novel expresses itself in verbal pyrotechnics incorporating Shakespearean archaisms, slang, legal jargon and references from the Hindu pantheon. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* will later draw inspiration from this significant novel.

In his masterpiece *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951), the anglophile Nirad Chaudhuri cynically appraises an India without the crown. Bhabhani Bhattacharya's novels including *So Many Hungers* (1948) are applauded for their irony and perceptive social commentary with themes revolving around history and societal problems of an emerging India

Train to Pakistan (1956), one of the most powerful evocations of the partition, is Khushwant Singh's claim to novelistic fame. The novel is replete with symbolism and satire. Set in the peaceful fictional village of Mano Majra, it perceptively captures the trauma of the Muslims and Sikhs who are forced to cast their lot with either Pakistan or India. Writers who have explored the theme of Partition in their respective work include Attia Hosain, Balchandra Rajan, Chaman Nahal, Raj Gill and Manohar Malgonkar.

Manohar Malgonkar is a novelist with a proclivity for historical and social themes. The pre-independence and post-independence years form the backdrop to his novels. Some of his important works include *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princes* (1963) and *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964).

Nayantara Sahgal was one of the first female Indian English writers to receive wide recognition. As a niece of Jawaharlal Nehru and daughter of Vijayalaxmi Pandit, perhaps it is not surprising that the themes of her novels are drawn from the history, politics and modern social problems of India. Her sharp social critiques examine the response of the elite to the crises that accompany political change. *Rich Like Us* (1985) looks back at the Emergency period, while the days of the British rule occupy centre stage in *Plans for Departure* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988).

The women novelists of the post-independence period seem to be concerned with the social arena. Born in Germany, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala immigrated to Britain, and is presently a citizen of the United States. She lived in India for twenty-four years after her marriage to a Parsi. Much of her work – including early novels like *To Whom She Will* (1955) and the Booker winning *Heat and Dust* (1975) centres around ironic depictions of the urban Indian middle class and the clash between Eastern and Western ways of life.

Hailing from Mysore, Kamala Markandaya moved to England after India's independence. Her novels deliberate upon the culture clash between rural and urban India and chart a changing social milieu. Her maiden venture *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955) was a runaway success and signalled a copious literary output of which *Pleasure City* (1982) marked the close. Her skill lies in the sensitive relationships and the strong individuality of her characters. Uma Parameshwaran the Indo-Canadian academic, regards Kamala Markandaya as one of the inaugurators of the diasporic tradition. She

reckons that *The Nowhere Man* (1972) is Markandaya's best work, prefiguring diasporic issues that are relevant today.⁷

Some single novels by lesser known women novelists that merit mention include Venu Chitale's *In Transit* (1950), Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli* (1977), Zeenuth Futehally's *Zohra* (1951), Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) and Perin Bharucha's *Fire Worshippers* (1968).

The fiction that follows seems to open itself up in thematic terms. Hailed as an author of rare sensitivity, Arun Joshi's novels like *The Foreigner* (1968) articulate the alienation of the post-independence Indian trapped between the Indian past and the Western influence. The issue of sex steps out of its conventional taboo and receives forthright treatment in Sasthi Brata's *She and He* (1973), K.M. Trishanku's *Onion Peel* (1973), Kamala Das' *Alphabet of Lust* (1976) and Vikram Kapur's *The Traumatic Bite* (1978). Saros Cowasjee makes an attempt at black humour in *Goodbye to Elsa* (1975).

In the post-independence period the Indian English novel seemed to stagnate. Josna Rege notes that the inspiration of the nationalist movement which had initially captured its imagination had dulled into a sort of tired social realism. She feels that the Indian English literary scenario of the seventies and eighties "was in the doldrums" with most of the novels of the period content with mechanical formulas of nation building or critique. According to Rege, most of the novels of this period seem caught between polarities of the self or the nation, allegiance or treachery, modernity or convention. She finds this "conceptually limiting and artistically stultifying".⁸ These novels had little to offer in terms of content or form. For the first fifty years of the Indian novel in English, novelists tended to depend on standard British English as the linguistic paradigm. Exceptions to the norm were few and far between.

1981 was to witness an unprecedented literary phenomenon in the form of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. It broke through the existing literary impasse. The work was greeted as a *tour de force* within the country as well as internationally. *The New York Review of Books* acclaimed the text as one of the most significant to emerge from "the English-speaking world in this generation",⁹ while the *New York Times* hailed Rushdie as an author to welcome to "world company", with a book to be received "on its own terms". "The literary map of India" it gushed, "is about to be redrawn . . . *Midnight's Children* sounds like a continent finding its voice."¹⁰

With *Midnight's Children* Rushdie ushered in a new literary era and revolutionised Indian writing in English. As Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Pier Paulo Piciucco put it:

The imaginative re-working of Indian history in a culturally hybrid environment, the innovative use of literary techniques...together with a supreme command of the English language and a genius for story telling modeled on the hoary Indian narrative traditions and cultural practices, had established *Midnight's Children* as a trend-setter and classic for all times.¹¹

Meenakshi Mukherjee who had the opportunity to read *Midnight's Children* prior to publication states unequivocally that even way back then it seemed to her "a landmark novel, attempting in dangerously adventurous manner to stretch the possibilities of narrative fiction in general and of what could be done with Indian material in the English language in particular". The confidence Rushdie displayed in coming to grips with the indefinable teeming reality of the subcontinent, the dexterity with which he handled the linguistic challenge and the energy of his prose was contagious. Mukherjee concedes that his precedent did galvanise the Indian English

literary vista, leading to a surge of new novels that has not yet declined.¹² The scope of the modern novels extends to embrace a global canvas. Born into a new post-colonial world, the later novelists handle English with a newfound confidence and absence of reserve that stems from the shedding of “colonial baggage”.¹³

Rushdie’s singular contribution lay in his giving the entity of independent India a new voice. *Midnight’s Children* was the embodiment of hybridity, a bricolage, drawing inspiration from magic realism of South America, the narrative innovations of Günter Grass, Gabriel García Márquez, Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, G.V. Desani and Charles Dickens among others, and infusing them with the energy and polyphony of the subcontinent. Rushdie made a stylistic statement. Timothy Brennan feels that much of the acclamation that greeted the book in India was motivated by its contribution in carving out a space for the Indo-English imagination on the global map.¹⁴ Klaus Börner views it as a “Copernican turning-point in the history of literature and of ideas”,¹⁵ transfiguring Western attitudes towards India and her literature. Such reactions are largely reflective of the international reception to the novel. Rushdie’s irreverence towards public figures, novelistic conventions and the English language, led to a creation beyond the imagination of the Empire. While there are those who were annoyed at what they deemed an inflated response to the novel, the sway of *Midnight’s Children* even so many years later is difficult to deny.

Rushdie followed up *Midnight’s Children* with other confident and bold works of fiction. However, *Midnight’s Children* enjoys the distinction of inspiring an entire generation of creative writers, while also opening up publishing opportunities both within the country and abroad. In addition, there has been a renewed interest in Indian writing in English. Harish Trivedi concedes that the dramatic renaissance of the

Indian novel in English which initiated nothing short of what he terms a “literary stampede” has to be credited to Rushdie.¹⁶

The literary upsurge initiated in the eighties has not yet abated. With Rushdie initiating the process, writers have added new dimensions to Indian writing. They have adopted a range of modes, diverse voices as well as techniques of postmodernist fiction to give expression to the complexities of contemporary experience. Numerous writers including Shashi Tharoor and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have acknowledged their debt to Rushdie in shaping their work. There are, of course, those like Rohinton Mistry and Vikram Seth who work along the conventions of classic realism, whose work is not influenced by Rushdie’s self-conscious magic-realist texts. Nonetheless, it remains a fact that Rushdie did forge new directions for writers and had a far-reaching influence. Chelva Kanaganayakam is convinced about Rushdie’s formidable sway enough to make the assertion that despite all the exceptions that exist, the writers of the present-day are in fact “midnight’s grandchildren”.¹⁷

The Indian Diaspora found opportunities in the fantastic mythical context that were part of everyday conversations in India. After *Midnight’s Children*, the first of the new crop of novels began with Amitav Ghosh who responded enthusiastically to the opportunities created by Rushdie. *The Circle of Reason* (1986) is written in the magic realist mode. *The Shadow Lines* (1988) remains a striking achievement among other works including *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and *Sea of Poppies* (2008). Ghosh’s fiction is associated with a thematic intensity and an exploration of postcolonial realities.

Following Rushdie’s precedent, novelists like Tharoor have successfully experimented with reworking genres from the Indian literary tradition. Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* made 1989 memorable. Therein, Tharoor frames a narrative of

political personages and events in modern India against that of the *Mahabharata*, to weave a brilliant satire. Like Allan Sealy's *Hero: A Fable* (1990), Tharoor's *Show Business* (1994) taps into the genre of Hindi film.

Vikram Seth's magnum opus *A Suitable Boy* (1993) - running into a colossal thirteen hundred odd pages - is a socially realistic novel that has been deemed one of the most popular epic narratives of the late twentieth century. His first work *The Golden Gate* (1986) is a satirical romance composed entirely in six hundred and ninety rhyming tetrameter sonnets.

Josna Rege is of the view that Rushdie's example enabled new writers from the minority communities like the Parsis and Anglo-Indians to "tell their own stories as Indian stories".¹⁸ Allan Sealy uses the traditional Indian form of the nama (epic) to give expression to the Anglo-Indian minority in *The Trotter-Nama: A Chronicle* (1988). *The Everest Hotel: A Calendar* (1998) gained him an international following after being short-listed for the Booker Prize. Rohinton Mistry is perhaps the finest Parsi voice among the writers of this ethnic group. He explores the Parsi world and diverse facets of Indian socio-economic life. Born in Bombay, he migrated to Canada in 1975. He has authored three novels - *Such A Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), and *Family Matters* (2002) - all of which made it to the short-list for the Booker Prize. The expatriate writer Boman Desai also evokes the Parsi community at large in his novels like *Memory of Elephants* (1988) and *Servant, Master, Mistress* (2005).

From her maiden novel *Cry, the Peacock* (1963) to *The Zigzag Way* (2004), Anita Desai's literary output has been profuse. Her work is noted for its psychologically astute observations. She engages with issues like the strains inherent in family life, the pressures of middle-class women torn between personal needs and

those of an Indian society in the throes of change. The Booker Prize that eluded Anita Desai thrice was bagged by her daughter Kiran Desai for *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) which deliberates upon multiculturalism.

Bharati Mukherji mediates the cross cultural experience and turns the spotlight on the immigrant and American identity in the course of her novels which comprise *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Jasmine* (1989) and *The Tree Bride* (2004). Amit Chaudhuri has received approbation for his novels *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991), *Afternoon Raag* (1993) and *Freedom Song* (1998).

Suniti Namjoshi played a major role in employing magic realism. *The Conversations of Cow* (1985), *The Mothers of Mayakiip* (1989), *St. Sumiti and the Dragon* (1994) are experimental in terms of narrative. The zenith of experimentation among her work is *Building Babel* (1997) which presages the form modern fiction may assume in the face of the technological revolution.

Meena Alexander is a prominent voice from Allahabad, presently living in Manhattan. Her novels explore the impact of migration and the identity of those who cross borders. Some of her best work includes *Nampalli Road* (1991), *The Shock of Arrival* (1996) and *Manhattan Music* (1997). Tabish Khair, an immigrant in Denmark, has to his credit *An Angel in Pyjamas* (1996). His latest publication is *Filming: A Love Story* (2007). Vikram Chandra divides his time between Mumbai and California. His first novel *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) shot him to fame, his latest publication being *Sacred Games* (2006).

As is obvious, many of the abovementioned writers do not live in India. It is interesting to note that this resurgence of Indian writing and recognition in terms of awards is associated with the diaspora to a very large extent with the probable exception of Arundhati Roy. The term "Immigrant Indian writers" or "diasporic

Indian writers” is getting increasingly inadequate to describe the distinct sensibilities that exist. Such blanket terms fail to take note of the various distinctions in world view and preoccupation between emigrant Indians like Raja Rao, Nirad Chaudhari, Sasthi Brata, Amitav Ghosh, Kamala Markandaya, Amit Chaudhari, Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai and the like; the Indian-born Canadian citizen who spends much of her time in England - Suniti Nam Joshi; naturalised Americans like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Bharati Mukherjee who resist the Asian-American hyphenation; the Kenyan-born, British educated Indian writer G.V. Desani; people of Indian origin like the Canadian-American Shauna Singh Baldwin or the English-born American writer Jhumpa Lahiri; Pico Iyer who was born in England to Indian parents, lived in America, and currently resides in Japan; the Trinidadian-born, British writer of Indo-Trinidadian descent, V. S. Naipaul, and the British-Indian novelist Hari Kunzru. Categorising them has its own complexities. Many of them make regular visits to India and regard themselves as hyphenated Indians. On the other hand there are those who would rather cling to an un-hyphenated status. They declare their preference for the land in which they chose to live and express discomfort with being labelled ‘Indian writers in English’.

Though the debates around Indian writing in English are not within the purview of this study, they need to be taken note of. It is felt that Indian writing in English is privileged at the cost of its regional counterparts. The essence of this debate finds expression in the views of Rushdie and Amit Chaudhari. Rushdie’s controversial introduction to *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing (1947-1997)* brashly states that the prose writing of that period by Indians writing in English “is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what is being produced in the 16 ‘official languages’ of India”.¹⁹ He suggests that Indo-Anglian literature is perhaps

the most valuable Indian contribution to the literary world. *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature*, a meticulous anthology by Amit Chaudhari was a riposte of sorts to the former. While it is true that Indian writing in English has been thriving, the power of regional writing cannot be gainsaid. In addition, this writing occupies a slightly different space.

Indian writers in English have been accused of trying to pander to a Western readership with an eye on the prestigious awards and the phenomenal monetary sums that accompany them. It is felt that these writers are complicit with a cosmopolitan elitism which encourages a literature that caters to the privileged classes in India or an international audience without. An elitist trend has also been pointed out since many writers of this ilk have been educated at the exclusive Doon School (Dehra Dun) and St. Stephen's (Delhi) before venturing abroad. John Mee agrees that these novelists hail from a rather narrow class band, but adds that their social and economic privilege has had its role to play in "the creation of a cultural space in which to rewrite the language of the coloniser".²⁰

Regarding charges surrounding authenticity and depth of this work, it may be stated that many of these writers consider their dislocation an enabling feature. Great writing after all, has little to do with one's place of residence and a lot of good literature gets written away from the homeland. *Ulysses* for instance was written in Italy not Ireland, and Edward Said lived in America as does the Australian writer Peter Carey. Rushdie and Arundhati Roy refused to italicise or provide a glossary to the words from Indian languages used in their work. The writers of the diaspora have been dismissed by some critics as a media phenomenon. For instance, M. Prabha's book *The Waffle of the Toffs* assimilates the various prejudices against Indian writing in English. Developments in publishing of work in English and sophisticated

marketing networks have given the growth of Indian English novelists a fillip. Nonetheless, the sheer magnitude and sway of this writing simply cannot be ignored.

Since the arrival of a post-independence generation that thinks, speaks and writes in English, there have been numerous promising debuts. The boom shows no sign of abating. Mittapalli and Piciucco are of the opinion that the global visibility of our literature is also determined by the fact that postcolonial studies the world over have been according Indian writing in English a central position in debates. They credit an ingenious group of Indian critical theorists like Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Aijaz Ahmed and Harish Trivedi for their opening up of new frontiers to the critical debate concerning Indian writing in English and for valuable critical perspectives.²¹ While it is true that Indian writing in English is thriving like never before, one needs to keep a discerning eye open for the true merit of a work in the midst of the marketing blitz and the hype.

The Indian writers in English within India have unfortunately been less successful in making themselves heard with the possible exception of Arundhati Roy. The literary output of the new generation of writers from India expanding the literary horizon includes Namita Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984) which in terms of its candour is credited with forging the way for the kind of genre that is Shobha Dé's claim to novelistic fame. Gita Hariharan's *A Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) and *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994) are literary experiments in reworking folk tales and childrens' tales. Others that deserve mention include Jai Nimbkar's *Come Rain* (1993), Esther David's *The Walled City* (1997), Sagarika Ghose's *The Gin Drinkers* (2000) and Shama Futehally's critically acclaimed *Tara Lane* (1993).

The scientist Jayant Narlikar has been regarded as a pioneer of the genre of science fiction with *The Return of Vaman* (1989) and *The Message from Aristarchus* (1992).

Other worthy additions include Mukul Kesavan's *Looking Through Glass* (1994), Rukun Advani's *Beethoven among the Cows* (1994), Kiran Nagarkar's *Ravan and Eddie* (1995), *The Narrator* (1995) by Makarand Paranjape, Ranjit Lal's *The Crow Chronicles* (1996) and Indrajit Hazra's *The Burnt Forehead of Max Saul* (2000).

The trio Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao wrote well into their nineties. The last two decades of the twentieth century saw the publication of Mulk Raj Anand's swansong *The Bubble* (1984), the fourth and final book of his autobiographical project. Narayan went on to publish *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1986), *The World of Nagraj* (1990) and *A Grandmother's Tale* (1994). Raja Rao's contribution *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988) seems reminiscent of his previous masterpiece *The Serpent and the Rope*. *The Chessmaster* is the first book of his intended trilogy, two of which are scheduled for posthumous publication (following his death in 2006).

Among the writers who began their careers post-independence, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh and K.A. Abbas have continued to write sporadically. However, they have not managed to outdo their previous work. Arun Joshi's *The City and the River* (1994) published posthumously, is a significant allegory of the Emergency period of 1975. Another ambitious attempt is Chaman Nahal's trilogy *The Crown and the Loincloth* (1981), *The Salt of Life* (1990) and *The Triumph of the Tricolour* (1993) which traces the period of Indian history three decades prior to independence.

Rushdie's model pointed how writers could be satiric or ambivalent in their attitude towards the nation. Hailed as the classic Indian coming-of-age novel, Upamanyu Chatterji's *English August: An Indian Story* (1988) offers a sardonic comment on the world of bureaucracy. The sequel to the novel, *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* (2000) is not as triumphant as its predecessor. His latest novel, *Weight Loss* (2006) is a dark comedy.

Nalinaksha Bhattacharya's *A Fistful of Desire* (1997) deserves mention. Anurag Mathur's *The Inscrutable Americans* (1991) that broke publishing records in India, invigorates the theme of the East-West encounter. Among the political novels are P.V. Narasimha Rao's *The Insider* (1998), *Gestures* (1986) by H.S. Bhabra, and Joydeep Roy-Bhattacharya's *The Gabriel Club* (1998). Historical fiction has attracted a few more proponents. Sudhir Kakar's *The Ascetic of Desire* (1998) has Vatsyayana the author of the *Kamasutra* for a hero. Kiran Nagarkar attempts to narrate the tale of Mirabai in *Cuckold* (1997) as does Ratnakar Rau in his novels *Govind* (1996) and *Govind, Shivaji's Warrior* (1997). Eric Prabhakar's *Madeira at Sundown: A Raj Trilogy* (1990) is set in colonial times. Mandeep Rai's *In the Shadow of the Pines* (1996) looks at the personal life of Lord Dalhousie. Gustap Irani's *Once Upon a Raj* (1992) has been commended for bringing a freshness to the historical theme with an innovative approach.

Shashi Deshpande is one of the outstanding women novelists. The dominant theme of her work is a woman's quest for self realisation in the midst of obstacles like social convention. Her noteworthy contributions revolve around the plight of women. *That Long Silence* (1989) has been acclaimed as her best work among novels like *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (1999) and *Moving On* (2004).

Nina Sibal's *Yatra* (1987) draws inspiration from *Midnight's Children*. Her protagonist Krishna, who has magical skin, is modelled on Saleem Sinai. Magic realism similarly impels the plot of Rani Dharkar's *The Virgin Syndrome* (1997) and Radhika Jha's *Smell* (1999).

Kerala's contribution in terms of novels by women has been notable. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) won her major international and commercial success with the award of the Booker Prize. The novel incorporates words from Malayalam. Her arresting narrative technique, locale, characterisation and plot engaged in a deliberation of themes ranging from a critique of social tradition that curbs individual freedom, to the strains of childhood. Suma Josson's *Circumferences* (1994), muses over the issue of expecting a woman to get married and bear children, above building a career. *A Video, a Fridge and a Bride* (1995) considers the anxieties that come with expectations of dowry. Lakshmi Kannan's *Going Home* (1999) takes a look at women's rights in relation to ancestral property.

In retrospect, it is clear that Indian fiction in English took its time to arrive. English had played a significant part in the writing of early nineteenth-century social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, through the age of nationalists like Gandhi and Nehru in the following century. India's literary giants of international repute were those like the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore who had not written originally in English. It was in Bengali, Hindi and Urdu that the Indian novel first developed in India. The work of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan earned the Indian novel in English a fair degree of attention. Undoubtedly popular in India, they did not find it as easy to establish themselves on the international literary scene. The second generation novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar and Arun Joshi remained rather obscure inspite of some work of merit. It is the third generation of

versatile writers however, who revitalised the Indian novel in English in the 1980s. They primarily deserve credit for the central position it is ascribed. It is rather difficult to trace a clear line of influence in Indo-Anglian writing until Rushdie appeared on the scene. While it cannot be denied that there were writers of great merit on the scene prior to Rushdie, to give Rushdie his due, it must be pointed out that *Midnight's Children* "broke out of a certain stagnation of both form and content" that had characterised the Indian English novel of the previous decades.²² *Midnight's Children* inspired a generation of writers and initiated the visibility Indian writing in English enjoys. It gave expression to a post-colonial context in a new exuberant form and voice that was embedded in the Indian tradition of story telling, while at the same time multicultural and sophisticated. The Indian novel in English gained tremendous impetus in terms of conceptual complexity and stylistic experimentation in the post-Rushdie era, making a salutary contribution to global literature.

John Mee opines that the renaissance brought about in Indian writing in English as a result of *Midnight's Children* has been perceptible in numerous ways: the manifestation of a "postmodern playfulness, the turn to history, a new exuberance of language, the reinvention of allegory, the sexual frankness, even the prominent references to Bollywood", all of these seem indebted to Rushdie.²³ While it may seem presumptuous to ascribe credit to a single intervention, Rushdie's impact in galvanising Indian writing in English has been acknowledged by critics and novelists alike. Perhaps it would be apt to consider John Mee's acknowledgement that in heralding a new era of Indian writing in English, Rushdie seemed more a "sign of the times than their creator".²⁴ Indeed, the story of the Indian novel in English is reflective of a changing India and the extensive impact of global changes on cultural productions. Meenakshi Mukherjee also sounds a note of caution about ascribing too

much to the influence of a single book while at the same time drawing attention to Rajendra Yadav's statement:

When we look back at the point where history takes a turn, we usually find an event, a movement or a person who/which embodies the pressures generated by the impact of time and the forces of society ... Sometimes, if we look carefully, we might even find a book.²⁵

Mukherjee concurs that *Midnight's Children* can well be considered an aspirant for that position in the context of Indian fiction in English.

Contexts and Texts

An endeavour to study the concerns of Rushdie's work cannot ignore the eclectic heritage that goes into giving his work its distinctive attributes. One of the prominent exponents of postcolonial fiction, Rushdie foregrounds the hyphenated experience of immigrants from former colonies who occupy a space in between manifold cultural traditions. Rushdie is associated with four countries: India, Pakistan, England and the USA where he currently resides. He hails from a context that is itself a complex blend of hybridized influences. His quintessential status and perception as a migrant postcolonial informs his work which draws upon eclectic sources as he straddles various cultural spaces and writes in a variety of genres from fiction to travel narrative, film documentary and critique, children's fable, journalistic exposé and political feature.

Salman Rushdie was born on 19th June 1947. His father Anis Ahmed was a Cambridge educated businessman and his mother Negin Butt Rushdie a teacher at Aligarh in North India. The family moved to Bombay from Kashmir before the birth of Rushdie. Despite being committed Muslims they were liberal in outlook. Rushdie

unequivocally declares that although he hails from a Muslim family background, he was not raised as a “believer”, but in an atmosphere of “secular humanism”.²⁶ Born into this well-off middle class family Salman and his three sisters grew up speaking Urdu, and were encouraged to converse in English at home. He studied at a mission school called Cathedral and John Connon Boys’ High School. The Rushdies chose not to relocate to officially Muslim Pakistan in the aftermath of the partition of India.

Rushdie recalls the film *The Wizard of Oz* which he watched in the Metro cinema in Bombay at the age of ten, as his very first literary inspiration. As stated in his various essays and interviews; the Bombay film industry, American cinema, comic books like *Superman* and *Batman*, *The Arabian Nights*, Enid Blyton were part of his initial literary stimuli. “A book is a kind of passport,” he states in an essay, and among the works that opened doors for him, range *The Film Sense* by Sergei Eisenstein, *The Crow* poems of Ted Hughes, Jorge Luis Borges’s *Fictions*, Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, *Rhinoceros* by Eugene Ionesco and Günter Grass’s *The Tin Drum*.²⁷ The literary legacy that he acknowledges includes Lewis Carroll, Dante Alighieri, Giovanni Boccaccio, James Joyce, Bertolt Brecht, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Italo Calvino, Miguel de Cervantes, Nikolai Gogol, Franz Kafka and Herman Melville.²⁸ In an essay called “Influence”, Rushdie has professed his debt to Italian literature and cinema, the genius of Dickens, the Roman classics and G.V. Desani’s *All About H. Hatterr*.

Rushdie envisages the realm of the imagination not so much as a continent as an ocean for as he puts it, “of influence and creative stimulation there can really be no end”.²⁹ It is an eclectic heritage that inspires and is transmuted through his work. It comprises Indian oral convention, epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, folklore, myth, legend, international cinema, popular culture and Islamic tradition.

At the age of thirteen Salman was sent to Rugby, a well-known English public school where his encounter with racism and rejection by schoolmates marks it as an unhappy chapter.

The Rushdies migrated to Pakistan in 1962 leaving behind an India that was increasingly becoming uncongenial to Muslims. At the time, Salman was studying in England. On hearing about the sale of Windsor Villa the family home in Bombay, Rushdie says “I felt an abyss open beneath my feet ... I’m sure that if he hadn’t [sold it] I would still be living in it”.³⁰ Rushdie’s choice of home now becomes an issue for concern – a choice between England and Pakistan. His father wanted him to study at Cambridge.

Subsequently, Rushdie read history from 1965-1968 at King’s College. He regarded the study of history as a stroke of good fortune since it left him free to pick the books of his choice. The course on Arabic and Islamic civilization in his final year had to be cancelled due to only five students having registered. But Rushdie’s resolve was not to be shaken and he turned out to be the only student of the course. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke views in this persistence “a basic sense of cultural identity”, since the course had little value in the competitive Western society of the time.³¹ This episode foreshadows a radical Rushdie who will often choose the path less trodden. The anti-establishment spirit prevalent in the 1960s did not leave him untouched. Rushdie was involved in London’s counter-culture. He was involved in theatre but did not write for the undergraduate magazines nor did he participate in student union debates. Though a bright student he was not considered a methodical one.

On his return to Pakistan, Rushdie was not inclined towards the towel business his father had embarked upon. He tried to produce Edward Albee’s *The Zoo Story* for

Pakistan's television service, but found the censorship there oppressive. London provided better opportunities for his ambitions as a writer.

Rushdie dabbled with advertising for ten years as a freelance copywriter for *Ogilvy and Mather* and *Ayer Barker* while he pursued writing fiction part-time. In 1975 Liz Calder, an editor at *Victor Gollancz* informed Rushdie of the science-fiction competition Gollancz had announced in order to discover new talent. Rushdie submitted *Grimus* (1975). This was his maiden novel to be published. Although Rushdie did not win and *Grimus* was poorly received, Liz Calder had the confidence to steer *Midnight's Children* into print.

Grimus tells the tale of an immortal American Indian who embarks upon an odyssey to find the meaning of life. The work springs from a twelfth century Sufi narrative poem *Conference of the Birds* which deals with the quest of the bird realm for a ruler. Among the mythical characters in the book is the ruler Simurg, a bird that is the repository of age old wisdom. The leader of the questing flock selects the thirty birds to make the arduous journey, at the end of which, they are unified with their creator. Rushdie's *Grimus* is an anagram of Simurg literally meaning 'thirty birds'. If the plot is reminiscent of Dante in its quest of ascending an island mountain for a miraculous rose, the intellectual temper recalls Kafka.

Grimus is divided into three parts. The first part tells the tale of Flapping Eagle - the immortal hero of the novel inexplicably appearing on Calf Island. He hopes to regain his mortality in this land ruled by Grimus. Flapping Eagle is unusual from the beginning. He is in search of Bird-Dog his sister, who has vanished after giving him the elixir of life. In the second part of the book, with Virgil Jones as his guide, Flapping eagle and Virgil Jones climb Calf Mountain, overcoming numerous impediments on their journey. In the final part, Flapping Eagle understands the reason

behind the existence of Calf Island. He finds his sister, the mysterious Grimus, the stone rose that has made possible existence on Calf Island, and gradually discovers himself. The end of the novel finds the island being obliterated.

A science-fiction based hybrid of religious myth and literary pastiche, *Grimus* blends the simplicity of folktale with the complexity of a questioning philosophical novel. Despite the fact that *Grimus* was dismissed largely on account of the lack of a marked geographical and historical context, critics did take notice of Rushdie as a promising literary talent. *Grimus* has been viewed as a preview to theoretical and stylistic preoccupations that were to be handled with greater maturity in Rushdie's subsequent work. These include notions of mysterious parentage, displacement and exile, unstable personal and national identity, the colonial legacy, a preview of Rushdie's precarious attitude towards female sexuality and cultural hybridity. According to Timothy Brennan, the aspiration of the mission in *Grimus* is "a transcendent vision of heterogeneity".³² Catherine Cundy sees this as a major pursuit in Rushdie's work. She agrees with the critical consensus that views *Grimus* as a "test-run" for the influential novels to come.³³

If *Grimus* is Rushdie's experiment, the zenith of sophistication in terms of a fine amalgamation of cultural strands and narrative forms is reached in *Midnight's Children* (1981). In 1976 Rushdie visited India to celebrate the publication of *Grimus*. He feels that this was when *Midnight's Children* was inspired: "when I realized how much I wanted to restore the past to myself, not in the faded greys of old family-album snapshots, but whole, in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolor".³⁴

The widely acclaimed *Midnight's Children* won Rushdie the Booker Prize for fiction on three occasions. Besides winning the Booker in the year of its publication, it was adjudged the "Booker of Bookers" in 1993, for the best novel to have won the

Booker Prize for Fiction in the twenty-five year history of the award. The novel was pronounced the “Best of Booker” yet again in 2008 for the best novel in the last forty years of the award. It has received numerous other accolades. *Midnight's Children* catapulted Rushdie to eminence and put the Indo-English novel on the world literary map. The response to the book was overwhelmingly that of a significant literary event.

With epic sweep, *Midnight's Children* attempts to chart the lives of three generations of the Sinai family. The life of Saleem Sinai the protagonist and narrator, is a metaphor for his country. The children of the book's title are all born in the course of the midnight of India's independence. As the two most powerful of the children of midnight the conflictual relationship between Shiva and Saleem bring to the fore the issues each of them represent. The novel is intensely political, interweaving the course of Indian democracy in the wake of its numerous challenges and drawing attention to the Emergency of the seventies. The novel problematises received versions of history, revels in politics, and draws heavily from aspects of Indian popular culture, memory and myth. It has been regarded as “the quintessential fictional embodiment of the postmodern celebration of de-centring and hybridity”.³⁵

Catherine Cundy is of the opinion that *Midnight's Children* anticipates *Shame* (1983) in terms of “its level of engagement with the realities of political life and in particular the abuses attendant on the assumption of dictatorial power”.³⁶ More concise, less effusive and less optimistic than *Midnight's Children*, this well-crafted novel is a darker work. *Shame* recalls historical events and the dynamics of power politics in Pakistan through the prism of a family drama involving Iskander Harappa (based on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) and his antagonist Raza Hyder (modelled on General Zia-ul-Haq the military dictator). The novel was banned in Pakistan. The mode of the

novel is intensely self-reflexive with the narrator constantly intruding the narrative. Like his counterpart Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, Omar Khayyam Shakil has an unidentified English father. The motif of paternal confusion is thus recalled. The novel won the Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger - Best Foreign Book and was a close runner-up for the Booker Prize.

Rushdie had paid a visit to Nicaragua in 1986 to attend the seventh anniversary celebrations of the Nicaraguan revolution in Esteli, Nicaragua. A travelogue *The Jaguar Smile* (1987) resulted from the trip.

In acknowledgement of his debt to Günter Grass, Rushdie has said: "This is what Grass' great novel [*The Tin Drum*] said to me in its drumbeats: ... Dispense with safety nets....Argue with the world".³⁷ *The Satanic Verses* (1988) created a furore that was unprecedented in the history of literature. Its ramifications went beyond the literary realm provoking powerful emotions on the global arena. Rushdie's problematic relationship with Islam lies at the core of the issue. Islam played a minimal role in his life. He admits that he lost his faith at the age of fifteen.³⁸ This conflictual relationship culminated in his interrogation of the 'grand-narrative' of Islam in his controversial book. The novel was short listed for the Booker Prize and bagged the Whitbread Award for Best Novel. It even won the German Author of the Year. However, its literary merit was overshadowed by the international furore amongst Muslims for its unfavourable depiction of the prophet Mohammed and its fictional reworking of an episode from Islamic history. There were demonstrations by Islamist groups in various countries. The novel was publicly burnt in Bradford. India was the first of many countries to ban the book. In addition to the censorships, riots, mass protests, shaky diplomatic relations, deaths, attacks and murder of some translators of the novel, Ayatollah Khomeini, the Iranian religious leader declared the

infamous fatwa on Rushdie on 14th February 1989. The writer was condemned for blasphemy and a bounty of 1.5 million pounds was offered for his death. Rushdie was thus forced into hiding for almost a decade under the protection of the British government.

The Satanic Verses highlights the exploits of two Indians - Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, who spectacularly fall to earth in Britain when their Air India jet explodes. The former is a famous Hindi movie star who has pursued the woman he loves to England while the latter is an Indian who is embarrassed by his Indian heritage and is obsessed with acculturation into the English mainstream. On arrival in Britain, the two begin to metamorphose. While Gibreel assumes a kind of halo evocative of his namesake, the angel Gabriel; Saladin Chamcha (colloquially meaning sycophant) sprouts horns and hooves, attributes of the devil. However, in the course of the work the anglophile Saladin reconciles and embraces his Indianness, while Gibreel ends up confused. His paranoid schizophrenic state drives him to suicide. Rushdie introduces the discussion of Islam within the paradigm of the dreams that Gibreel experiences subsequent to his metamorphosis. *The Satanic Verses* is an ambitious novel about hybrid identities. It is a cutting satire of racism and migration in the U.K., as well as a compelling exploration of good and evil, religious faith and fanatical belief.

In 1990 Rushdie published an essay "In Good Faith" to conciliate his critics. He issued an apology in which he seemingly reaffirmed his respect for Islam. However, Iranian clerics did not revoke their death threat. The impact of the Rushdie affair continues to endure. After the death of Khomeini, the Iranian Government publicly committed itself in 1998 not to carry out the death sentence against Rushdie. This was agreed to in the context of a larger agreement between Iran and the U.K. to

normalise relations. Rushdie subsequently emerged from his enforced exile. Some believe that the fatwa died with the Ayatollah, but fundamentalist Islamic groups have continued to renew the fatwa and the reward amount.

Rushdie continued to write. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) is a paean to the power of narrative. It narrates the exploits of Haroun Khalifa and his father Rashid in Gup and Chup. They are in quest of Rashid's flair for spinning stories which seems to have gone missing. Haroun is mesmerised by the stories his father narrates. On the other hand, Saroya, Rashid's wife feels neglected in the wake of his obsession for stories. This prompts her to run off with Mr. Sengupta. Her elopement in turn motivates the journey to the Valley of K in the dual pursuit of mother and talent. Thus the characters enter into the palimpsest story-world of Kahani. Rushdie has asserted that the film *The Wizard of Oz* helped him most in finding the right voice for the work. Haroun's companions are clearly evocative of Dorothy's friends.³⁹ In the course of what reads as a simple fable, its appeal not restricted to any particular age group, Rushdie makes some pertinent points on reading fiction and the role of the author. *Haroun* won the Writers' Guild Award for Best Children's Book, and Rushdie adapted it for the stage.

There followed a book of essays entitled *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (1991). An extremely readable collection of Rushdie's musings on a varied range of topics, the book provides valuable insights into Rushdie's world and imagination. The issues Rushdie brings to the anvil include that of migrancy, identity, exile, literature, cinema, racism in Britain, Islam, politics, literary figures including his contemporaries and the inspiration behind his writing.

The British Film Institute launched a publishing programme in 1992 to showcase British film classics. It encourages fresh approaches to contemporary film

criticism and critiques of some remarkable efforts in the history of film. The institute has subsequently been publishing titles annually in batches of four. The idea of homecoming in the MGM classic *The Wizard of Oz* has always had a special reverberation for Rushdie. He acknowledges the tremendous impact the film had on him since he was a child: "When I first saw *The Wizard of Oz* it made a writer of me".⁴⁰ Rushdie's critical assessment *The Wizard of Oz* (1992) was among the first British Film Institute Film Classics to be published. He considers *The Wizard of Oz* as a creation whose scope eluded its own creators. The magic that resulted went beyond the intentions of all involved in putting together the film.

East, West (1994) is a book of short stories. In the first section called "East" Rushdie deals with stories set in the East. The second section "West" centres around tales from the West, and the concluding section is an intermingling of both the East and the West. Each section consists of three stories.

The Moor's Last Sigh (1995) tells the history of the wealthy Zogoiby family through the story of Moraes Zogoiby, a young man from Bombay descended from Sultan Muhammad XI, the last Muslim ruler of Andalucía. With a focus on contemporary India and Moorish Spain, the novel explores a Bombay very different from that of *Midnight's Children*. It is a Bombay that flags its Portuguese links and bring to the focus characters from the Jewish-Christian minorities of South India. It is also a Bombay in which communalism and fundamentalism sometimes reach a dangerous pitch. Some Hindus in India were enraged by the parody of Bal Thackeray the leader of the Hindu right wing party the Shiv Sena, but the Supreme Court warded off attempts to ban the book.

The protagonist Moraes Zogoiby is a *mélange* of Catholic, Jewish, Arabic/Spanish and contemporary Indian influences. The concept of the palimpsest is

exploited by Rushdie as a paradigm of the notion of hybridity. The narrative strategies in *The Moor's Last Sigh* are reminiscent of those deployed in *Midnight's Children*. Catherine Cundy observes that *The Moor's Last Sigh* is the first book Rushdie has written using the computer. She feels this may be instrumental in giving his verbal facility even greater impetus.⁴¹ *The Moor's Last Sigh* made it to the short list for the Booker Prize. It was also the recipient of the Whitbread Novel Award and won Rushdie the British Book Award's Author of the Year.

Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing 1947-1997 (co-edited with Elizabeth West) (1997) was published to mark fifty years of India's independence. It is a compendium of thirty-two selections from fiction and non fiction. Excerpts from novels, memoirs, speeches and stories constitute this anthology.

Situated in a world of pop music, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) re-works the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in the context of modern popular music. The analogy is between the Ormus Cama-Vina Apsara and the Orpheus-Eurydice pair. Set in Bombay, England and America, the novel traces the story of Ormus and Vina's love story and the phenomenal success of their rock band VTO. Vina, the hugely popular singer is literally swallowed by a devastating earthquake. The novel charts their story and that of the narrator Rai who is Ormus' childhood friend and Vina's secret part-time lover. The book is peopled with larger than life characters, figures from popular culture, twins who can communicate telepathically from beyond the grave, skeletons from peoples' past and a materialistic society. Its canvas is the globalised world. Rushdie himself has stated: "This book is not a novel about rock'n'roll, but an attempt to respond to the evolution of world culture in the last half-century".⁴²

Rushdie's *Fury* (2001) is set in New York at the beginning of this millennium. Malik Solanka, an Indian born fifty-five year old former professor at King's College Cambridge, tries to find a new life in New York City. As his wife and son lay asleep in their London home one night, Malik found himself poised over his wife with a knife. His murderous rage frightens him into escaping to New York. Subsequently, he lives alone in a richly appointed Manhattan apartment at the opening of the novel. He has created an animated philosophising doll, Little Brain, which has its own successful TV series. In New York he has blackouts and violent rages and becomes involved with two women: Mila, who looks like Little Brain, and a beautiful freedom fighter named Neela Mahendra. The themes of exile, metamorphosis, rootlessness, migrancy, angst and loneliness find their way into the novel.

Step Across This Line (2003) is a collection of non-fiction from 1992-2002. Most of the essays were written under the threat of the fatwa. They explore a range of topical issues including Rushdie's reactions as well as those of the media and various governments, to what Rushdie calls his "unfunny Valentine" – the pronouncement of the fatwa on St. Valentine's Day.

Shalimar the Clown (2005) also had the distinction of being short listed for the Booker. It was the recipient of the Crossword Fiction Award in India and a finalist for the Whitbread Award in Britain. With epic sweep the narrative moves from California to Kashmir and from Nazi-occupied Europe to the contemporary world threatened by terrorism. It tells the tale of two Kashmiri villages whose inhabitants gradually get caught up in communal violence. The reader is introduced to the daughter of a Hindu pandit, the dancer Boonyi Kaul, and her childhood sweetheart Shalimar the clown, son of a Muslim theater troupe leader. Their passion culminates in a marriage solemnised by both Hindu and Muslim rites that are part of a secular Kashmiri society

living in a state of harmonious coexistence. The triangle to this love story comes in the form of Maximilian Ophuls, a charismatic former U.S. ambassador to India. Boonyi's life changes when she is smitten by Max Ophuls during her dance performance for him. Ophuls reciprocates her affections. Boonyi chooses to escape from her husband Shalimar and a seemingly unpromising future, by eloping with Max. The result is Shalimar's initiation into the terrorist league. The book opens in Los Angeles in 1991. Max Ophuls is found murdered in broad daylight on the doorstep of India, his and Boonyi's illegitimate daughter. The murderer is none other than the cuckolded Shalimar the Clown, Max's chauffeur. The drama parallels events unravelling in a troubled Kashmir. Intensely political and historically informed, the novel captures the pulse of our global era as it interweaves lives and countries.

Rushdie's latest work *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) is a testament to the nature and transformative power of narrative. The sixteenth-century Renaissance era frames the novel. The Mughal era of Emperor Akbar is conjured up alongside the Renaissance Italy of Niccolo Machiavelli. The writer makes the assertion that the Florentine city may have been distant from the Mughal capital geographically, but they were not so very different in actuality. An Indo-Italian makes his way into the palace of Emperor Akbar with the claim that he is Akbar's uncle, and also the bearer of a letter from Queen Elizabeth of England. He relates his intriguing tale. History and legend blend with Italian epic and stories from the subcontinent. In the course of this romance the author deliberates upon larger themes of nation, love, death, politics, power and religion. Emperor Akbar is a liberal man with a syncretic outlook. He interrogates dogma, reflecting for instance upon whether mankind has created God in its own image. The work is a blend of history and postmodernist magic realism. Rushdie's style and language rivet as it usually does.

The critical establishment has recognised and honoured Rushdie. He is the recipient of numerous awards and has been knighted in recognition of his contribution to literature. His works take the reader on a provocative journey into the world of contemporary history, literature, politics, culture and philosophy. As an engaged and engaging public intellectual he addresses many of the pressing issues that concern a globalising world. While many writers choose to steer clear of issues that a tumultuous contemporary context grapples with, Rushdie has usually tackled such issues head-on. His outspokenness has come at a cost but he maintains that to him it seems imperative to take sides. His essay "In Good Faith" defends the artist's "freedom to challenge, even to satirise all orthodoxies, including religious orthodoxies".⁴³

It is difficult for a reader of Rushdie to be unaffected by the concerns he brings to the anvil and the eloquence of his prose. He is a challenging read with his sheer alacrity of thought, novelty of expression and his contemporaneity offering an enlightening look at our lives and times.

Critical Reception

As an impressive presence on the world literary scene the response to Rushdie's work has been copious. Rushdie scholarship has been dominated by essays and reviews in academic journals and edited compilations, with very few book-length studies till date. Here is an attempt to offer a brief critical survey of Rushdie criticism.

Among the early critics to contribute to Rushdie studies in the 1980s were Uma Parameshwaran, Maria Couto and Meenakshi Mukherjee. *The Perforated Sheet: Essays in Salman Rushdie's Art* (1988) by Uma Parameshwaran is an introductory study of his early work. It brings together her essays on *Grimus*, *Midnight's Children*

and *Shame*. She makes an attempt to locate Rushdie in the pantheon of other writers in English in India and hails his experimentation with language.

A seminal early work of criticism on Rushdie was Timothy Brennan's *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation* (1989). Brennan foregrounds the notions of nation forming and empire, in reading Rushdie. He considers Rushdie a "Third-World cosmopolitan", an insider to the tribulations of the Third-World, with First-World literary tastes.⁴⁴ He finds Rushdie's fiction distinct from early anti-colonialist writers like Fanon and goes on to credit Rushdie with a novel and distinct variety of "Third World postmodernism" that is grounded in a historico-political context inspite of its parodic garb.⁴⁵

A noteworthy contribution to Rushdie studies came in the form of Catherine Cundy's book *Salman Rushdie* (1996) as part of the *Contemporary World Writers'* series. The book is an invaluable source for the Rushdie scholar. It provides a comprehensive general introduction followed by a discussion of his major works from *Grimus* to *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. It includes a brief assessment of *The Moor's Last Sigh* in the form of a postscript. A study by D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke entitled *Salman Rushdie* (1998) as part of the *Macmillan Modern Novelists* series, is also worthy of mention as a good early study.

Some full-length studies that feature chapters focusing on Rushdie's work comprise Sudha Rai's *Homeless by Choice: Naipaul, Jhabvala, Rushdie and India* (1992). It examines the reality of the exile. Therein, *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are assessed as testaments to Rushdie's expatriate preoccupations. Fawzia Afzal-Khan's study *Cultural Imperialism and the Indo-English Novel: Genre and Ideology in R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, and Salman Rushdie* (1993) concerns itself with the manner in which genre becomes a significant ideological tool

for liberation from imperial hegemonic strictures in the work of the writers under consideration. While the first three authors under discussion are content with combining myth and realism as an appropriate fictive strategy, Afzal-Khan contends that Rushdie's accomplishment lies in his use of generic forms like myth, realism and comic epic only to debunk them.

The issues shared by Paul Scott, V.S. Naipaul and Rushdie assume centre stage in Michael Edward Gorra's *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie* (1997). With regard to style and form the study aligns Rushdie with the likes of Grass, Márquez, Kundera, Calvino, and Thomas Pynchon. In contrast with Naipaul's emphasis on a rationality that can lead to despair, Rushdie's work is viewed as a force for change. *Contemporary Fiction* (2003) by Jago Morrison attempts to understand how the five writers under consideration, including Rushdie, address issues of historical responsibility in an age dominated by scepticism. *Vis-à-vis* an examination of *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie's work is explored in terms of a 'superabundance' of history.

Viney Kirpal, G.R. Taneja and R.K. Dhawan have contributed to the growing number of edited collections in response to Rushdie's work.⁴⁶ A critical examination of the literature of the Indian sub continental diaspora forms the core of *Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* (1992) edited by Emmanuel Nelson. Two of the fourteen chapters therein are devoted to Rushdie. Vijay Lakshmi provides a discussion of the manner in which Rushdie's worldview is shaped by the immigrant psyche and considers the absurdist-fabulist mode of his early work. Anuradha Dingwaney offers a discussion of the means by which Rushdie empowers himself as a writer and constructs the authority to write about the subcontinent.⁴⁷ Emmanuel Nelson applies the paradigm of the diaspora to examine the work of almost sixty

representative writers of the Indian diaspora in *Writers of the Indian Diaspora: A Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (1993). The volume offers relevant biographical, bibliographical and critical information on each writer including Rushdie.

M.D. Fletcher's *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the fiction of Salman Rushdie* (1994) is a significant contribution to Rushdie scholarship. This collection organises primarily previously published articles and some specially commissioned ones under the category of five of Rushdie's novels i.e. *Grimus*, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses* and *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. It includes a comprehensive attempt to assess two or more of Rushdie's novels. This significant tome is brought to a close with an appendix of writings by Rushdie followed by a bibliography of scholarly articles on his work.

Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie (1999) by M. Keith Booker is another valuable tool for the researcher. It mainly brings together previously unpublished original essays, providing an even-handed assessment of the trends in Rushdie studies towards the close of the twentieth century. One half of the essays are categorised in terms of their focus on *Midnight's Children* and the other half of the essays deliberate upon Rushdie's other work up to *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The book takes note of a reversal of critical interest back to *Midnight's Children* in the post *Satanic Verses* period. The essays are principally expressive of the contemporary interest in postcolonial studies and regards Rushdie as complicit with the hegemonic forces of global capitalism, even as he is regarded as an exponent of global liberation.

Midnight's Children: a Book of Readings (2003) edited by Meenakshi Mukherjee is a compilation of ten essays and one interview. These focal essays taken from journals and other publications have been covered in a chronological sequence. Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Joel Kuortti's two volumes: *Salman Rushdie New Critical*

Insights endeavour to bring together some of the critical essays written in the post-*Satanic Verses* controversy period. The eight essays in the first volume and the nine in the second, denote various critical and theoretical approaches to Rushdie. The essays take into account Rushdie's work from *Grimus* to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. An expedient bibliography of Rushdie's work and criticism has forms the appendix. Mohit Ray and Rama Kundu's *Salman Rushdie: Critical Essays* (2006) published in two volumes take into account individual critiques on his novels ranging from *Grimus* to *Fury*.

Rushdie's work has generally been well received. *Midnight's Children* has typically been acclaimed as a masterpiece. As M. Keith Booker observes, many of the influential factors in Rushdie criticism were founded in that early period.⁴⁸ Critics like Maria Couto, Harish Trivedi, Nancy Batty, Mujeebuddin Syed and Nalini Natarajan responded to the ingenious and exuberant wielding of language, the infiltration of Indian accents and idiom into English as well as its narrative aspects.⁴⁹ Uma Parameshwaran, Neil Ten Kortenaar, Edward Barnaby and Dieter Reimenschneider among others, commented on Rushdie's engagement with Indian history in the novel.⁵⁰ *Midnight's Children* elicited comparisons with various other texts and writers in addition to Grass and Márquez. Critics who pursued parallels include Rudolf Bader, Patricia Merivale, Nancy Batty, Kumkum Sangari, Richard Cronin, Robert Alter and Dieter Reimenschneider.⁵¹

The publication of *Shame* only enhanced Rushdie's critical reputation. Essays by those like Cynthia Carey Abrioux, Seema Bhaduri, Santosh Chakrabarti, M.D. Fletcher, Mujeebuddin Syed and Aruna Shrivastava drew attention to the manner in which the novel made an attempt to narrate and interrogate the nation of Pakistan.⁵² Commentary on the work took note of the deliberate and explicitly metafictional

quality of *Shame* and highlighted Rushdie's postmodernist strains. Critics like Aijaz Ahmed, Inderpal Grewal, Anuradha Needham and Ambreen Hai foreground the issue of gender in the text.⁵³ Interestingly, it was only in the wake of the *Satanic Verses* controversy that *Shame* received significant critical consideration. In fact even *Midnight's Children* witnessed a resurgence of critical notice following the commotion over the controversial *Satanic Verses*. M. Keith Booker goes on to substantiate via facts and figures the manner in which Rushdie studies has been eclipsed by the controversy.⁵⁴

The Moor's Last Sigh also opened to largely favourable appraisals. In an initial review, Paul Cantor commended its engagement with postcolonial problematics.⁵⁵ In her early essay, Bishnupriya Ghosh contends that though Rushdie's work can be viewed in terms of a postmodern model, his postmodernism is of a typically Indian strain. She makes a case for situating and comprehending his particular postmodernism within its context.⁵⁶ Farhad Idris embarks upon a reading of *The Moor's Last Sigh* that draws parallels with Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. John Clement Ball and David Myers consider the text as an exposition of Indian politics and the fundamentalism overtaking the Indian nation.⁵⁷

The Ground Beneath Her Feet was greeted with mixed response. Christopher Rollason discerns reactions ranging from approbation to ambivalence and even hostility.⁵⁸ While Rachel Falconer's reading examines the mythical framework of the text, Silvia Albertazzi and Christopher Rollason deliberate upon its musical intertexts.⁵⁹ Readings of the work have also underscored the issue of globalisation.⁶⁰

Fury has been regarded as Rushdie's weakest work. Most of the response to it was negative, even dismissive. Reviewers found the plot unconvincing, the characters pretentious, the narrative lacking the usual vitality, Rushdie's satire unable to

penetrate the surface or attempt a real understanding of the causes of fury. It was felt that the teeming references threatened to engulf the plot. John Sutherland was among the few who applauded the work. For all its limitations, Hasan Suroor reviewing *Fury* for *The Hindu* felt that it is ultimately partly redeemed by its contemporaneity.⁶¹

Reactions to the rather recent *Shalimar the Clown* are largely limited to reviews. Reviewing the novel for *The Hindu*, Hasan Suroor argues that *Shalimar the Clown* is Rushdie's most important book since *The Moor's Last Sigh*. He finds the book "vintage Rushdie".⁶² Writing for the *New Statesman* John Mullan applauded the engagement of the book with issues like "religious fundamentalism, the influence of America, the psychopath-ology of terrorism...."⁶³ A *Time* reviewer made similar comparisons noting that the novel is an exploration of political and religious fundamentalism. Despite its shortcomings, he reckons that it stands as a testament to the reasons Rushdie remains a "force to be reckoned with".⁶⁴ Reviewers generally conceded that the work marked a return in terms of Rushdie's characteristic formal strengths.

M. D. Fletcher notes that the response to Rushdie's fiction can be broadly divided in terms of its literary strategies - that have been viewed as an attempt to "de-colonize" English - and in terms of his political agenda, which has been regarded as an exposition of grand narratives like religion and socio-political issues. Much of the criticism is descriptive and tends to focus on the writer rather than his work. Rushdie criticism has deliberated upon his narrative mode: mainly magic realism, his writing within a postmodern, postcolonial cultural context, as well as his decolonising use of English. However, there is no study devoted exclusively to formal aspects of his work. There is also much scope for critique of his recent fiction.

The present study makes a comprehensive attempt to scrutinise history, politics and migrant identity as insistent concerns enunciated in Rushdie's major fiction. No full-length study of Rushdie's novels has so far been carried out from this standpoint. This study encapsulates six of Rushdie's texts, including his more recent fiction and enables the appraisal of one to illuminate and expound understanding of another. In view of the dearth of attention to Rushdie's more recent fiction, the present endeavour also focuses its attention on the later novels so as to reveal their significance. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, *Fury* and *Shalimar the Clown* offer much scope for interpretation in terms of multiple perspectives they bring in. The present study also brings under scrutiny the recurrent formal patterns in Rushdie's *oeuvre* - for instance, Metafiction, Magic Realism, Foreshadowing, Intertextuality - and concentrates on his linguistic strategies. In its attempt to analyse Rushdie's more recent fiction and through its adoption of a comprehensive approach, this study hopes to make a modest contribution.

Plan of the Thesis

This dissertation has been organised into six chapters inclusive of the introduction and concluding segment. The introductory chapter entitled "Of Imaginary Homelands: Introduction", takes into account the literary background and Rushdie's formative contexts. The critical survey considers the diverse approaches Rushdie's work has elicited and provides the framework within which this research is located.

The second chapter entitled "Problematising History, Politics and Identity: Re-reading *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*" examines the key concerns of the two novels in question. It considers *Midnight's Children* as a postcolonial critique of the

newly independent Indian nation. Rushdie's subversion of history in this exuberant text is examined. The following section deliberates upon the explication of the politics and identity of Pakistan in *Shame*.

The manner in which the transcultural experience forms the crux of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* is explicated in the third chapter titled: "Diasporic Dislocation: Traversing Transnational Spaces in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*". The texts are unified in their concern with protagonists who are migrant artists. Rushdie regards migrancy as a general ontological condition as well as a dominant trope of our time. The characters in both works give expression to the ambivalence of location that fascinates Rushdie. In terms of the bigger picture the novels engage with forces of globalization and chart the canvas of politics and society.

"A Return to Roots: Revisiting the Imagined Homeland in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown*," is the concern of the fourth chapter. This segment scrutinises the complexity of the multicultural context that is India. It is the Indian nation that continues to be a fundamental thematic focus in both the texts regarded in this chapter. Rushdie takes a look at the history of India fraught with turbulence in the last century. *The Moor's Last Sigh* employs the model of a hybrid Spain to probe what is supposedly a multicultural Indian society, while *Shalimar the Clown* deliberates upon the sensitive issue of the rise of fundamentalism in Kashmir, in the course of a love story.

Rushdie's narrative genius simply cannot be ignored. It is his contribution to narrative and language that is explored in the fifth chapter: "Writing in a Postmodern/ Postcolonial Space: Rushdie's Narrative Landscape." Rushdie's most acclaimed work has been hailed for envisioning an interface between the postmodern and the

postcolonial. This segment brings under scrutiny some of Rushdie's narrative techniques namely metafiction, magic realism, foreshadowing, and intertextuality. It further embarks upon an assessment of certain linguistic devices that give Rushdie's writing its iconoclastic edge.

The concluding chapter attempts a unification of the various concerns dealt with in the study. It deduces that Rushdie's *oeuvre* is predominantly shaped and sustained by a historical and political vision of the subcontinent viewed via the consciousness of a migrant postcolonial. He attempts to recreate the cultural crisis in his imagined homeland and redefine it in the postcolonial context. He wields language to subvert and contest domination, and his writing has carved out a space in the English language of the empire. This section reiterates the reasons that Rushdie remains a formidable writer. His targets have included totalitarianism and oppression in its various *avatars*. Rushdie has also come to stand for the importance of stories and the need to continue telling them.

Notes

¹ Guy Astic qtd. in Christopher Rollason, "Rushdie's Un-Indian Music: The Ground Beneath Her Feet," Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights, eds. Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Joel Kuortti, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003) 91.

²M.K. Naik, "Indian English Fiction 1864-1980: The Emergence and the Peaking," Twentieth Century Indian English Fiction (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004) 11.

³ Naik 12.

⁴ William Walsh, "India and the Novel," The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: From Orwell to Naipaul, ed. Boris Ford, vol. 8 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995) 235.

⁵ Walsh 240.

⁶ Madhusudan Prasad, "Some Post-Independence Indian English Novelists: An Overview," Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English, ed. M.K. Naik (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985) 214.

⁷ Uma Parameshwaran qtd. in "Homage to Kamala Markandaya," Francis C. Assisi, Indo link.21 May 2004, 9 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.beilharz.com/>>

⁸ Josna E. Rege, "Victim into Protagonist? Midnight's Children and the Post-Rushdie National Narratives of the Eighties," Rushdie's *Midnights Children*: A Book of Readings, ed. Meenakshi Mukherjee (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003) 189-90.

⁹ Robert Towers, "On the Indian World-Mountain," rev. of Midnight's Children, by Salman Rushdie, New York Review of Books 28:14 (1981): 30.

¹⁰ Clark Blaise, "A Novel of India's Coming of Age," rev. of Midnight's Children, by Salman Rushdie, New York Times 19 Apr. 1981: 18.

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- ¹¹ Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Pier Paolo Piciucco, eds., preface, Studies in Indian Writing in English, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2001) v.
- ¹² Mukherjee, introduction, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 10.
- ¹³ Naik 199.
- ¹⁴ Timothy Brennan, "The National Longing for Form," Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation (London: Macmillan, 1989) 80.
- ¹⁵ Klaus Börner, "The Reception of *Midnight's Children* in West Germany," The Novels of Salman Rushdie, ed. G. R. Taneja, and R. K. Dhawan (New Delhi: Prestige, 1992) 12.
- ¹⁶ Harish Trivedi, "Salman the Funtoosh: Magic Bilingualism in Midnight's Children," Mukherjee Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 72.
- ¹⁷ Chelva Kanaganayakam, "Midnight's Grandchildren," Counterrealism in Indo-Anglian Fiction (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2002) 171.
- ¹⁸ Rege 203.
- ¹⁹ Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West, eds., introduction, The Vintage Book of Indian Writing 1947-1997 (London: Vintage, 1997) x.
- ²⁰ John Mee, "After Midnight: the Indian Novel in English of the 80s and 90s," Postcolonial Studies 1.1 (1998): 129.
- ²¹ Mittapalli and Piciucco, preface iv-v.
- ²² Rege 187.
- ²³ Mee 127.
- ²⁴ Mee 127.
- ²⁵ Rajendra Yadav qtd. in Mukherjee, introduction 12.
- ²⁶ Salman Rushdie, "Why I Have embraced Islam?" Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991 (London: Granta; New Delhi Penguin, 1991) 430.

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- ²⁷ Rushdie, "Günter Grass," Imaginary Homelands 276.
- ²⁸ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," Imaginary Homelands 21.
- ²⁹ Rushdie, "Influence," Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002 (New York: Modern Library, 2003) 69.
- ³⁰ Rushdie, Step 180.
- ³¹ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, Salman Rushdie, Macmillan Modern Novelists (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1998) 4.
- ³² Brennan 70.
- ³³ Catherine Cundy, Salman Rushdie, Contemporary World Writers (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 12.
- ³⁴ Salman Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," 9-10.
- ³⁵ Mukherjee, introduction 9.
- ³⁶ Cundy 37.
- ³⁷ Rushdie, "Gunter Grass," 277.
- ³⁸ Rushdie "In God We Trust," Imaginary Homelands 377.
- ³⁹ Rushdie, Step 11.
- ⁴⁰ Rushdie, Step 10.
- ⁴¹ Cundy 110.
- ⁴² Salman Rushdie qtd. in Rollason 89.
- ⁴³ Rushdie, "In Good Faith," Imaginary Homelands 396.
- ⁴⁴ Brennan, preface viii.
- ⁴⁵ Brennan 166.
- ⁴⁶ See, Viney Kirpal, ed., The New Indian Novel in English: A Study of the 1980s (New Delhi: Allied, 1990); Taneja, and Dhawan, eds., The Novels of Salman Rushdie (New Delhi: ISCS, 1992).

⁴⁷ See, Vijay Laxmi, "Rushdie's Fiction: The World Beyond the Looking Glass," Reworlding: The Literature of the Indian Diaspora, ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson (New York: Greenwood, 1992) 149-156; Anuradha Dingwaney, "Author(iz)ing *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*: Salman Rushdie's Constructions of Authority," Reworlding 157-167.

⁴⁸ M. Keith Booker, "The Development of a Literary Reputation," introduction, Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie (New York: G. K. Hall, 1999) 3.

⁴⁹ See, Maria Couto, "Midnight's Children and Parents: The Search for Indo British Identity," Encounter 58.2 (1982): 61-66; See, for example, Harish Trivedi, "Salman the Funtoosh: Magic Bilingualism in Midnight's Children," Mukherjee 69-94; Nancy E Batty, "The Art of Suspense: Rushdie's 1001 (Mid-) Nights," ARIEL 18 (1987): 49-65; Mujeebuddin Syed, "Midnight's Children and Its Indian Contexts," Journal of Commonwealth Literature 29.2 (1994): 95-108; Nalini Natarajan, "Woman, Nation, and Narration in Midnight's Children," Mukherjee 165-181.

⁵⁰ See, Neil Ten Kortenaar, "Midnight's Children and the Allegory of History," ARIEL 26.2 (1995) 41-62; Edward Barnaby, "Airbrushed history: Photography, Realism, and Rushdie's Midnight's Children," Mosaic, University of Manitoba 1 Mar. 2005. Highbeam Research 2005, 3 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>; Dieter Reimenschneider, "History and the Individual in Anita Desai's Clear Light of Day and Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children," World Literature Written In English 23.1 (1984): 196-207; Jean M Kane, "The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History: Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children," Contemporary Literature 37.1 (1996): 94-118, JSTOR. 1 Apr. 2008 <<http://www.jstor.org>>

⁵¹ For echoes of Grass in Rushdie, see Rudolf Bader, "Indian Tin Drum," International Fiction Review 11.2 (1985): 75-83; Patricia Merivale, "Saleem Fathered by Oskar: Intertextual Strategies in Midnight's Children and The Tin Drum," ARIEL 21.3 (1990): 5-20. On the parallels between Midnight's Children and The Arabian Nights, see Batty 49-65. On Marquez and Rushdie, see, Kumkum Sangari, "The Politics of the Possible," Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, The Post-Colonial Studies Reader 143-147. On Kipling and Rushdie, see, Richard Cronin, "The Indian English Novel: Kim and Midnight's Children," Modern Fiction Studies 33.2 (1987): 201-213. On Sterne and Rushdie, see, Robert Alter, "Midnight's Children and Tristram Shandy," Mukherjee, 112-115. On the parallel between Rushdie and Anita Desai, see Dieter Reimenschneider, 196-207.

⁵² Cynthia Carey Abrioux, "In the Name of the Nation: Salman Rushdie's Shame," Commonwealth 18.1 (1995): 48-55; Seema Bhaduri, "Rushdie's Politics of Understatement: The Subaltern and History of Shame," Commonwealth Review 10.2 (1998-99): 36-43; Santosh Chakrabarti, "Shame as a Political Allegory," Salman Rushdie: Critical Essays, vol. 1, eds. Mohit K. Ray, and Rama Kundu (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2006) 152-162; M.D. Fletcher, "Rushdie's Shame as Apologue," Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, ed. M.D. Fletcher (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994) 97-108; Syed Mujeebuddin, "Centres and Margins: Shame's 'Other' Nation," Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights, vol. 1, eds. Mittapalli and Kuortti 131-149; Aruna Srivastava, "'The Empire Writes Back': Language and History in Shame and Midnight's Children," ARIEL 20.4 (1989): 62-78.

⁵³ Aijaz Ahmed, "Salman Rushdie's Shame: Postmodern Migrancy and the

Representation of Women,” In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1994) 123-158; Inderpal Grewal, “Salman Rushdie: Marginality, Women and Shame.” Fletcher 123-144; Anuradha Dingwaney, “The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie,” Fletcher 145-157; Ambreen Hai, “ ‘Marching In from the Peripheries’: Rushdie’s Feminized Artistry and Ambivalent Feminism,” Booker 16-50.

⁵⁴ M. Keith Booker, introduction 6-7.

⁵⁵ Paul A. Cantor, “Tales of the Alhambra: Rushdie’s Use of Spanish History in The Moor’s Last Sigh,” Studies in the Novel 22 Sept. 1997 Highbeam Research 1997, University of North Texas, 3 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>;

⁵⁶ Bishnupriya Ghosh, “An Invitation to Indian Postmodernity: Rushdie’s English Vernacular as Situated Cultural Hybridity,” Booker 129-153.

⁵⁷ John Clement Ball, “Acid in the Nation’s Bloodstream: Satire, Violence, and the Indian Body Politic in Salman Rushdie’s The Moor’s Last Sigh,” Mittapalli and Kuortti, vol. 2, 36-50; Myers, David. “A Tragic Lament beyond Postmodernist Parody: Multicultural Art’s Protest against Bigoted Fundamentalism in Salman Rushdie’s The Moor’s Last Sigh,” Commonwealth Review 10.2 (1998-99): 71-86.

⁵⁸ Rollason 115.

⁵⁹ See, Rachel Falconer, “Bouncing Down to the Underworld: Classical Katabasis in The Ground Beneath Her Feet,” Twentieth Century Literature 22 Dec. 2001, HighBeam Research 2001 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>; Silvia Albertazzi, “Music in The Ground Beneath Her Feet.” Ray and Kundu, vol. 2, 124-132; Rollason 89-125.

⁶⁰ See Rollason; also Mariam Pirbhai, “The Paradox of Globalization as an ‘Untotalizable Totality’ in Salman Rushdie’s The Ground Beneath Her Feet,”

International Fiction Review 1 Jan 2001, HighBeam Research 2001.

<<http://www.highbeam.com>>

⁶¹ Hasan Suroor, "Read it in spare time," rev. of Fury, by Salman Rushdie, Hindu 16 Sept. 2001. 14 August 2007. <<http://www.hinduonnet.com>>

⁶² Hasan Suroor, "The Return of Salman Rushdie," rev. of Shalimar the Clown, by Salman Rushdie, Hindu 2 Oct. 2005, 14 August 2007

<<http://www.hindu.com>>

⁶³ John Mullan, "Fiction-The Weight of History," rev. of Shalimar the Clown, by Salman Rushdie, New Statesman 26 Sept. 2005, 9 Feb. 2006

<<http://www.newstatesman.com>>

⁶⁴ Aravind Adidga, "A Fable of Fury," rev. of Shalimar the Clown, by Salman Rushdie, Time [Asia] 29 Aug. 2005, Time Inc. 9 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.time.com>>

II

Problematizing History, Politics and Identity: Re-reading***Midnight's Children and Shame.***

We see that we are all irradiated by history, we are radioactive with history and politics.

- Salman Rushdie (*Imaginary Homelands* 100)

Rushdie's *oeuvre* explores numerous concerns, but it has consistently grappled with historical and political representation. The interplay between history and the individual, features among the key ideas taking shape in his insistently political work. *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* in particular, engage with the political crises that plague the newly emergent nation states of India and Pakistan. Aruna Shrivastava believes that a vital aspect of these two works is the manner in which Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* and Omar Khayyam in *Shame* "try to come to terms with their personal and national histories as colonized people."¹

Most accounts of the Western approach towards history in the nineteenth century are characterised by reliance upon the origin, meaning and teleology of history. Traditionally, history has been considered a self-contained, objective, unbiased corpus of knowledge. However, much of the present epistemological questioning of historical representation and knowledge has been sparked-off by the questioning of the authority of historical sources and documents. The recording of historical events necessitates a prior process of interpretation and analysis, and these obviously imply a degree of subjectivity. For, as Linda Hutcheon has it: "facts are not given but are constructed by the kinds of questions we ask of events".² Human subjectivity is largely shaped by culture and its dominant ideology. Consequently, history viewed as a human construct bears the impress of cultural and ideological

discourse. The difficulty does not arise from the ideological, arbitrary and subjectively determined nature of history; but from the fact that it is a construct that lays claim to totality, closure and objectivity.

Fiction as a literary artefact is shaped by history as a cultural force. The long established dichotomy between history and fiction was constructed upon the supposition that the former was concerned with reality and objectivity, while the latter with the imaginative and the subjective. The frontiers that demarcate history and fiction are increasingly blurring. As Linda Hutcheon puts it, "it is this very separation of the literary and the historical that is now being challenged in postmodern theory and art".³ Recent critiques of history and fiction concentrate upon the sites of convergence of the two modes rather than their differences.

In the wake of Hayden White's *Metahistory*, Poststructural theory and Postmodern historiography propose a relativist view of the possibility of either objectivity or material referentiality in historical discourse. Twentieth-century considerations of history espouse that history and fiction merit treatment along a similar basis as linguistically and ideologically determined constructs. They both draw from verisimilitude rather than objective truth, are both regarded as "linguistic constructs, highly conventionalized in their narrative forms and not at all transparent either in terms of language or structure," they are both "intertextual, deploying the texts of the past within their own complex textuality".⁴ Fiction and history are not regarded as mutually exclusive, but interdependent. Much contemporary fiction attempts a telling of the stories ignored by history.

An attempt "to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical"⁵ in terms of form as well as theme, is made by what Hutcheon terms "historiographic metafiction". She privileges historiographic metafiction as a

quintessentially postmodern art form. According to her the term refers to:

those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages...Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (*historiographic metafiction*) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past.⁶

In considering historiographic metafiction “in which the fictively personal becomes the historically - and thus politically - public in a kind of synecdochic fashion”, Linda Hutcheon points to *Midnight's Children* wherein the representation of the protagonist Saleem Sinai is intimately tied with that of his country. This results in the “politicization of public *and* private experience, of nationality *and* subjectivity”.⁷ Both *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* can be deemed historiographic metafiction in that they re-write the twentieth-century history of India and Pakistan. In the view of Hutcheon:

The premise of postmodern fiction is the same as that articulated by Hayden White regarding history: ‘every representation of the past has specifiable ideological implications’. But the ideology of postmodernism is paradoxical, for it depends upon and draws its power from that which it contests. It is not truly radical; nor is it truly oppositional. But this does not mean it has no critical clout....⁸

Historiographic metafiction is associated with textual play, parody and re-formulation of history. It does not regard history as a definable totality but regards engagements with history as digressive, circumstantial and textual. Historiographic metafiction lays stress on the textuality of history as it “shows fiction to be

historically conditioned and history to be discursively structured".⁹ Admittedly political, these re-presentations of history enable new perspectives and identities to rise out of culturally marginalised positions.

History is the fulcrum of the narrative in *Midnight's Children*. Important public events in Indian socio-politics are allied with those in the lives of Saleem and his family. Several critics have identified Stanley Wolpert's *A New History of India* as Rushdie's source text for the novel, or an example of the kind of historical version that lends itself to Rushdie's parody. In the view of Neil Ten Kortenaar, *Midnight's Children* is a contemplation of "the textuality of history and, in particular, of that official history that constitutes the nation".¹⁰

Rather than contend for a reorganisation of what may qualify as history, it is a reinterpretation of what has always constituted history that is Rushdie's main concern. Hence, the novel does incorporate monumental historical events, but they lead to an interpretation that is at variance from much of traditional history. Jago Morrison argues that unlike writers like Toni Morrison or Maxine Hong Kingston who attempt to reclaim the silences in history of the dispossessed, for Rushdie "History is conceived as an overwhelming superabundance of experience, a tumult of competing voices".¹¹ For Rushdie, the problem of history resides in "its omnipresence and bewildering multiplicity". Rather than representing the past as a "knowable totality", his work is "magnificently cacophonous".¹² *Midnight's Children* offers a counter-balance to the totalising discourse of history by foregrounding the private and ex-centric narrative of the protagonist. This middle-class youth of mixed parentage is India in *Midnight's Children*. Saleem comes to embody India as Rushdie's answer to the political dictum "Indira is India and India is Indira" (MC 427).¹³ He defines himself by his association with India's history. He is the instigator of events, and what

transpires with him and his family is inextricably interwoven with that of the nation. History literally becomes his story.

In *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie reminisces how the germ of *Midnight's Children* was born in the course of a family joke that the departure of the British was induced by the arrival of Salman who was born eight weeks prior to Indian independence.¹⁴ Subsequently, *Midnight's Children* chronicles the birth of 1001 children born within the midnight hour of India's independence with phenomenal gifts. The most potent endowments are related to the hour closest to midnight. Saleem and Shiva who are both born at the very stroke of midnight have the most powerful abilities.

The children of midnight are thus mysteriously "handcuffed to history" (*MC* 9), their destinies being inextricably interwoven with that of the newly independent nation. Saleem Sinai announces that he was born at the very stroke of midnight: "Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came ... at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world" (*MC* 9).

Personal identity is thus linked with national identity. For his portentous birth Saleem not only bags the coveted *Times of India* prize offered to those mothers who give birth at the exact moment of India's Independence; but also receives a letter from the reigning Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru congratulating baby Saleem. Nehru assured the neonate: " 'We shall be watching over your life with the closest attention; it will be, in a sense, the mirror of our own' " (*MC* 122). The letter binds the destiny and potential of the neonate Saleem with that of the embryonic polity that is at the same time an ancient civilisation.

With epic sweep, the novel attempts to chart the lives of three generations of the Sinai family. Various major political events between 1947 and 1978 are

incorporated into the text and interwoven with the story of Saleem. The plot moves from their home in Kashmir, to Amritsar, Agra, Bombay and Karachi; finally halting in Bombay. Divided into three parts, the first part of the book chronicles the period from 1915-1947. Saleem traces the story of his grandfather Aadam Aziz, a young German-return doctor, his marriage to Naseem, his leaving Srinagar for Agra with his wife, and the marriage of his daughter Amina to Ahmed Sinai, followed by the birth of the narrator. The second part of the novel deals with the childhood of Saleem and the migration of the family to Karachi on account of the financial crisis they face. All this occurs against the backdrop of Indian democracy in the wake of numerous challenges. Part three is intensely political. It ingeniously recreates contemporary historical events with a focus on the Emergency of the seventies.

One of the early coincidences of the plot with world history extends way before Saleem's birth, with his alleged grandparents' strange courtship in 1915. The young German-educated doctor Aadam Aziz, had seen and examined various parts of Naseem Ghani, the landlord's daughter's body through a seven inch perforation in a white bedsheet serving as the purdah. He was not allowed to see his intriguing patient as a whole. Aadam's desperate hopes to see her face were realised when Naseem complained of a longed-for headache on the day the World War ended. The narrator is convinced that, "Such historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled, my family's existence in the world" (MC 27).

Rushdie acknowledges the influence of the Dickensian novel in shaping *Midnight's Children*, wherein "details of place and social mores are skewered by a pitiless realism, a naturalistic exactitude".¹⁵ This inspires him to situate his narrative against the meticulously observed background of 'real' India.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre is a significant historical event featured in the novel. When the Sinais are delayed in Amritsar en route to Agra, Aadam Sinai saunters into the protest meet at Jallianwala Bagh. It is his sensitive nose that saves his life, throwing him to the ground with the force of a timely sneeze just as Brigadier Dyer issues his fifty men the command to open fire. The narrator's description of the scene provides a sense of the "real" history of the massacre in opposition to the "official" one propagated by the coloniser: "They have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd. Of these, one thousand five hundred and sixteen have found their mark, killing or wounding some person. 'Good shooting,' Dyer tells his men, 'We have done a jolly good thing'" (MC 36).

In the mode of postmodern readings that privilege the possibility of multiple interpretations, Rushdie is clearly projecting the Amritsar massacre as a denunciation of the coloniser's act. Sabrina Hassumani notes that Rushdie considers the diametrically opposite versions of the massacre wherein "the colonizers viewed this as putting order to chaos; the colonized viewed it as a cold-blooded massacre of innocent victims".¹⁶ Eric Berlatsky is convinced that Rushdie consistently distinguishes between subjective interpretations and deception in ideological terms for political dominance", and exhibits a preference for the truth of one type of interpretation over another.¹⁷ As Hutcheon clarifies, postmodern fiction "does not 'aspire to tell the truth' as much as to question *whose* truth gets told".¹⁸ Rushdie thus plays upon "point of view" in historical narrations and suggests the multiplicity of historical accounts. In an essay, Rushdie indicts the film *Gandhi* for its distorted portrayal of the Amritsar massacre, pointing out that the film depicts Dyer as a zealous individual whose act was condemned by the empire; but in reality he was a hero to the colonialists who had taught "the wogs" a lesson.¹⁹

Landmark dates in Indian history form the crux of the plot of the novel to impart an air of historical verifiability. Vanita, an Indian woman married to a street singer, who is pregnant with the departing Englishman William Methwold's child, goes into labour at the moment of the birth of Pakistan on 14th August 1947. Exactly a day later, she delivers a baby boy at the magical hour of midnight on 15th August when India attains independence. As it turns out, Amina Sinai also gives birth to a baby boy at precisely the stroke of midnight in Dr. Narlikar's Nursing Home itself.

To render the plot more complex, the destinies of these two children of midnight - Shiva and Saleem - are curiously linked. The child of Amina Sinai is switched with the child of Vanita at birth. The act is committed by Mary Pereira the servant of the Sinai's, in a desperate bid to earn the affection of an aristocrat-hating communist called Joe D'Costa. She believes that this revolutionary act of exchanging the babies as an attempt to raze the class distinctions would help her find favour with him. The plot thus deftly swivels. The illegitimate son of a departing Englishman and a poor Hindu street-singer's wife is raised as Saleem Sinai the child of a well-off Muslim couple. Their actual biological child is called Shiva and brought up by the homeless Hindu street-singer who has been widowed in childbirth. Thus the recipient of Nehru's letter is not the child to whom it is intended.

By virtue of the fact that Saleem and Shiva are both born at the very stroke of midnight the most powerful gifts of the magical hour are theirs. Saleem's talent is "the ability to look into the hearts and minds of men", while Shiva is blessed with "the gifts of war" (*MC* 200). In the rivalry between Saleem and Shiva, Timothy Brennan recalls the legendary rivalry between Brahma and Shiva - creator and destroyer - in traditional mythology. "Saleem, like Brahma, imagines the whole of Indian history and contains it within him".²⁰ The conflict between Saleem and Shiva

is set up as one of irresolvable dualities.

The lines between historical fact and fiction blur constantly. The protagonist claims direct responsibility for sparking off the language riots which led to the linguistic restructuring of states in 1956. Saleem, who is trying to impress a neighbour Evie Burns with his almost non-existent cycling skills, crashes into the procession of the Marathi language supporters. The marchers jocularly goad him to speak some Gujarati and he replies with the only rhyme he knows which happens to ridicule Gujarati speech rhythms: “Soo ché? Saru ché! / Danda lé ké maru ché!” (MC 191). This becomes the slogan of the mob. As they encounter the rival Maha Gujarat Parishad demonstrators, violence erupts:

...the two parties fell upon one another with no little zeal, and to the tune of my little rhyme the first of the language riots got under way, fifteen killed, over three hundred wounded.

In this way I became directly responsible for triggering off the violence which ended with the partition of the state of Bombay, as a result of which the state became the capital of Maharashtra. (MC 192)

In 1957, a year later, the Communist Party won a large number of seats. The connection of the event with Saleem’s life is via his mother. Saleem follows and spies on Amina’s clandestine meetings with her first husband Nadir who re-enters her life as an active communist called Quasim the red. She contributes her time and resources towards the impoverished, canvassing for him and the party. It is this electorate in turn that votes for the Communist Party, enabling their victory.

In 1959 the famous Nanavati case riveted the nation. To this day it is considered the archetypal crime of passion. Commander K. Manekshaw Nanavati was tried for the homicide of his wife Sylvia’s paramour - Prem Ahuja. On his return

home from one of his assignments, his wife confessed that she was having an affair. Nanavati dropped his family at the 'Metro Cinema' for a movie, excused himself and proceeded to deal with his wife's lover. In the course of events that followed, Nanavati shot him dead. He then presented himself to the Deputy Commissioner of Police. The case enthralled the nation. Since the jury had been influenced by media and public support for Nanavati and was open to being misled, the Indian Government abolished jury trials after this case

In *Midnight's Children* the character of Commander Sabarmati is modelled on that of Nanavati. Saleem becomes the engineer of the whole episode as the person who alerts Commander Sabarmati to his wife's illicit relationship with Homi Catrack via an anonymous note. His purpose in doing this is basically to caution his perfidious mother whose rendezvous with Nadir Khan he disapproves of. However, matters take their own turn and wind up with disastrous consequences. Saleem admits that it was he who set in motion the chain of events that transpired:

...Commander Sabarmati was only a puppet; I was the puppet-master, and the nation performed my play – only I hadn't meant it! I didn't think he'd ...I only wanted to... a scandal, yes, a scare, a lesson to all unfaithful wives and mothers, but not that, never, no. (MC 262; original ellipses)

The riots instigated in India with the disappearance of the relic of the holy hair of Prophet Mohammed, are dexterously woven into the events of the Sinai family. Incensed by the death of his son Hanif, Aadam Aziz leaves his Agra abode never to return. The narrator states that a man answering to his grandfather's description was seen at the Hazratbal Mosque where the concerned relic was housed. He wonders if his grandfather was behind the theft of the relic: "Was this bizarre incident truly

political, or was it the penultimate attempt at revenge upon God by a father who had lost his son?" (*MC 277*). Aadam Aziz suffers a fall and dies in the valley of his birth. The narrator goes on to associate the death of his grandfather with the death of Jawaharlal Nehru on 27th May 1964: "Nehru's death; can I avoid the conclusion that that, too, was all my fault?" (*MC 279*).

In typical postmodern fashion, events from history are installed only to be subverted. Saleem is unable to escape his association with historical events even when he goes to Pakistan along with his mother and sister. Incidentally, he learns that the presence of the Pakistani frontier deprives him of his telepathic transmission to the children of midnight. While in Pakistan, Saleem finds favour with his uncle General Zulfikar. His uncle prefers Saleem over his own son who is an embarrassment on account of his enuresis. Consequently, Saleem is allowed to witness the surreptitious meetings leading to the military coup by Ayub Khan. He claims "not only did I overthrow a government – I also consigned a president to exile" (*MC 291*).

Saleem makes a mention of, but abjures responsibility for certain other key historical events like the deteriorating relations between India and Pakistan, the conquer of Goa by the Indian army, American aid to Pakistan, the Sino-Indian border conflict, the census of 1961 and the victory of the All India Congress in the 1962 elections.

The Indo-Chinese conflict of 1962 finds the Sinais returning to India for a short while. Saleem realises that he is unable to convene the 'Midnight's Children's Conference' which then collapses. In 1963 the Sinai family immigrates to Pakistan permanently. It is during the Indo-Pak conflict of 1965 that Saleem loses most of his family. He is convinced that the hidden agenda of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965 "was nothing more nor less than the elimination of my benighted family from the face

of the earth” (*MC* 338). Saleem fuses factual media coverage with incidents in his own family as he traces the course of the Indo-Chinese war. His family members ultimately die in the air raids and he is rendered amnesiac.

During the partial erasure of his memory Saleem becomes a tracker in the Pakistani army with his acute olfactory powers to aid him apprehend enemies of the state. He literally becomes a “man-dog” sleeping in a kennel beside the stalls of the dogs of the unit. As part of this Canine Unit for Tracking and Intelligence Activities – CUTIA, Saleem is sent on a mission as part of a team, to lead sixty thousand Pakistani soldiers to East-Pakistan which was planning secession.

After Sheikh Mujibur-Rehman proclaims the state of Bangladesh on 25th March 1971, he is sniffed out by Saleem, arrested, and repatriated to West-Pakistan. While on this mission, Saleem escapes from the war into the Sunderbans with three young soldiers and they ultimately emerge in Dacca following a series of misadventures. It is here that one of the children of midnight - Parvati the witch - who is part of the entertainment troupe flown in from Delhi to celebrate the victory of the Indian soldiers, recognises Saleem. During the time when Saleem is part of the invading army, he is called the ‘Buddha’. Parvati greets Saleem by name and restores to him his identity. She enables him to escape in her wicker basket and they are flown to Delhi. “Sometimes mountains must move before old comrades can be reunited” (*MC* 374). Saleem is certain that the purpose of the entire Bangladesh war had been to reunite him with his old life and friends.

India’s first nuclear test explosion is the historical event that corresponds with the re-entry of Major Shiva on the scene. He has returned from Bangladesh as a war hero, and his reappearance shakes Saleem’s world. Major Shiva is notorious for his affairs with women of various stations and classes. Once they are impregnated

however, he loses interest and forsakes them. Parvati is not spared this fate. Shiva abandons her after she gets pregnant.

Parvati's pregnancy correlates to the gestation of the Janata party. Her thirteen-day labour commences on the day the Allahabad High Court finds Prime Minister Indira Gandhi guilty of malpractice in the election of 1971, and the thirteen days when Indira Gandhi refused to resign. Her son is born at midnight on 25th June 1975, the day Indira Gandhi declared Emergency rule in India. Saleem is in no doubt that the motive behind the declaration of the Emergency was "the smashing, the pulverizing, the irreversible discombobulation of the children of midnight" (MC 427). The silence of the masses in response to this autocracy finds an analogy in baby Aadam's peculiar silence the entire first year of his birth, as well as his strange tuberculosis that refuses to respond to treatment. It is only post the Emergency that his affliction vanishes. Saleem is convinced that his son will have to be a magician to cope with the world he is leaving behind. The narrator hopes that the second generation of magical children will "grow up far tougher than the first, not looking for their fate in prophecy or the stars, but forging it in the implacable furnaces of their wills" (MC 447). This prospect however, comes to naught. The child Aadam re-enters *The Moor's Last Sigh* as a young man only to belie all the initial promise.

History finds yet another link with autobiography. Saleem is among those who are victimised in the course of the mass sterilisation operation instigated by Sanjay Gandhi. He is also directly affected by the razing of the slums in Delhi in 1976.

The elections of 1977 find mention in the novel as Indira Gandhi's Congress party suffers a defeat, conceding leadership to the Janata Party. Saleem however, is not very optimistic about the new government given the existing leadership of the party. The book seems to end on an austere and dismal note of the future.

Saleem Sinai “fathered by history” (*MC* 118), defined in terms of his affiliation with post-independent India, finds himself rendered impotent towards the close of the story, due to the vasectomy drive under Sanjay Gandhi’s leadership. The 581 surviving midnight’s children meet the same fate. Saleem leaves Delhi, making his way to Bombay with his foster son Aadam. Aadam, evocative of the elephant God Ganesh with his large ears and nose, is in reality the child born of Saleem’s wife Parvati and his arch-rival Shiva. Parvati recalls Saleem’s biological mother Vanita, who also dies while giving birth. Saleem claims Shiva’s offspring as his own. He “is well aware identity does not reside in the blood; it is the claim and its recognition by the one claimed that matter”.²¹ The Sinai lineage ultimately has its rightful heir restored to the family line in the act of Saleem adopting Aadam the biological son of Shiva.

The end of the text has been viewed as a cynical and scathing comment on the fragmentation the nation has been reduced to, in spite of its youthful potential and promise. Anuradha Dingwaney is among those who feel that the trajectory of Saleem’s life seems deeply pessimistic.²² The 1001 children that are a metaphor for the new vibrant India are reduced to a hopeless horde of “scapegraces”.²³

Saleem represents the post independence generation born into a realm of possibilities. The realisation of this potential is all but thwarted in the course of events. The children of midnight seem apathetic and powerless to respond to historical events. As the omniscient protagonist narrator of *Midnight’s Children*, Saleem is far from a ‘type’. He is a poor excuse for a protagonist with his mutilated finger, tonsured head, and disintegrating self. His prodigious telepathic ability is frittered away in inconsequential acts like cheating in school, travelling around India, and petty voyeuristic exploits like spying on the thoughts of others.

The 'Midnight's Children's Conference' is unable to instigate political action of any kind. Their empowerment is thwarted by Saleem's fear that Shiva will stake a claim to his birthright. Thus, Saleem desists from marshalling the conference, until his relocation to Pakistan deprives him of any such contact. He realises that his thoughts could not permeate geographical boundaries. During a visit to India, Saleem's operation to drain his nose results in the endowment of an acute sense of smell at the cost of the permanent loss of his telepathic prowess. Even his olfactory abilities are only used to sniff out Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, to his Pakistani foes. Saleem ends up revealing the children of midnight to their assassins. Uma Parameshwaran regards his physical impotence an extension of his internal impotence. She goes on to argue that the Widow is not the real reason for the fate of the children of midnight, but rather a catalyst in their self betrayal.²⁴ This sentiment finds an echo in the final lines of the novel: "it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times" (*MC* 463). The protagonist himself is nearing his unusual end. He has begun to crack quite literally. His body, "buffeted by too much history... has started coming apart at the seams" (*MC* 37). He will eventually disintegrate and crumble into dust.

Mujeebuddin Syed is among those who focus on the cautious optimism of the final scene. He regards the ultimate focus on the child Aadam and the empty pickle jar as one indicative of hope. For him, these seem like signifiers of the future and mark a new beginning. Rushdie admits that though the tale of Saleem leads him to despair, the story is far from nihilistic in its echoes of "the Indian talent for non-stop self-regeneration".²⁵ The writer feels that the very form of the novel hints at the innumerable possibilities for the country. This provides the cautious optimism that counter-balances the negativity. In an interview Rushdie maintains that the book

seems to him “very affirmative”.²⁶ India is an interesting exemplar of a unit without a centre. Prior to independence it was basically a collection of states - rather distinct from one another - that were ruled by the British. Nevertheless, India exists as an entity and Rushdie wants to see this multicultural, multi-ethnic experiment succeed. Readings of *Midnight's Children* have drawn attention to Rushdie's commitment to nationalism. Josna Rege states, “Despite its conceptual freshness and vitality, *Midnight's Children* remains very emotionally committed to the narrative of the nation”.²⁷

As an allegory for newly independent secular India, Saleem Sinai's physical disintegration is a reflection of the fragmentation within the country and of the Indian subcontinent as well. The cracks and fissures that plague Saleem's body are a comment on the national corpus afflicted by communal and other divisions. The hope of the new nation is lauded in the birth of Saleem. Rushdie laments the damage to that initial hope by the various historical and political processes that culminate with the Emergency. In aiding the sterilisation of the children of midnight, Shiva fulfils the powers of destruction of his mythological namesake. Saleem views the sterilisation as sperectomy “the draining-out of hope” for the country as a whole (*MC* 437).

In writing the novel, Saleem succumbs to the Indian tendency to embrace multitudes:

I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each 'I', every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar

multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world. (MC 383)

The image of the perforated sheet invoked at the onset of the novel becomes a symbolic trope in the course of the text with Saleem realising that it is via such fragmentary forms that he will have to seek wholeness, filling those gaps that he can. A vacillation between form and fragmentation occurs throughout the novel.

Numerous characters exemplify this impulse for formal unity through fragments. For instance, Lifafa Das, the peepshow owner bids people to view the whole world in his postcards: "Dunya dekho" (MC 75). Saleem is convinced that India has a widespread "national longing for form" (MC 300). Nadir Khan, Amina's first husband, had a painter for a roommate who attempted to capture the whole of life in his art, his paintings getting increasingly larger before he ultimately killed himself. Still in love with Nadir Khan, Amina resolved to fall in love with her second husband Ahmed Sinai, "bit by bit" (MC 68). Saleem's uncle Hanif was a script writer insistent on making a comprehensive documentary film about the 'Ordinary Life of a Pickle Factory'. In the film industry dominated by fantasy, his script is rejected and the work is shelved. His uncompromising stance is reflected in another obsession related to his playing of cards. In the game of rummy "he was determined never to lay down a hand until he completed a thirteen-card sequence in hearts. Always hearts; all the hearts, and nothing but the hearts would do" (MC 246).

As Keith Wilson points out, a basic tenet of the conception of *Midnight's Children* is an acceptance of the fractional nature of the final product. For, "the realities of public history or private experience are never reducible to the encompassing forms that the absolutist artist may want to impose upon them".²⁸ The dominant images of fragmentation include Saleem's mutilated body that seems a

caricature of the map of the nation, the disintegration of the 'Midnight's Children's Conference', and the eventual fragmentation of Saleem's body into 400,000,506 parts. As a metaphor for the nation, Saleem fragments into as many parts as the number of people in India at the time of writing the novel. His own disbanding, as also the dispersal of the 'Midnight's Children's Conference' reflects the demolition of the national ideal of 'unity-in-diversity'.

Though the dominant image is that of fragments, Saleem attempts to make sense of the parts and view the whole picture even as he admits its limited nature. An illusion of totality and wholeness is suggested through the employment of leitmotifs that organise the text in terms of a design. The silver spittoon, the green tin trunk, the buried tin globe encasing the curios dear to Saleem, the perforated sheet, have resonances all through the text. The novel closes with an emphasis on the abortive nature of closure itself. Among the thirty pickle jars on the shelf, each representative of the "chutnification of history" the narrator attempts to pickle his past in literal terms. He claims: "I have immortalized my memories, although distortions are inevitable in both methods" (*MC* 459). He concedes that "the future cannot be preserved in a jar; one jar must remain empty..." (*MC* 462). In contrast with the monolithic grand narrative of history, the personal narrative is qualified by fragmentation, indeterminacy, polyphonic voices and the lack of closure.

The author seems to expose the secure cohesive self as yet another fiction. The very beginning of the novel finds the narrator's grandfather Aadam Aziz basking in Kashmir early one morning. While he attempted to pray, Aadam hit his nose against the earth. As he bled "he resolved never to kiss earth for any god or man." The decision left a hole in him: "a vacancy in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to women and history" (*MC* 10). The narrator concedes that his changed

vision may have been accelerated by the incident, but he reckons it is really the five years Aadam spent studying to be a medical practitioner in Germany that made the landscape seem provincial and stifling. His medical leather bag with the Heidelberg imprint becomes a symbol of his European acculturation and scientific temper. He whistles “O Tannenbaum” on his bicycle rides. In contrast with his western leanings, his wife Naseem and the boatman Tai are citadels of tradition and convention. Naseem is offended by her husband’s wish that she discard the purdah. She stubbornly refuses to pose for the photographer commissioned by her husband, for she “was not one to be trapped in anyone’s little black box” (MC 40).

Rushdie underscores the intricacies of identity in Saleem’s concern with tracing origins. Cynthia Carey Abrioux observes that he seems intent on exposing the “farce of origins” as he engages in a parody of nation and name.²⁹ Just as Saleem’s mother has her name changed from Mumtaz to Amina Sinai with her marriage to Ahmed Sinai, Saleem chooses the name Laylah for Parvati who changes her religion and becomes his wife (MC 415). Nadir Khan changes his name to Qasim Khan when he becomes a communitst, and is known as Lal Qasim, i.e. Qasim the Red. Saleem’s sister is dubbed the Brass Monkey until she becomes famous in Pakistan as Jamila Singer for her melodious voice.

The text is an exploration of complex questions about cultural identity. Like Oscar Matzerath from Günter Grass’ *The Tin Drum*, Saleem Sinai is motivated by the artistic impulse to seek his identity through a “self begetting novel”, one which will, synecdochally, also account for the history of their time and place”.³⁰ *Midnight’s Children* is predominantly concerned with a new postcolonial nation attempting to forge an identity and assert itself. The critique of the imperial powers on the other hand, is subtle rather than overt. Brennan notes the manner in which the novel

sardonically reflects orientalist precursors like E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown*. The character of Saleem's grandfather Dr. Aziz harks back to Forster's Dr. Aziz, while the MCC 'Midnight's Children's Conference', comprising the magical children is evocative of the 'Mayapore Chatterjee Club' that the anglicised Hari Kumar is part of, in Scott's novel.³¹

Michael Gorra makes an interesting observation that apart from the near mandatory scene at Jallianwalla Bagh, an engagement with colonialism seems extraneous to the plot. However, he says the colonial backdrop proves unavoidable in that Saleem's family represents the very model of the "native bourgeoisie," happy to occupy the posts vacated by the coloniser.³² He notes that Saleem is schooled in English. His folks reside in a house built by the British on a hilltop. The Englishman, William Methwold names the villas - Versailles, Buckingham, Escorial, and Sans Souci - in the fashion of European palaces. He sells them at a pittance on a proviso that the new owners retain the contents of the home in its entirety. Manipulation is cloaked in what Methwold terms a mere quirk – a "game" (MC 95).

This hegemonic stratagem to make mimic men of the Indians may be regarded as an instance of the discourse of mimicry that Homi K. Bhabha considers "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge".³³ The ambivalence of the discourse of mimicry implies that, inspite of the initial remonstrations to the conditions, the residents succumb to imitation. They fail to realise how they were gradually being changed by the estate:

Every evening at six they are out in their gardens, celebrating the cocktail hour, and when William Methwold comes to call they slip effortlessly into their imitation Oxford drawls; and they are learning about ceiling fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars,

and Methwold, supervising their transformation, is mumbling under his breath. Listen carefully: what's he saying? Yes, that's it. 'Sabkuch ticktock hai,' mumbles William Methwold. All is well. (MC 99)

Mimicry attempts an appropriation of the Other as it envisages power. Thus, the residents begin to imbibe the ethos of the coloniser in the course of the mime. They are unable to discern the ploy of the Englishmen to exert control in this form, even in their act of departure. Conversely, mimicry has a deep and disturbing impact on the power of colonial discourse in that the agenda to reform is imperiled by the "excess or slippage produced by the *ambivalence* of mimicry (almost the same, *but not quite*)". Thereby mimicry is rendered "resemblance" as well as "menace".³⁴ It is menacing in terms of the partial representation of the colonial object thereby upsetting its authority.

The issue of identity also assumes significance in the matter of an affliction that leaked into history and broke out on an enormous scale shortly after Independence. The Rani of Cooch Naheen is among the first to suffer from of this disease of going white in "blotches." She regards it as a symbolic manifestation of anglicisation, of "cross-cultural concerns," an expression of the "internationalism" of her spirit (MC 45). Subsequently, even the businessmen of the country and Aadam Sinai himself will come to be afflicted by this condition.

Identity is problematised most emphatically in the context of Saleem's multiple and uncertain parentage. He represents the plural identities of India. This hybrid self springs from the imagination of a writer shaped by his own experience of plurality and migrancy, in which purity has no place. Saleem is actually the son of an illicit union between an Englishman and a poor Hindu woman. He is brought up by a

Kashmiri Muslim couple who are ignorant of the fact that he has been exchanged at birth with their own son.

The multifaceted origins of the nation are thus taken into account. Through the complex ancestry of Saleem Sinai the novel represents the different social classes and religious backgrounds. All these play a part in the formation of the new nation via Saleem's complex ancestry.

If Ahmed and Amina are his parents, Saleem is Muslim. If Wee Willie Winkie and Vanita are regarded as his parents, he is lower caste Hindu. If Methwold is his father, he is Anglo-Indian. Schaapsteker considers himself a father to Saleem. He feels that he gave Saleem a fresh lease of life curing him by curing him with krait poison when doctors had given up on him. Amina Sinai's dream that she was impregnated by Nadir Khan, provides yet another name to the catalogue of his paternal figures. Further, Saleem's uncle Hanif and aunt Pia act as his surrogate parents for the period when his parents discover he is not their biological offspring. With Saleem considering Zulfikar as a father figure while in Pakistan, he becomes Pakistani Muslim. With Picture Singh earning his paternal affections he is rendered a poor Communist. Mary Pereira the woman responsible for exchanging the children in the first place provides the Christian angle. She takes care of Saleem in the role of his ayah throughout his childhood and finally grants him succour in the form of employment and shelter when he has no place left to turn to at the end of the novel. Saleem finds employment in a pickle factory run by his old ayah and a consort in Padma Mangroli, his co-worker. Through these multiple identities Saleem has to discover his true self.

Saleem's numerous father figures – Methwold, Wee Willie Winkie, Schaapsteker, Nadir Khan, Hanif, Ahmed Sinai, Picture Singh “make him an identity-

defying compound of Moslem, Hindu and British, with a mythological frame of reference that draws on all the components of an Indian melting-pot".³⁵ Plurality is also represented in terms of Saleem's ability to function as a medium for communication with the other children of midnight. The discovery that he can telepathically commune with all of the other children enables him to witness India's complex diversity and heterogeneity first hand. His origins and identity are dubious right from the outset. In addition, in the course of the novel he goes through an amnesiac phase forgetting even his name, and being reduced to a man-dog, while in Pakistan. He is disintegrating at the time of writing his story. This fragmentation is a metaphor for the loss of identity. Saleem has to deal with a mottled history, a decentred country, uncertain parentage and fragmentation of his very being. He is literally the epitome an unstable identity. For, he is not who he thinks he is, his parents are not his parents, and to bring the irony full circle, even his son is not his son.

The narrative technique of *Midnight's Children* corroborates and foregrounds notions of memory and fragmentation. According to Rushdie, the experience of displacement is accompanied by the fragmentation of memory and identity. He speaks of how the diasporic writer who attempts to capture the world is compelled to do so in "broken mirrors", some fragments of which can never be retrieved.³⁶ Keith Wilson regards *Midnight's Children* as a novel centrally concerned with the limitations of the narrative act: "It "deliberately invites a questioning of the credentials of the novelist and of the illusory surface objectivity of the novel form".³⁷ The novel is indeed intensely self-reflexive, inserting the condition of the writing process into the text. This will be discussed in chapter five. Through such metafictional asides Rushdie

penetrates the illusion of the real. He foregrounds fictional truth. He uses a cinematic metaphor to explicate the association between reality and illusion:

Reality is a question of perspective; the further you get from the past, the more concrete and plausible it seems - but as you approach the present, it inevitably seems more and more incredible. Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up, row by row, until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions; the illusion dissolves - or rather, it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality. (MC 165-6)

The narrator acknowledges and even embraces the errors in his novels – both intentional as well as unintentional. The many silences, absences and inconsistencies of the micro narratives are legitimate since the past cannot be completely accounted for. Saleem concedes the difficulty of furnishing an accurate account of event. He feels that “it is possible to create past events simply by saying they occurred” (MC 443). In *Midnight's Children* the first person narrator Saleem draws attention to the error he makes regarding the elections of 1957 and the assassination of Gandhi, but significantly adds “in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time” (MC 166).

Rushdie's justification of fantasy is that India itself was: “quite imaginary”, a “mass fantasy”, “the new myth – a collective fiction in which anything was possible...” (MC 112). The narrator even confesses to the reader that he had concocted the section on Shiva's death:

To tell the truth, I lied about Shiva's death. My first out-and-out lie – although my presentation of the Emergency in the guise of a six-

hundred-and-thirty-five-day-long midnight was perhaps excessively romantic, and certainly contradicted by the available meteorological data. (MC 443)

Truth becomes a construct in the view of the postmodern writer's suspicion of grand narratives. The narrator candidly admits errors, omissions and even lies. Paradoxically, his candour rather than weaken the text, seems to render him more trustworthy as a narrator. As Linda Hutcheon asserts, "this provisionality and uncertainty do not 'cast doubt upon their seriousness', but rather define the new postmodern seriousness that acknowledges the limits and powers of 'reporting' or writing of the past, recent or remote".³⁸ M. Keith Booker is of the opinion that "this Nietzschean-Whitmanesque mode of acceptance of contradiction" is a crucial premise of almost all Rushdie's fiction. He adds that Rushdie's fiction "consistently embraces contradiction, privileging the plural over the singular, the polyphonic over the monologic".³⁹ All of Rushdie's narrators seem unfazed by contradictions.

The lack of the subject knowing the past with any certainty "is not a transcending of history, but a problematised inscribing of subjectivity into history".⁴⁰ Rushdie explicitly states in his essay "Imaginary Homelands" that the mistakes of his narrator Saleem "are the mistakes of a fallible memory". He admits that he made his narrator suspect his narration because his attempt in *Midnight's Children* was primarily a novel of memory, and his India was mainly a version, "and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions".⁴¹ History, in the view of Rushdie, is characterised by ambiguity. He states:

Facts are hard to establish, and capable of being given many meanings. Reality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge. The reading of Saleem's

unreliable narration might be, I believed, a useful analogy for the way in which we all, everyday, attempt to 'read' the world.⁴²

Rushdie's wry statement of clarification in his latest novel *The Enchantress of Florence* to the effect that "A few liberties have been taken with the historical record in the interests of the truth", is a proposition that has implications for his entire corpus of work.⁴³ It is the creative writer's view of history that he presents. In doing this he takes various liberties with conventional history. Nancy E Batty suggests that the most significant message of *Midnight's Children* is the proposition that "if history is composed of fictions, then fiction can be composed of history".⁴⁴

Uma Parameshwaran opines, "At an overt level, Rushdie parodies the traditional form of histories." He does this in several ways. In his portrayal, some of history's significant and violent episodes originate in trivial accidents. For example there is the Nanavati case, the language demonstrations, and the theft of the hair of the Prophet. Parameshwaran feels that Rushdie takes liberties with dates with little regard for "chronometric exactitude that is one of the corner-stones of traditional historical writing".⁴⁵ From a reading of his work it seems like Rushdie is convinced that history and historical events, even reality, are accessible only through one's perception and interpretation.

Rushdie resists "grand narratives" like purity and wholeness. He transcends the precincts imposed by conventional history telling and narrative. He questions historical givens, opposes totalising postulates, and reveals how history is a construct that is available through interpretation. Srivastava feels that by introducing the historical, Rushdie compels the reader to confront ideas of history and fiction. She avers that his stories "displace more politically acceptable ones", thereby providing a voice for the subaltern individual.⁴⁶

The plot of *Midnight's Children* thus anchors itself within a historical context, subverting history in the process. The narrator states that he is far from satisfied with his attempts at pickling his story. He is haunted by the urge to “revise and revise, improve and improve” (MC 460). However, he is obliged to stop at some point. What he says of his own tale can well be said for the author’s creative attempt:

One day, perhaps, the world may taste the pickles of history. They may be too strong for some palates, their smell may be overpowering, tears may rise to eyes; I hope nevertheless that it will be possible to say of them that they possess the authentic taste of truth ... that they are, despite everything, acts of love. (MC 461)

“I, too, am a translated man. I have been borne across.”

- Salman Rushdie (*Shame* 29)

In an article on Pakistan Rushdie avers that it is a place in which “democratic institutions”, indeed “democratic instincts” have never been allowed to germinate. “Instead, the country’s elites - military, political, industrial, aristocratic, feudal - take it in turns to loot the nation’s wealth”.⁴⁷ If *Midnight's Children* was Rushdie’s strenuous attack on the powerful political regime of Indira Gandhi, *Shame* consolidated Rushdie’s position as a dissenting, anti-establishment writer.

Unlike the epic scale of *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* adopts a focus concentrated on the tyrannical and repressive nature of the regimes of the Pakistani elite, wherein democracy has no place and violence reigns. As an act of remonstrance against the autocratic establishment of a postcolonial nation it is a significant

postcolonial text. In the words of Cynthia Carey Abrioux: “The predominant discourse of *Shame* is that of an incendiary and denunciatory evocation of a post-colonial nation in a state of moral chaos and murderous repression”.⁴⁸ This novel is the author’s stringent appraisal of the social and political situation in Pakistan despite the textual disclaimer:

The country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exist, like myself, at a slight angle to reality.... My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan. (S 29) ⁴⁹

The narrator claims that this “off-centering” (S 29) is necessitated by the fact that if he had been writing a realistic novel it would prove futile to argue that he was writing not only about Pakistan but also in universal terms. In that case, he is certain “the book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned”(S 70). In order to avoid public indignation he purports to narrate “a sort of modern fairy tale” (S 70). However, the correlation between certain peculiar happenings in the fairy tale and other equally strange political events in a certain nation is obvious. The narrator’s exposition of the crimes committed in the name of the nation is undertaken via partially reconstructing the regimes of Zia-ul-Haq and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the country.

Locating the narrative in the fourteenth century enabled by the writer’s use of the Islamic Hegiran calendar, underlines the coexistence of medieval as well as modern forces in the country. From its very inception - in terms of geography and topography - the Pakistani landmass is associated with an arbitrary and slapdash origin. The narrator draws attention to its “*insufficiently imagined*” beginnings (S 87).

The country was formed as a political arrangement with the British exiting from India.

The narrator deliberates upon “the famous moth-eaten partition”:

that chopped up the old country and handed Al-Lah a few insect-nibbled slices of it, some dusty western acres and jungly eastern swamps that the ungodly were happy to do without. (Al-Lah’s new country: two chunks of land a thousand miles apart. A country so improbable that it could almost exist). (S 61; original parenthesis)

Pakistan owes its existence to the act of migration. The nation had to will its being. In addition to its migratory nature, the narrator provides an account of the manner in which the country got its name. It was a process distant from the intentions of the people at large:

Pakistan is an acronym originally thought up in England by a group of Muslim intellectuals. P for the Punjabis, A for the Afgans, K for the Kashmiris, S for Sind and the ‘tan’, they say for Baluchistan . . . it was a word born in exile which then went East, was borne across or translated, and imposed itself on history; a returning migrant, settling down on partitioned land, forming a palimpsest on the past. (S 87)

Bangladesh, as a part of East-Pakistan, had no part to play in this scheme of naming. The narrator wryly comments that it subsequently took the hint and triggered off its own secession:

The palimpsestic nature of the country erected over the Indian layer, is underscored. The metaphor of the palimpsest recurs throughout Rushdie’s work. Competing accounts vie for acceptance, and space is reinscribed while the previous inscription remains incompletely erased:

A palimpsest obscures what lies beneath. To build Pakistan it was necessary to cover up Indian history, to deny that Indian centuries lay just beneath the surface of Pakistani Standard Time. The past was rewritten; there was nothing else to be done. (S 87)

Pakistan would rather deny its Indian past. The new nation state had no authoritative past of its own and had to grapple with a complex identity crisis. The seeds of discord were thus inherent. Cynthia Carey Abrioux argues that this lack of stability rendered the nation an easy target for exploitation by ruthless power brokers who were able to “consecutively re-inscribe and recuperate the space”.⁵⁰

Interestingly, the narrative is manipulated by recurring self-reflexive intrusions from the narrator who posits himself as a migrant akin to the Pakistani nation. He self-consciously foregrounds the hybrid status of the work and his status as a postcolonial migrant. Whereas *Midnight's Children* had the protagonist Saleem Sinai in the role of the first person narrator, it is the novelist himself who seems to assume the role of the raconteur of *Shame* in the persona of Rushdie. Migration is an enduring theme in Rushdie's writing. His experience of translation is bound with his conception of Pakistan as a second home. The narrator's self-representation in *Shame* is that of a migrant. He explicitly alludes to his own translation: “I, too know something of this immigrant business. I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England, where I live, and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will)” (S 85; original parentheses).

He reflects upon his expatriate status at length:

Although I have known Pakistan for a long time, I have never lived there for longer than six months at a stretch....I have learned Pakistan in slices....

. . . however I choose to write about over-there, I am forced to reflect that in fragments of broken mirrors . . .(S 69).

And yet again, “As for me: I, too like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist” (S 87). Catherine Cundy posits that the novel articulates “a coherent and positive image of the migrant post-colonial subject”.⁵¹ The distinct sensibility of the migrant writer is articulated. The narrator of *Shame* muses:

I have a theory that the resentments we *mohajirs* engender have something to do with our conquest of the force of gravity. We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown. (S 85)

The experience of migration may be accompanied by an irreplaceable loss, but it can also be an enabling experience. As the narrator puts it, “It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion – and use, in evidence, the success of Fitzgerald-Khayyam – that something can also be gained” (S 29). The reference to the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* points to Rushdie’s view of the hybrid experience being one filled with possibilities. Christopher Lehmann-Haupt notes that even the name Omar bears is that of an Eastern poet unrecognised in his own clime and famous only in translation.⁵²

The book opens in the fabulist mode but history begins to assume centre stage. Arbitrary selections of facts from official history find their way into the text. Gen. Raza Hyder who ultimately becomes president-dictator of his country, is a commentary on Gen. Mohammed Zia ul-Haq. The character of the rich landlord and playboy, Iskander Harappa is a caricature of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He enjoys a successful reign as Prime Minister until he is overthrown by Raza Hyder and

eventually executed after a mock trial for the murder of a relative. The narrative focuses on the careers, contentions and corruption of these two rivals in the political arena.

Timothy Brennan feels that the history in *Shame* “is a history filtered through the ambitious self-images of its protagonists - the history they in effect ‘try on’ to inflate their importance”.⁵³ He opines that while Saleem Sinai endeavours to encompass multitudes, the likes of Bhutto and Zia only downgrade events to their own dimension.

The novel opens in the remote town of Q with the death of old Mr. Shakil, a widower who has raised his three daughters - Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny - in captivity. After the death of their father the three girls realise that he has left them bankrupt. In defiance against the inflexible strictures with which they have been raised, they host a party. Their invitees are primarily the imperialists. That single night of hedonism results in one of them getting pregnant. The pregnancy in turn, leads to their self-imposed confinement which extends for over half a century. Their captivity cements such strong bonds of intimacy and solidarity between them, that in their attempt to spare the illegitimate child public shame, each of the three sisters displays symptoms of pregnancy.

The paternity and maternity of Omar and his brother Babar is disclosed neither to the children of this strange triune motherhood, nor the reader. This motif of confused parentage whereby Rushdie problematises identity is prefigured in *Midnight's Children* via Saleem's complicated ancestry. Like Saleem, Omar has an imperialist for a father, and inherits the colonial legacy as well. He is conceived as a result of a union between the departing imperialists and the Muslims. This echoes the formation of Pakistan. Omar later conceives of his tutor Eduardo Rodrigues as a

father figure. This uncertain parentage splits the consciousness of the character who is then deprived of a fixed core and identity. Ignorance of parentage subverts the attempt to build an integrated sense of self or nationality. In the face of their complicated and ambiguous origins, the characters have to grapple with issues of identity and history.

Despite the numerous references to Omar as the hero, he is in actuality, an object of parody. He is quickly relegated to the margin of events. The narratorial voice wonders: “Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this?” (S 25). Saleem enjoyed a centrality of status in *Midnight's Children* despite his fragmentation. Omar, on the other hand, is well aware of his liminal position. His peripheral nature is in accordance with the peripheral status of the country. In the first few pages of the text he confides in Iskander that he isn't even “the hero of his own life; a man born and raised in the condition of being out of things” (S 24). Omar is born in his grandfather's death-bed which also forms the site for the end that overtakes him. As he is held upside down after his birth, he is afflicted by “a sense of inversion, of a world turned upside-down” (S 21), and “that improbable vertigo ... the sense of being a creature of the edge: a peripheral man” (S 24), continues to plague him all his life. He is paranoid that he will fall off the edge of the world into oblivion. Giddy spells afflict him at geographical borders.

Omar devours his grandfather's books. Unlike his namesake the Persian poet Omar Khayyam however, he has no gift for poetry. Like Adam Aziz in *Midnight's Children*, he follows the path of western education to become a medical doctor. Even when he is physically distanced from his home, he is driven by the injunction of his mothers' ban on shame. He accordingly acts upon the instructions of his mothers in his relationships with Farah Zoroaster, the maid Shahbanou, and his cronies. He is later afflicted by insomnia.

His mothers' refusal to have him circumcised, have his head tonsured or introduce to him religion leaves Omar a potentially secular slate. However, he is unable to rise above degeneracy. Like Saleem in *Midnight's Children*, he disregards his historical potential and gets embroiled in the cancerous political scenario in his nation. The enabling possibilities that can arise from his situation are thwarted by his lack of critical discernment. According to Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, Omar's re-inscription of the forbidden emotion of shame relates to the fact that he "unreflectingly and uncritically reacts to his mother-country's ideological codes".⁵⁴

On his twelfth birthday Omar's wish for freedom is grudgingly granted by his mothers. As he steps out of the fortress that is his home, the book opens up to the wider arena of politics in the nation. Scorned by society for his shameful birth, he adopts a defiant attitude. He finds a fitting crony in Iskander Harappa. This nominal hero of the book - Omar - is sidelined when the narrator turns the spotlight on the private and political fortunes of the two contenders for power in the nation, General Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa.

It is from the purview of a familial structure that the story of the nation unfolds. A family tree marks the opening of the novel. It delineates the various family connections, simultaneously and conspicuously calling attention to Omar's and Babar's anonymous paternity. The real and the fictive are co-opted. In reality, the political families were not related. In the text however, Iskander marries Rani Humayun the cousin of Raza Hyder. Aijaz Ahmed commends the wonderful technical mechanism of converting all the adversaries into kin for the purpose of "reflecting the monopolistic structure of dictatorial power and the very narrow social spectrum within which this power in Pakistan circulates".⁵⁵

Raza Hyder's marriage to Bilquis leads to the birth of Sufiya Zinobia, thwarting her parents' ardent desire and expectation of a male child. To make things worse, while still an infant, a brain fever leaves her mentally retarded. She is trapped in a mind that refuses to keep pace with the development of her body. The brew distilled by a local hatim leads to the side effect of the deceleration of the progress of time in her body. This is a recurrent motif in Rushdie's work. Saleem's hastened initial growth in *Midnight's Children* decelerates as an after effect of the krait poison administered to cure him from a fatal illness. Moraes Zogoiby in *The Moor's Last Sigh* suffers from a condition wherein his physical ageing process is accelerated double-time. Sufiya Zinobia's condition is such that at the age of twelve she has the mind of a three year old.

The story of Omar Khayyam intersects that of the power politics in the form of Sufiya finding a husband in Omar Khayyam her physician. By then, he is an immunologist of international renown. In *Midnight's Children*, Nadir Khan and Mumtaz have a discreet wedding celebration. There are only a few guests present, and no tents, singers or sweetmeats. Similarly, in *Shame*, the idiotic Sufiya "smiled and ate a plate of laddoos decorated with silver paper" (S 199), at her private wedding to Omar – a man thirty-one years her senior. Sufiya who represents shame is blissfully unaware that Omar, a prodigy of sorts has degenerated into the embodiment of shamelessness. The depraved Omar ends up marrying into the family that killed his step-brother. He ultimately impregnates Shahbanou - his wife's ayah - under the roof of his own father-in-law. If, in *Midnight's Children* Rushdie worked the duality between liberal secularism and communal forces via Saleem and Shiva; in *Shame* it is Sufiya and Omar who play out the duality between shame and shamelessness.

Sufiya absorbs the rejection and shame of her parents and also the ignominy of a whole people around her to become shame incarnate. In the course of the novel she becomes almost literally the conscience of a world bereft of shame. She comes to stand for the shame and violence that resulted in the doom of the dictatorship in Pakistan. Sufiya's repressed feelings find an outlet in violence. She decapitates two hundred and eighteen turkeys from the compound of a neighbour at the age of twelve. She goes on to brutally attack her brother-in-law on his wedding day. The discovery that Omar who is not allowed to consummate the marriage with her, sleeps with her servant in her stead, is the final straw. It triggers her evolution into legend. She allegedly turns into a bestial creature - a white panther.

Marriage doesn't ensure the happily-ever-after ending of the conventional fairy story. In this case the beast does not undergo a positive renewal as is the case in the original "Beauty and the Beast" tale. Instead, Sufiya's metamorphosis into the beast is accelerated. Sufiya becomes a symbol of the author's endeavour to fictionalise the emotion of shame.

In the admission of the narrator, the character of Sufiya is partly built upon the incident of a British-Pakistani girl in the East End of London. This girl was killed by her own father in an act of honour killing because he suspected she had copulated with a white boy. Sufiya represents such a notion of shame. The narrator adds that her character is based on yet another British-Asian girl who feels shame rather than indignation at being tormented and beaten by a group of white boys in a late-night train. The narrator imagines this pent up humiliation finding a vent in an awesome violence. This is what happens in the case of Sufiya. Yet another inspiration for the character of Sufiya is a boy from a news item who simply ignited of his own accord and burned to death.

Ayelet Ben-Yishai observes that “The dialectic of shame in this novel is not with its opposite - honour, but with its lack - shamelessness”.⁵⁶ It is about shame and shamelessness, the violence they prompt, and their manifestation. Sufiya is a kind of ‘Jekyll and Hyde’ persona as is subtly indicated by the phonetic congruence of her two surnames Shakil and Hyder.⁵⁷ Under Sufiya’s naive self-effacing exterior lurks the violence that resurfaces at significant points in the tale. She mutilates her own hair at the onset, and moves on to decapitating turkeys as well as men, and ravaging property. Sufiya may be regarded as symbol of the Islamic nation in its utopian aspiration as the land of the pure. In this case her character hints at forces of retribution as a retort to the loss of shame.

The dialectic of shame and shamelessness is symbolically entwined with the power struggles of Bhutto and Zia via Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder. Arjumand Harappa the daughter of Iskander, described famously as “virgin Ironpants” (*S* 107), is loosely modelled on Benazir Bhutto. General Yahya Khan and Sheikh Mujib the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh are models for the character of President Shaggy Dog and Sheikh Bismillah respectively.

Raza Hyder’s career enjoys a meteoric rise. As a Colonel he is appointed to guard the gas fields against the local tribes. He engineers a military conquest as a result of which martial law is imposed. He becomes the administrator after the arrest of the Chief Minister. Raza ruthlessly sends arrested tribals to the gallows. These deeds ultimately lead to his downfall. He is demoted from his position as minister and relegated to commanding the military training unit.

The success of Raza Hyder -his wife’s cousin - and his own cousin Little Mir Harappa instigate Iskander Harappa. He is goaded into abandoning his debauched lifestyle. Subsequently, he parts ways with his dissolute crony Omar and his mistress

Pinkie Aurangzeb, recognising them as hindrances to his political agenda. He thus enters the political field with a Machiavellian brilliance. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke observes that

Isky, like Bhutto, is a self-contradictory man, the scion of an enormously wealthy landowning family (the surname Harappa is doubly appropriate because the site of the Harappan civilisation borders Bhutto's family estate in the Sind province), patrician, Westernized, yet he adopts a populist manner to succeed as a politician – rhetorical speeches, bad language, histrionics.⁵⁸

As Prime Minister, Iskander's error that leads to his downfall is the restitution of Raza. Discounting other worthy candidates, he raises Raza from the doldrums and makes him Commander-in-Chief of the army. The narrator interjects: "this single error proved to be the undoing of the ablest statesman who ever ruled that country which had been so tragically misfortunate, so accursed in its heads of state" (S 181). Raza ejects Iskander through a military coup and has him executed. Iskander Harappa - the man who had ushered a new century ahead of time, whose name "was etched on history in letters of burning gold" (S 183) – could not overpower Time with his greatness. "Time's revenge: it hung him out to dry" (S 186).

After ousting Iskander, Raza assured the people via national television, swearing on the Koran, that the army was only acting as an umpire and elections would be held. The elections were deferred repeatedly and ultimately cancelled. It was at this time that the initials CMLA standing for "Chief Martial Law Administrator" acquired new import. "People began to say what they really stood for was *Cancel My Last Announcement*" (S 227). This act prefigured a reign marked by Islamic punishments such as flogging and cutting-off hands, banning alcohol and

imported movies, regulating television programmes, making the veil mandatory, replacing the legal system with religious courts, incarceration of beggars and members of the Popular Front party on grounds that “God and socialism were incompatible” (S 247). “God was in charge” and those who doubted that were given proof of the power of the divine. Anti-faith elements were just simply made to vanish, “poof, like so” (S 248).

The imposition of Islamic fundamentalism in the name of religion could gain currency because of the regard of people for the rhetoric of faith and their susceptibility to manipulation thereof. Even *Midnight's Children* makes a reference to the feeble grasp of the “Karachiites” on reality, which disposed them to “turn to their leader for advice on what was real and what was not” and exude the “odours of acquiescence” (MC 308). But, the narrator states that ultimately one tires of the situation. In that case the available options include “disintegration, or a new dictatorship” or, what is termed the “myth” of “liberty; equality; fraternity” (S 251).

Raza's is a military regime while Iskander who propagated the notion of ‘Islamic socialism’ (S 150) is an elected representative. Both reigns however, are marked by grave political delinquencies for they are both despots. Goonetilleke notes that Isky and Raza are portrayed as buffoons but what they inflict on Pakistan is not in the nature of farce, but tragedy.⁵⁹

Rushdie's work, *Shame* in particular persistently signals what Samir Dayal terms “the problematic imbrication of gender with nation”.⁶⁰ Women are central to Rushdie's development of his theme in the text. Political oppression is connected with sexual suppression. The narrator explicitly avows:

I had thought, before I began, that what I had on my hands was an almost excessively masculine tale But the women seem to have

taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies It occurs to me that the women knew precisely what they were up to – that their stories explain, and even subsume, the men’s So it turns out that my ‘male’ and ‘female’ plots are the same story, after all.

(S 173)

The masculine account is balanced by the feminine. Rushdie’s interrogation of gender is a key to the larger context of discourse of the nation. In keeping with the declared aim of giving voice to the subaltern female, a good part of narrative space is devoted to women. History unfolds through the stories of the numerous women: Rani, the silent suffering wife of Iskander Harappa who is evocative of Penelope from Greek myth, her daughter Arjumand Harappa, Bilquis, the wife of Raza Hyder, Bilquis’ daughters Naveed and Sufiya Zinobia. Sufiya Zinobia brings together the various narrative strands. She is simultaneously an embodiment of the shame of the family and of the nation. She can be regarded as the rebellion of the woman against patriarchal codes, and a people against tyranny at large. The narrative asserts:

Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honour and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well. (S 173)

Correspondingly, much of the response to *Shame* has focused on its portrayal of women. Opinions have varied with critics like Timothy Brennan, Ben Yishai and Anuradha Needham praising Rushdie’s strong women characters, to those like Aijaz Ahmed and Inderpal Grewal charging him with misogyny. D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke and Catherine Cundy are among those who criticise Rushdie’s representation of women.

Cundy for instance, considers the manner in which the declared project of the text is a “formal manoeuvre” destabilised by the very representation of the women within the text in extreme terms.⁶¹

A sense of entrapment looms large over the novel. At the onset one witnesses the confinement of the three girls. They, in turn, sequester their son Omar Khayyam Shakil. In the climax of the novel, the dictator Raza meets his end in a cage-like contraption at Omar’s ancestral home. This ‘dumb-waiter’ was constructed by the three sisters to transport things from the outside world. Each of the characters- the women in particular - is ensnared in a situation that defies escape or real agency. Needham feels that Rushdie tries to “*expose* the particular and horrifying condition of their oppression through his searing indictment of a culture that closes women off from the whole range of social, cultural, and political networks” that are accessible to the men.⁶²

The three Shakil sisters turn their backs on society and live on their own terms. However, in their assertion and rebellion they take things to an extreme. Naveed Hyder is trapped in her procreative role. Talvar Ulhaq uses his clairvoyant abilities to impregnate her annually and she bears children that increase each year in arithmetic progression. So, in the year of Iskander’s fall, her children numbered twenty seven. Driven to despair “by the pressure of the children who were so numerous that she forgot their names, she hired an army of ayahs and abandoned her offspring to their fate” (*S* 207). She seeks a release from her role as child bearer by committing suicide.

Arjumand Harappa rues her sexuality and makes every attempt to deny it. Her father had warned her that since it was a man’s world, she would have to surmount her gender if she wanted to participate in power structures. Arjumand takes her

father's caveat to an extreme. She underplays her femininity in order to empower herself in political terms. She deals with her unrequited love for Haroun Harappa by directing her energies into politics.

Bilquis Hyder and Rani Harappa are relegated to their exilic locales for large parts of the action. Bilquis is complicit with patriarchal standards in her self-dissatisfaction for not providing her husband a male heir. Rani Harappa turns a blind eye to her husband's infidelities. However, she is the only female in the novel who is able to act positively via her legacy of "an epitaph of wool" (S 191). Through her embroidery of eighteen shawls she illustrates the personal and political transgressions committed by her husband. She titles the collection "The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great", and dispatches it to her daughter Arjumand, whose adoration for her father Iskander had blinded her to his misdemeanours.

"No two sets of memories ever match, even when their subject is the same", claims the narrator. In pictorial detail the shawls tell their tale: "Isky groveling at primrose Chinese feet, Isky conspiring with Pahlevi, embracing Dada Amin", "Iskander and the Death of Democracy, his hands around her throat, squeezing Democracy's gullet", "Iskander pointing at the future, only there was nothing on the horizon". She puts her maiden signature - Rani Humayun - to the work, which marks her attempt to retrieve her selfhood. This "act of accusation on the grandest conceivable scale" goes beyond the defiance of a single individual, to function as a subversion of history (S 191-96). It is the act of the artisan exposing an alternate version of official history. Although Rani's needlework does not occupy much narrative space, it assumes significance beyond the passive attempt of one individual. In Needham's observation, the events depicted by the shawls have a factual base and are therefore an indictment on a grand scale. She states that the shawls: "*do* describe

‘unspeakable things’ that actual history has covered up”.⁶³ They thereby go beyond the boundaries of the book into the real world.

As an attempt to salvage what lies beneath the palimpsestic present, Rani’s artistic act is comparable with that of Saleem’s literal as well as metaphorical attempt at pickling his account of history. It also recalls Moraes Zogoiby in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*, writing his story in a bid to continue living.

Sufiya Zinobia becomes a “human guillotine” a monstrous creature akin to a kind of nemesis (S 244). According to Syed Mujeebuddin, “the severest indictment of the insularity of Pakistani society is emblemized in Sufiya Zinobia”.⁶⁴ Blusing in shame from birth, she is unable to react in any other manner beside violence. Rushdie has repeatedly highlighted that the coming together of shame and shamelessness can only engender violence. The single collective attempt in the book wherein “the women of the country began marching against God” (S 249), is quelled by Raza Hyder.

Aijaz Ahmed concedes that an appraisal of Rushdie’s representation of women in *Shame* is a complex undertaking given the fact that he is astute and capable of narrating oppression of women, and is not a “misogynist plain and simple”.⁶⁵ Ahmed finds the novel populated by women who are “frigid and desexualized”, “demented and moronic”, “driven to despair”, or embodiments of “sheer surreal incoherence and loss of individual identity” (S 144). He argues that in spite of the author’s patina of concern with women who are undoubtedly portrayed more sympathetically than the men, the novel is flawed if “virtually every woman is to be pitied, most are to be laughed at, some are to be feared, at least some of the time, but none may be understood in relation to those fundamental projects of survival and overcoming.”⁶⁶

While the validity of Ahmed's claim has to be admitted, Justyna Deszcz argues that Sufiya may be inarticulate but she is also an autonomous individual who rebels against patriarchy. Deszcz is of the view that *Shame* cannot be regarded as anti-feminist. She interprets the text in terms of Rushdie's appropriation of the fairy-tale 'Beauty and the Beast', to make it an "anti-paternalist narrative" that goes beyond the archetype. She feels that Rushdie provides an exposition of how authorial strictures may be destabilised. As a contribution to the interrogation of patriarchal repression, she regards *Shame* as a testament to the "feminist poetics" in his work. She maintains that what is most significant, "is not whether one's allegiances can be clearly defined as feminist or not, but whether one engages in the act of exposing women's stories".⁶⁷

Ambreen Hai draws attention to the ambivalence of Rushdie's feminism. She notes a dual inclination in Rushdie's work from *Midnight's Children* to *The Moor's Last Sigh*, wherein Rushdie seems to be employing feminist approaches to further his own postcolonial narration. She submits that his declared feminism becomes increasingly complex and "ambivalent" in the course of his corpus of work. The feminist bent in Rushdie seems to be offset by its lapse "into reifications of stereotypes of gender and sexuality...and into replaying surprisingly parochial and patriarchal discourses of gender and sexuality."⁶⁸ She goes on to view this incongruity as an indication of "contradictory efforts to conjoin discourses of colonialism and gender". She concludes with the assertion that it is imperative to appreciate the extent "of agency and self-consciousness" with which writing such as Rushdie's makes an attempt to rectify such inconsistency.⁶⁹

The text stands charged in the matter of Rushdie's characterisations being subordinated to his political concerns. However, it may be argued that this extends to the portrayal of almost all the other characters as well. While it is true that the women

who populate Rushdie's novels often seem to accept the conventional role of the male as the ultimate authority it must be noted that they are strong willed and assertive, varied and powerfully drawn.

Omar's end, like that of Saleem's is an unusual one. He is decapitated by his wife in his mother's house at Nishapur and obliterated in the explosion that overtakes the end. The conclusion is shrouded in ambiguity. In all likelihood, Sufiya literally explodes in fulfilment of the portent of the boy who self ignited. "Humiliate people for long enough and a wildness bursts out of them" (S 117), the narrator had warned. The carnage at the close of the novel wipes out the entire cast.

Ahmed considers it an elemental conceptual flaw that the writer is not able to "include integral regenerative possibilities" within the world he creates.⁷⁰ However, such regenerative possibilities could well prove simplistic given the complex and highly volatile nature of the socio-political situation in the subcontinent. Indeed, as Ahmed aptly notes, the predominant concern in *Shame* is that of "a space occupied so entirely by power that there is no space left for either resistance or its representation; whoever claims to resist is already enmeshed in relation of power and the logic of all-embracing violences".⁷¹ Even while he concedes the relevance of Ahmed's diagnosis of Rushdie's fiction lacking optimism, Samir Dayal wonders whether such optimism would in fact be warranted. Indeed, history seems to be repeating itself in present day politics in the subcontinent and with specific reference to the situation in Pakistan. With the military holding sway lately, and the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the message of *Shame* not only seems presaged, but so very pertinent.

In *Midnight's Children* as well as *Shame*, Rushdie interweaves history and politics as he deliberates upon the identity of the nation states of India and Pakistan.

He is disappointed with the postcolonial nation because those who came to lead it were, as Timothy Brennan puts it, “sell-outs and power brokers”.⁷²

The writer’s disenchantment with a disoriented, aimless generation is encapsulated in *Midnight’s Children*. The aspirations of the new nation are at variance from its frustrating realities. Even so, India emerges from the book as a land of possibilities in the form of its voluminous meandering narrative. *Shame* shares stylistic techniques with *Midnight’s Children* but as its scope demands, it is tightly crafted. The exhilaration that greeted Independence in the young postcolonial nation of Pakistan has jaded. The country is thereby floundering in the midst of lost ideals, rampant corruption and repressive governments. Iskander had once told his daughter that as a nation the people had an outstanding talent for “self-destruction”. He continued: “ ‘we nibble away at ourselves, we eat our children, we pull down anyone who climbs up. But I insist that we shall survive’ ”(S 184). Despite its staying power, the world portrayed in *Shame* is a grim one.

Rushdie regards himself as a writer of political fiction. *Midnight’s Children* and *Shame* condemn acquiescence and quiescence in the face of tyranny. They insist upon political engagement and social accountability. Rushdie emphasises the need for “books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world”. His best work manages to accomplish just this.

Notes

¹ Aruna Srisvastava, “‘The Empire Writes Back,’ Language and History in Shame and Midnight’s Children,” ARIEL 20.4 (1989): 62.

² Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (New York: Routledge, 1990) 123.

³ Hutcheon, Poetics 105.

⁴ Hutcheon, Poetics 105.

⁵ Hutcheon, Poetics 108.

⁶ Hutcheon, Poetics 5.

⁷ Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism (London: Routledge, 1989) 161.

⁸ Hutcheon, Poetics 120.

⁹ Hutcheon, Poetics 120.

¹⁰ Neil Ten Kortenaar, “Midnight’s Children and the Allegory of History,” Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*: A Book of Readings, ed., Meenakshi Mukherjee (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003) 29.

¹¹ Jago Morrison, “Imagining Nations: Salman Rushdie’s Counter-histories” Contemporary Fiction (New York: Routledge, 2003) 138.

¹² Morrison 141.

¹³ Salman Rushdie, Midnight’s Children, 1981 (London: Vintage, 1995).

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¹⁴ Salman Rushdie, “The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987,” Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991 (London: Granta; New Delhi Penguin, 1991) 26.

¹⁵ Salman Rushdie, "Influence," Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002 (New York: Modern Library, 2003) 64.

¹⁶ Sabrina Hassumani qtd. in Eric L. Berlatsky, Fact, Fiction and Fabrication: History, Narrative, and the Postmodern Real from Woolf to Rushdie, diss., U of Maryland College Park, (2003) 276, 28 Dec. 2008
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¹⁷ Eric L. Berlatsky 276.

¹⁸ Hutcheon, Poetics 123.

¹⁹ Rushdie, "Attenborough's Gandhi," Imaginary Homelands 103.

²⁰ Timothy Brennan, Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation (London: Macmillan, 1989) 113.

²¹ Kortenaar 44.

²² Anuradha Dingwaney, "Salman Rushdie (1947-)," Writers of the Indian Diaspora: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook., ed., Emmanuel Nelson (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1993) 370.

²³ V.B. Salunke, "Salman Rushdie and India," The Novels of Salman Rushdie, eds., G. R. Taneja and R. K. Dhawan 186.

²⁴ Uma Parameshwaran, "'Lest he returning chide': Saleem Sinai's Inaction," The Perforated Sheet: Essays on Salman Rushdie's Art (New Delhi: East-West, 1988) 33.

²⁵ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," Imaginary Homelands 16.

²⁶ T. Vijay Kumar, "'Doing the Dangerous Thing': An Interview with Salman Rushdie," Mukherjee, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 220.

²⁷ Josna E. Rege, "Victim into Protagonist? Midnight's Children and the Post-Rushdie National Narratives of the Eighties," Mukherjee, Rushdie's *Midnight's* 203.

²⁸ Keith Wilson, "Midnight's Children and Reader Responsibility," Critical Quarterly 26.3 (1984): 24-25.

²⁹ Cynthia Carey Abrioux, "In the Name of the Nation: Salman Rushdie's Shame," Commonwealth 18.1 (1995): 51.

³⁰ Patricia Merivale, "Saleem Fathered by Oskar: Intertextual Strategies in Midnight's Children and The Tin Drum," Mukherjee, Rushdie's *Midnight's* 117.

³¹ Brennan 82.

³² Michael Gorra, "The Novel in an Age of Ideology: On the Form of Midnight's Children," After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997) 131.

³³ Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," Location of Culture (London:Routledge, 1994) 85.

³⁴ Bhabha 86.

³⁵ Wilson 29.

³⁶ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" 11.

³⁷ Wilson 30.

³⁸ Hutcheon, Poetics 117.

³⁹ M. Keith Booker, "Beauty and the Beast: Dualism as Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie," ELH 57 (1990): 978. JSTOR. 20 Mar. 2006

<<http://www.jstor.org>>

⁴⁰ Hutcheon, Poetics 118.

⁴¹ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" 10.

⁴² Rushdie, "'Errata': Or, Unreliable Narration in Midnight's Children," Imaginary Homelands 25.

⁴³ Salman Rushdie, The Enchantress of Florence (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008) Copyright page.

⁴⁴ Nancy E. Batty, "The Art of Suspense: Rushdie's 1001 (Mid-)Nights," Mukherjee, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 110.

⁴⁵ Parameshwaran 7.

⁴⁶ Srisvastava 77.

⁴⁷ Rushdie, "November 1999: Pakistan," Step 285.

⁴⁸ Abrioux 48.

⁴⁹ Salman Rushdie, Shame (Calcutta: Rupa; London: Picador- Pan, 1983) 29.

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⁵⁰ Abrioux 50.

⁵¹ Catherine Cundy, Salman Rushdie, Contemporary World Writers (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 56.

⁵² Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, rev. of Shame, by Salman Rushdie, New York Times 2 Nov. 1983: 27.

⁵³ Brennan 119.

⁵⁴ Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, "The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie," Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, ed. M.D. Fletcher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994) 151.

⁵⁵ Aijaz Ahmed, In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1994) 140.

⁵⁶ Ayelet Ben-Yishai, "The Dialectic of Shame: Representation in the Metanarrative of Salman Rushdie's Shame," Modern Fiction Studies (2002): 201.

⁵⁷ Morrison 148.

⁵⁸ D.C.R.A.Goonetilleke, Salman Rushdie, Macmillan Modern Novelists (New York: St. Martin's, 1998) 60.

⁵⁹ Goonetilleke 62.

⁶⁰ Samir Dayal, "The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie's Shame," Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association 31.3 (1998): 39
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⁶¹ Cundy 55.

⁶² Needham, 153.

⁶³ Needham 156.

⁶⁴ Syed Mujeebuddin, "Centres and Margins: Shame's 'Other' Nation," Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights, eds. Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Joel Kuortti, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003) 143.

⁶⁵ Ahmed 143.

⁶⁶ Ahmed 151.

⁶⁷ Justyna Deszcz, "Salman Rushdie's Attempt at a Feminist Fairytale Reconfiguration in Shame," Folklore 1 Apr. 2004. HighBeam Research, 2 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>

⁶⁸ Ambreen Hai, "'Marching In from the Peripheries': Rushdie's Feminized Artistry and Ambivalent Feminism," Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie, ed. M. Keith Booker (New York: G. K. Hall, 1999) 18.

⁶⁹ Hai 47.

⁷⁰ Ahmed 151.

⁷¹ Ahmed 127.

⁷² Brennan 27.

III

Diasporic Dislocation: Traversing Transnational Spaces in

The Ground Beneath Her Feet and Fury

...the migrant is, perhaps, the central or defining figure of the Twentieth Century.

- Salman Rushdie (*Imaginary Homelands* 277)

Migration, with the shifting of cultural borders that it engenders, is a defining feature of the contemporary world. It has thus fittingly become, in the words of Edward Said “a potent, even enriching, motif of modern culture” as the exile, aware that homes are transient, “cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience”.¹ In the view of Iain Chambers, the concept of migrancy is characterised by a traffic wherein points of departure as well as arrival are ambiguous as the experience of migration “calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation”.²

In such a scenario terms like ‘diaspora’ ‘immigrant’, ‘expatriate’, ‘exile’, ‘émigré’, are gaining currency. The term diaspora can be traced to the Greek word dia (through) and speiro (to scatter or sow seeds) in terms of etymology. Initially used by the ancient Greeks, the word diaspora came to be used specifically in the context of Jews scattered in exile. Presently, the term has come to refer to any people or population that is transnational - that is residing in a land other than that of its origin, and the development in their dispersal and culture.

Rushdie himself is the prototypical translated and transnational postcolonial involved, as he concedes, in “crossing frontiers all my life - physical, social, intellectual, artistic borderlines”.³ The eternal outsider, fugitive and exile, he finds himself in a perennial limbo with his Indian descent, his stay in Pakistan, England,

lately New York and the shadow of the fatwa continuing to haunt him. It is no wonder then, that the decentrement of the individual emerges as a persistent concern in Rushdie's fiction and non-fiction. According to him migrants are new types of human beings:

who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves -because they are so defined by others - by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur....The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier. ⁴

Rushdie is convinced that migrancy is a dominant trope of our time. He views it as a general ontological condition whereby each of us is a migrant in that we all cross frontiers.⁵ But he does go beyond this limitless nebulous stance to consider the facilitating as well as incapacitating possibilities associated with the translated experience. In his view the migrant sensibility is a "burdensome freedom".⁶ In his non-fictional essays as well as in *Shame*, Rushdie makes it clear that the process of "translation" has been one of loss as well as gain (S 29), not unlike Homi Bhabha who considers the "ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference".⁷ Bhabha feels that human history has entered a period of hybridised cosmopolitanism. Thus:

America leads to Africa; the nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia; the margins of the nation displace the centre; the people of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis. The island story is told from the eye of the aeroplane The bastion

of Englishness crumbles at the sight of immigrants and factory workers.⁸

Rushdie views hybridity as an enabling category. It is the liberating and enabling connotations that accompany such transculturation that fascinates Rushdie in the main. He chooses to focus on the potential for creative gain that such a conflict can engender. Writing in the context of migrant writers in the essay "Imaginary Homelands" he reiterates:

Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy.⁹

Bhiku Parekh relates the diasporic Indian to the banyan tree that is able to nourish itself from its widespread roots. In a similar vein he observes that the diasporic Indian is not homeless but has several homes.¹⁰ Much diasporic writing favours this double perspective. Nevertheless, the frontiers between the different worlds persevere. The condition of being an insider as well as an outsider, of living in between worlds, leads to an identity that is moulded in transit and one that is relentlessly mutating.

Midnight's Children subsumes the idea of migration as it deals with the transition of India as a country into a postcolonial nation. Harveen Sachveda Mann notes that in the course of the life of Saleem Sinai, Rushdie narrates the numerous violent changes that accompanied the country's "migration into postcolonial nationhood; of class struggles, language battles, religious skirmishes, political machinations, and territorial wars with neighbouring countries..."¹¹ The work directly engages with migration when Saleem migrates to Pakistan along with his

entire family. *Shame* also incorporates the theme of migration as it charts the trajectory of the translated past of the Pakistani nation. In the article: “‘Being Borne Across’: Translation and Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*,” Mann considers how *The Satanic Verses* offers Rushdie’s most emphatic articulation of the theme of migration and metamorphosis. Likewise, the two texts that are the focus of this chapter *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* centrally explore the theme of diasporic dislocation in both literal and metaphoric terms.

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* all three of Rushdie’s protagonists – Ormus Cama, Umeed Merchant and Vina Apsara find themselves in the role of globetrotting migrants. The story spans four continents as the characters attempt a double act of migration from India to Britain and then the United States. A part of the plot is played out in Mexico. Temporally the novel opens on Valentine’s Day in 1989 - a wry reference to the day the fatwa was pronounced against Rushdie. The backward-directed narrative then moves back to Bombay of the 1950s, to Britain of the 1960s, and on to America in the 70s and 80s, to make a brief stop in Mexico in 1989 where the earthquake tragedy occurs. The narrative then goes beyond the ill-fated opening to finally close in America of the 90s.

The three protagonists meet as children in post-independence Bombay. Born into a Zoroastrian family in Bombay, in 1937, Ormus’ entry into the world is almost accidental. He surprises his unsuspecting parents as the live baby that follows his dead twin. Rai’s parents meet for the first time at the hospital where they are both present to pay a condolence visit at the stillbirth of Gayomart Cama. The marriage of Rai’s parents will later be destroyed by another rival - the city of Bombay itself. His father cherishes the Art-Deco past of the city, while his mother anticipates and contributes to its skyscrapered future. Vina arrives as a ward of Pилоo and Golmatol Doodhwala.

Born to an Indian father and Greek-American mother in 1944 in the United States, this half-Indian girl born Nissa Shetty, was sent to her distant relatives, the Doodhwalas, after a spate of tragedies overtake her family. Vina escapes from the ill treatment meted out by her guardians, to find asylum and affection under the roof of the narrator Umeed's family.

Umeed, also known as Rai, is the third angle of the Ormus-Vina-Rai love triangle, as Vina's occasional lover. The fateful love-at-first-sight meeting of Ormus and Vina occurs in a Bombay record store and their legendary romance begins in the 1950s. Their relationship is constantly punctuated by spells of self imposed abstinence and absence. The lovers are parted as a result of a host of circumstances which lead Vina to London, only to be reunited years later.

It is Ormus and Vina's pact to delay their marriage for ten years that is channeled into inspiring their musical genius. Ormus is a musician par excellence, while Vina is a supremely gifted singer. Their formation of the rock band VTO propels them into the international limelight as the two most famous rock stars the world has known. Their migration to the U.S. brings them rock stardom through two decades, at the end of which they decide to go solo. Vina ultimately dies in an earthquake on a performing tour in Mexico. Subsequently, Ormus gets killed by a Vina look-alike in New York. It is Rai Merchant the narrator who ends up finding ordinary human love.

"Disorientation is loss of the East" Rai explains, but he also wonders: "Suppose that it's only when you dare let go that your real life begins?" (*GF* 176).¹² When the protagonists physically leave Bombay and go west, the disorientation extends to their identity as well as their notion of reality. Rushdie is convinced that the disturbance of reality as a result of the experience of dislocation teaches migrants

that “reality is an artefact”.¹³ M. D. Fletcher notes that Rushdie’s fiction explores the manner in which “migration heightens one’s awareness that perceptions of reality are relative and fragile”.¹⁴ This concern is most explicit in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

The chapter of Ormus leaving India is aptly titled “Membrane” (*GF* 250), wherein he feels that he is literally passing through a permeable membrane into an unknown new reality. Rachel Falconer opines that this critical moment of crossing a frontier wherein one world literally falls back and a new one hastens to take its place, leaves the migrant with a sense of reality as something provisional.¹⁵ The text substantiates the confusion that accompanies the crossing of the frontier. The relative nature of reality is brought into question in terms of the notion of the palimpsestic parallel world presented in the text. This alternative but vivid other reality is encountered by Ormus Cama on his flight from Bombay to London, in the form of an attractive young woman called Maria who is accompanied by her teacher. Maria visits Ormus even in London and tells him about her own world which she claims may be on a collision course with the world Ormus inhabits.

Both the male migrant protagonists in the text are amenable to a double vision. At first Maria haunts Ormus while he is awake as well as when he is asleep. She also visits him during his comatose years. In the years following Vina’s death, it is Rai who has access to this other world. It is during his photographic experiments in double-exposure that Rai discovers spectral figures captured on film. He recognises Maria and her teacher, the visitors from the other reality. Maria’s teacher makes an appearance on videotape, apologising for Maria’s behaviour and explaining the existence of doors between worlds that allow other realities. In her view, earthquakes are an indicator of two colluding realms. These beings from the other vista alert Rai about the impending end of their own world. They beseech him to rescue Ormus from

his self imposed isolation after Vina's demise. The notion of the possibility of unlimited dimensions existing as palimpsests over and around our own had been prefigured way back in Rushdie's *Grimus*.

The mystery behind Ormus' killer also hints at the other world. The assassin remains shrouded in obscurity. Questions linger as to whether it was Vina who returned from the dead to claim her beloved, or a Vina impersonator. Rai, the rationalist in the text ultimately concedes: "I think she came and got him because she knew how much he wanted to die" (*GF* 571).

In reflection of this textual uncertainty, historical fact ceases to hold sway and mingles with the fictive. Historical errata creep in. Kennedy, for instance is not shot in Dallas. It is a Palestinian marksman who allegedly kills both John and his brother Bobby Kennedy. Nixon was never president and Britain is involved in the Vietnam war. It is not Elvis Presley, but his biological twin who survives. Protagonists from various fictions swap places with their creators. Pierre Menard Kilgore Trout Stephen Dedalus, Henri Hulot thus take the place of Jorge Luis Borges, Kurt Vonnegut, James Joyce, Jacques Tati, while Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* becomes *Catch-18*. The fictive assumes the status of reality. For instance "The Garden of Forking Paths", the title story in a book of short stories by Borges is cited as Vina's "favorite nineteenth-century novel, the interminable masterwork of the Chinese genius...Ts'ui Pên." (*GF* 351) Real songs, on the other hand, are attributed to fictive performers.

If the city be perceived as the model of the contemporary world, the protagonists are metropolitan figures engaged in rewriting the urban script. In the words of Iain Chambers, the "migrant's sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present, is perhaps the most fitting metaphor of this (post)modern condition".¹⁶ Bombay, London and New York are the

three great metropolises of the world evoked. A starry eyed Ormus leaves London for Manhattan, only to find his hopes dashed – an experience that finds its echo in that of the protagonist of *Fury*. The text draws attention to:

The rusting decadence of the city at ground level, its shoulder-barging vulgarity, its third-world feel (the poverty, the traffic, the slo-mo dereliction of the winos and the cracked-glass dereliction of too many of the buildings, the unplanned vistas of urban blight, the ugly street furniture), and the bizarreries to which Vina initially insists on exposing him . . . these things fuel his celebrated moral disgust. (*GF* 387)

Ormus' anguish finds expression in his music. After the huge success of their rock group VTO in London in the sixties, Ormus and Vina's talent takes America by storm in the next two decades. An entire generation of "disoriented" young Americans join the ranks of their ardent fan base (*GF* 379).

Whereas it is discontentment that triggers Ormus's move to England, Rai's own reasons are a sense of surfeit and claustrophobia in Bombay. While Ormus is increasingly disillusioned with the West that he encounters, Rushdie makes wry observations about the state of affairs in India. "But here is our very own special talent; we should celebrate it. About scams we don't need to learn a thing. We can teach" (*GF* 235). He continues: "there is the infinite indifference of India. *Chalta-hai*, isn't it? So it goes. We expect our Piloos to get up to tricks, and we shrug and turn away" (*GF* 234).

In terms of the bigger picture the novel charts the canvas of politics and society. It is the corruption in Indian public life that receives the spotlight for the initial part of the novel in which Bombay forms the locale. Laloo Prasad Yadav thinly

disguised as Pilloo Doodhwala is the target of Rushdie's satire. The narrator wryly deliberates upon how we in India have been fortunate to observe some of "the best of the best-members of the trickster hall of fame." He ironically notes that this stems from the fact that we are difficult to impress. This leads us to demand the "highest levels of performance from our public crooks." Thus "we rely upon the scamster to rekindle a sense of wonder dulled by the excess of our daily lives" (*GF* 232).

The narrator notes that Pilloo Doodhwala is "unshakeably ensconced as India's Scambaba Deluxe". He blatantly catalogues various scams:

The People's Car scam of the later 1970s (huge sums of public money disappeared from a project headed by Sanjay G.), the Swedish Cannons scam of the 1980s (huge sums of public money went astray from an international arms deal that besmirched the reputation of Rajiv G.), and the Stock Exchange scam of the 1990s (strenuous efforts were made to fix the movements of certain key stocks, using, naturally, huge sums of public money). (*GF* 232; original parentheses)

The Fodder scam in which Pilloo Doodhwala is embroiled in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, is associated with his ownership of a hundred million wholly fictitious goats. Rai is on a mission to expose this scam. It is ironic that when the scam comes to light, instead of destroying Pilloo, it only leads to an increase of his power. There were demonstrations in his support. On his imprisonment he declared that he would run for public office. "The Bombay jailkhana became Pilloo's royal court", where powerful figures came to pay him homage. He was granted a Presidential pardon and elected mayor (*GF* 245).

The narrator combines humour with derision as he concedes the creative genius of the scam artiste. He states: "The flim-flam maestro is a superman for our

times”, soaring above all convention and plausibility. And strangely, if his ruse fails, “like the melting wings of Icarus, then we love him all the more for revealing his human frailty, for falling fatally to earth” (*GF* 231).

Rai’s exposé serves to bring Piloo to book. However, Rai in turn, harbours his own secret. He is guilty for passing off a murdered photographer’s film as his own. It is these photographs that launch him on his international career. He admits, “Piloo Doodhwala had his scam; and as you see, I had mine. He made four billion dollars. I just made my name” (*GF* 245).

The narrative takes the form of a love story. The text asserts “*Venus significant humanitatem*. It is love that is the sign of our humanity” (*GF* 414). It is the love of Ormus and Vina that holds the plot together. Unknown to Ormus, Vina on the other hand intermittently shares a non-platonic relationship with Rai who has always been in love with Vina. Rai yearns for Vina to return his sentiments and is content in the role of her confidant and part-time lover. It is only after Vina’s death that he discovers a more stable love and builds a fulfilling relationship with Mira Celano. He is initially intrigued by Mira’s shocking resemblance to and impersonation of Vina, but grows to love her for her own person.

Rushdie enhances and even universalises his subject with the Orpheus and Eurydice legend which forms the mythic underpinning to the story. Orpheus was said to be one of the chief musicians of antiquity who could enchant nature with his music and song. It is believed that while fleeing from the advances of Aristaeus, Eurydice was killed by snake bite. Orpheus who ventured into Hades in quest of his wife, managed to charm all those in Hades including Persephone with his melodies. They, in turn, permit Eurydice to return to earth on the famous condition that Ormus should walk ahead of her and not turn to glance behind until he reached his world. Ormus’

curiosity and anguish get the better of him. He loses Eurydice forever as he glances backward. His failure to retrieve her is a stock ingredient of the myth.

Rushdie employs this framework with significant divergences. Orpheus provides the model for the character of Ormus who is a talented singer and musician. Of course, Vina is his Eurydice. The earth literally opens up during the earthquake in Mexico to swallow Vina. This incident gives its name to the title of the text: *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. It is evocative of the trepidation of the earth that swallows Eurydice into Hades. In this case however, rather than resist the advances of Rai who is the Aristaen figure in the text, Vina is involved in an intermittent affair with him. Rai is an anagram of Ari-the prefix of the mythical Aristaeus. After the death of Vina, Ormus retreats from the world only to emerge from his reclusion in the attempt to reclaim Vina. He is obsessed with the urge to look backward and resurrect Vina like the mythic Orpheus. His attempts to retrieve Vina from the dead however, are not as heroic as that of his mythological counterpart. He seeks Vina look-alikes to mimic Vina's stage performances and thereby assuage his own grief. Ormus meets his end at the hands of a woman in New York. It is not clear if she is a crazy fan, a rejected Vina impersonator, or Vina herself from the dead. A parallel could be drawn with Orpheus' own supposed end at the hands of spurned Thracian Maenads.

Rushdie adroitly weaves myth from the Graeco-Roman as well as from the Indian tradition in this text which teems with mythic patterns. Interestingly, there are references to numerous myths wherein heroes have defied authority. Among those included are Dionysus, Prometheus, Jason and Medea, Quetzalcoatl, Kama and Rati. In the last two, it is the woman who rescues the male lover. In her essay, Rachel Falconer argues that each of the characters in the novel has an orphic side.¹⁷

In Rushdie's subversion of the myth, it was Vina who rescued the teenager Ormus from despair. She was his muse, inspiring his music. When he lay comatose after the fatal accident engineered by the vengeful wife of Mull Standish, Vina found him and rescued him from his three year coma. After Vina's death, it is Mira, the Vina look-alike, who provides him a fresh lease of life. Finally, when he no longer wishes to live, he is shot in New York by a mysterious Vina mimic. The close could be viewed as a reversal of the myth in the form of Vina's return to the upper world to claim her beloved.

Like Ormus, Rai is haunted by the urge to look back. His backward looking propensity leads him to hold a photographic exhibition called "After Vina" in her memory. Unlike Ormus however, Rai is able to move ahead with the passage of time and open up to a new relationship with Mira Celano.

Early in the novel Rai asserts that the real hero of Virgil's poem is Aristaeus. In his view Aristaeus is responsible for a marvel even greater than Orpheus' charming musical genius which could not ultimately raise his lover from the dead. The narrator asserts: "This is what Aristaeus could do: *he could spontaneously generate new bees from the rotting carcass of a cow*" (GF 22; original emphasis). Modelled as it were on Aristaeus, Rai has a hand in Vina's tragedy to the extent that he leaves her by herself in the chaos towards the end. He is occupied with taking pictures of the earthquake casualties. It is Rai who is left at the end of the tale with a family in the form of Mira and her daughter Tara, and a chance at finding happiness. It may be a "family of the modern epoch: elective alliances against terror or despair" (GF 567), but unlike Ormus he is able to begin anew.

Interestingly, this is a rare Rushdie text that closes with optimistic survivors finding a degree of contentment. The only other such instance being *Shalimar the*

Clown. In the context of Rushdie's endings the norm takes the form of destruction and apocalypse. Thus, Saleem is literally disintegrating in *Midnight's Children*. *Shame* ends in an apocalyptic explosion. In *The Moor's Last Sigh* Vasco Miranda implodes while the Moor awaits arrest and an uncertain future. This uncertainty and loss is also the conclusion of *Fury* haunted by the explosion in which Neela Mahendra is martyred.

The globe-trotting protagonists of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury*, as also that of *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown* are artists. Ormus and Mira are musically inclined, while Rai is a photographer. The reader learns only much later in the story that the pictures that were to launch Rai's photographic career propelling him into the international limelight, were really somebody else's work. While investigating the Piloo scam, Rai procured the pictures from the heel of the murdered photographer before his own close escape. He published the pictures as his own. Similarly, Mira starts off as a Vina impersonator, but goes on to find her own act. She subsequently refuses to play the Vina mimic that launched her act, thereby asserting her own identity.

In Falconer's observation, "artistic integrity is represented as being sharply at odds with social responsibility" in the novel. Thus, Ormus finds his true singing talent when he leaves India and his family. Vina's entire family is murdered; it is only her life that is spared seemingly so that she can go ahead with her dream of becoming a singer. It is amid threats to the life of his friend - a female reporter - that Rai flees India. The credit for his art is misattributed. Rai's mission to photograph the wasteland, in which the businessman Piloo claimed to be rearing his goats, is his moment of distillation as an artist and person. He is discovered and nabbed by Piloo's employees. While awaiting his own end, he stumbles upon the murdered

photographer whose dangling body is reminiscent of his own father's death. His father had committed suicide hanging himself from the ceiling fan. His appropriation of the photographs is the moment that puts him to the test.

The question of artistic responsibility is thus evoked. The novel is a paean to art, wherein Rushdie underscores the power of narrative and art. For, like he puts it: "You can destroy the singer, but you can't stop the song".¹⁸ It is with the dominant image of Vina and Ormus being broadcast on almost all the channels on television that the text closes in contemporary temporal reality. Their talent is a testament to the inexorability of art, despite the paradoxical fragility of the artist.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet has been well received by most critics. In general, reviewers conceded that globalisation is a significant aspect in the text. The early half of the work revolves around the East while the latter half deals with the West. The second section subsequently has passages devoted to the hollowness of Western materialism and celebrity status, a theme that reverberates through *Fury* as well. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is far from an uncritical celebration of hybridity or pluralism. Much of the novel is concerned with American culture taking over the world. Arundhati Roy situates the onus for the translation of the dynamics of globalisation into common understanding upon the artist. In this process she feels that the artist decolonises the agendas of multinational corporations that is considered the domain of the expert.¹⁹ Rushdie makes an attempt to demystify globalisation to an extent in this novel. He takes a look at neo-imperial power wielders. However, the characters largely remain party to western capitalism and consumerism rather than function proactively as dynamic agents of resistance. Thus, the question of whether Rushdie is meaningfully attempting a critique of neo-colonial globalising forces remains ambivalent.

As a global novel Rushdie's allusiveness attains a greater complexity in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. In *Midnight's Children* Saleem's sister attains fame as a popular singer in Pakistan and comes to be called Jamila Singer, while his uncle Hanif is a filmmaker in the Indian film industry. Gibreel Farishta in *The Satanic Verses* is an Indian cinematic superstar. With the West as the epicentre in this text it is not surprising that Rushdie elects to use the popular cultural form of rock music. Music forms the most significant intertext in the work and musicians and music occupy centre stage.

Christopher Rollason draws attention to Rushdie being a rock-and-roll enthusiast with "an expert's knowledge of the field".²⁰ Consequently, quotations from song lyrics, deliberate misquotations, adaptations from rock-and-roll tracks, song titles, are interspersed throughout the body of the text. Rollason's essay meticulously charts the song microtexts in the work. He notes how song and album titles find their way into the text in the form of strategic chapter headings. He draws attention to Rushdie's deliberate interweaving of fact and fiction with regard to song lyrics, singers and dates.

In an interview with Peter Kadzis, Rushdie talks about how his desire to write about rock-and-roll stemmed from its association and significance through his teenage years. He states:

Rock is the mythology of our time. It was interesting to contrast it in the novel with that older mythology, which now requires more explanation than it used to. I wanted to write about rock and roll partly because it's the music of my life. When I was young, it was young. We've more or less grown up and grown old together. It feels as if rock music is the soundtrack of my life.²¹

In the 'Salon' interview as well, Rushdie states his intention: "I wanted to take this world [of rock'n'roll] and treat it seriously as a vehicle to examine our life and times".²² He feels that the references to rock music would be universally culturally accessible. The character of Ormus Cama has been attributed to being inspired by Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Elvis Presley and loosely on the only Indian rock star of international renown, Freddie Mercury. The novel includes a title track called "The Ground Beneath Her Feet" in the form of an elegy written by Ormus for his Eurydice-Vina, after the earthquake claims her. In actuality, after reading a manuscript of this novel, the singer Bono from the famous rock band U2 proposed the idea of setting Rushdie's lyrics to music. The song by U2 featured in the film *The Million Dollar Hotel*. Rushdie admits his astonishment at the prospect of an imaginary song crossing the frontier to attain real status in a novel wherein the dominant image is that of a porous frontier between the world of the imagination and the one we occupy.²³

Rushdie claims that his hero Ormus discovered rock music one thousand and one days prior to its appearance in the West. As the text has it, Ormus Cama has access to rock music via a strange connection with his dead twin who prompts him the melodies years before they become popular in the west. Similarly, in the act of Ormus going west with rock-and-roll, Rachel Falconer suggests that Rushdie reverses the usual course of the adventure narrative, which is mainly that of the eastward directed westerner.

In addition to the allusions to pop music and musicians, there is the interesting intratextuality wherein characters from Rushdie's previous texts stroll into this one. William Methwold the British colonialist who is the biological father of Saleem reenters *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in a more significant role occupying larger

narrative space. Homi Catrack from *Midnight's Children* also makes an appearance in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, as does Aurora Zogoiby from *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

In keeping with the pairing of characters to reflect and represent dialectical dualities in Rushdie's early fiction, it is Rai Merchant who pairs with Ormus Cama in this novel. In *Midnight's Children* Saleem is pitted against Shiva; Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa perform this function in *Shame*. Similarly, Rai endorses his connection with Ormus. He asserts: "I'm his true Other, his living shadow self. The people with whom you share a history: these are the people who can leave you shipwrecked and drowning." (*GF* 386). In addition to Rai being Ormus's other self, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* exploits the idea of duality in the form of two sets of twins, as well as the concept of the parallel world. Ormus Cama's twin Gayomart was stillborn but is able to maintain a connection with his living twin. Similarly Virus and Cyrus Cama are an interesting duo.

The novel opens in the middle of the action, on the last day of Vina's life when the earthquake claims her. Midway, the novel moves to Britain and then America with no subsequent return to the subcontinent. The West assumes centre stage. Rushdie intended this novel as his goodbye to India. He bids Bombay farewell: "I had to cross oceans just to exit *Wombay*, the parental body. I flew away to get myself born. But like a longtime cigarette smoker who manages to quit, I have never forgotten the taste and kick of the old abandoned drug" (*GF* 100). Rai goes on to add:

Imagine, if you will, the elaborately ritualized (yes, and marriage-obsessed) formal society of Jane Austen, grafted on to the stenchy, pullulating London beloved of Dickens, as full of chaos and surprises as a rotting fish is full of writhing worms; swash & rollick the whole into a Shandy-and-arrack cocktail; colour it magenta, vermilion,

scarlet, lime; sprinkle with crooks & bawds, and you have something like my fabulous home town. I gave it up, true enough; but don't ask me to say it wasn't one hell of a place. (GF 101)

The city of Bombay is crucial to Rushdie's writing. *Midnight's Children* opens with Saleem's explicit announcement: "I was born in the city of Bombay...." (MC 9). The claustrophobic restrictive ambience of *Shame* is nostalgic for the excess of Bombay. Interestingly, Rushdie seems to have anticipated the change in nomenclature from Bombay to Mumbai in the course of his description of the political group "Mumbai's Axis" in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. In fact, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* he unequivocally states "Forget Mumbai. I remember Bombay" (GF 158). It is in the course of writing about Bombay observes Roshan Shahani that "writers like Rushdie have charted anew the cultural map of the world".²⁴

In Rushdie, the criterion to gauge the best journey of all is that of the 'inner journey'. For, like he points out in the essay "On Adventure", "few topographical boundaries can rival the frontiers of the mind".²⁵ Rushdie's fiction is passionately concerned with traversing geographical and imaginative boundaries. Each of the characters in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* embark upon an "imagined journey from periphery to centre" (GF 271).

"*There must be somewhere better than this*" was what they all thought. For Sir Darius Xerxes Cama, Ormus' father, that utopia was England. However, England only left him a broken man with dashed hopes. For Ormus' mother Lady Spenta, that "somewhere better" was the Parsi paradise where Ahura Mazda and his angels reigned "but that place was far off, and Bombay increasingly felt to her like a labyrinth without an exit". Ormus Cama's discontentment with where he was led him abroad in search of someplace "better", but in his case that entailed severance of

family ties. Where Vina was concerned, the right place was always someplace else: “Always in the wrong place, in a condition of perpetual loss, she could (she did) unaccountably take flight and disappear; and then discover that the new place she’d reached was just as wrong as the place she’d left.” Ameer Merchant believed that the city of Bombay she was involved in building was the better place. “For Rai’s father V. V. Merchant, the utopia was the Bombay they lived in which was being annihilated with his dear wife’s involvement in its destruction. Rai’s feelings of surfeit led him out of Bombay. For him, the best place was where Vina was. But Vina could never really be his (*GF* 163).

As the beckoning West opens up windows to the world at large, the notion of a homecoming often becomes unlikely.²⁶ Then again, like the narrator concedes: “A kind of India happens everywhere, that’s the truth too; everywhere is terrible and wonder-filled and overwhelming if you open your senses to the actual’s pulsating beat” (*GF* 417).

*...the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that “there’s no place like home”
but rather that there is no longer any such place as home.*

-Salman Rushdie (*Step Across This Line* 30)

Rushdie, whose favourite themes are migration and transmutation, delves into the kismet of the migrant and the flight from the self once again in *Fury*. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* finds Ormus Cama, Vina Apsara and Rai Merchant leaving India for England and finally playing out their lives in America. Yet again in *Fury* the protagonist is a self exile whose geographical trajectory parallels that of the characters in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. The characters in both works give expression to the

ambivalence of location that fascinates Rushdie. *Fury* is Rushdie's first novel based in America.

Chronologically, the novel locates itself in the transition period between the old and the new millennium. It is the early twenty-first century of the dot com boom, of the "Gush, Bore" presidential election (*F* 6)²⁷, of the Euro 2000 football games. Malik Solanka, the fifty-five year old Indian Professor of Philosophy whose origins go back to Bombay, has been leading a seemingly ideal marital and familial life in England with his second wife of over a decade, Eleanor and their son Asmaan. Disillusioned with academic life he had resigned from his post at King's College, Cambridge. He then embarked upon the construction of microcosms of his own in the form of dolls. His creation 'Little Brain' is a philosophising doll that started out as part of this idiosyncratic personal project. Solanka's 'Great Minds' series had Little Brain in the role of a television interrogator interviewing the likes of Socrates, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Bertrand Russell, etc. in an attempt to enlighten the general public.

Little Brain grows into a puppet, cartoon, talk show host, supermodel and actor, with her own fan base, memoirs and video games. She "was making her own way in the world. Like Hawkeye or Sherlock Holmes or Jeeves, she had transcended the work that created her, had attained the fiction's version of freedom" (*F* 97). Her global star status rakes in the millions for her inventor Malik. However, it is the loss of control over this brainchild that enrages the creator. "With Pinocchio," asserts the narrator, "Geppetto's troubles ended when the blasted puppet became a real, live boy; with Little Brain, as with Galatea, that's when they began" (*F* 101). In the face of his impotent fury, Malik began to detest what he describes as a "Frankendoll". For, the creature of his imagination "born of his best self and purest endeavour, was turning

before his eyes into the kind of monster of tawdry celebrity he most profoundly abhorred" (F 98). The doll came to embody all that he despised and spelt the defeat of all the lofty principles that prompted her into being.

Ten years of suppressed self loathing and aggravation prompt Solanka into the destruction and expulsion of Little Brain from his home in all its forms, save one secret doll which he mutilates with a knife. Subsequently, one night Malik finds himself poised over the sleeping figures of his wife and son with a carving knife in his hand, reminiscent of Shakespeare's Macbeth and Othello. He feels the need "to put an ocean, at least an ocean, between him and what he had almost done" (F 39). This inexplicable fury disturbs him into packing his bags and boarding the first flight to New York the very next morning – no reasons ventured. His own reasoning in fleeing to America is his desire to be no longer a historian but a man without a history, to erase the old slate "to *unwrite* it. Not to be but to un-be", which in contemporary electronic lingo would be akin to the "master deletion" of the existent program (F 79). He seeks sanctuary in the most important city on earth - Manhattan, New York. America is the land of self-creation, the Mecca; "the country whose paradigmatic modern fiction was the story of a man who remade himself" (F 79). And of course, the "Promised Land" is at the zenith of its "hybrid, omnivorous power" (F 44).

However, Solanka comes to realise that this is not the haven he imagined in his quest for quiet and peace. He admits that he has been seduced by the veneer of brilliance:

...and he was compromised by this seduction ... It made him want what it promised and eternally withheld. Everyone was an American now, or at least Americanized: Indians, Iranians, Uzbeks, Japanese, Lilliputians, all. America was the world's playing field, its rule book,

umpire and ball. Even anti-Americanism was Americanism in disguise, conceding, as it did, that America was the only game in town.... (F 87)

Like the Land Surveyor in Kafka's *Castle*, Solanka finds he is striving in vain for the healing that he believed the world's greatest city would afford him (F 86). His disillusionment leads him to the comprehension that America had it all wrong. Notwithstanding the all-powerful dollar and opulence, "people were stressed-out, cracking up" (F 115). He wonders how he could have succumbed to the thought that America would heal him:

... this Gotham in which Jokers and Penguins were running riot with no Batman (or even Robin) to frustrate their schemes, this Metropolis built of Kryptonite in which no Superman dared set foot, where wealth was mistaken for riches and the joy of possession for happiness, where people lived such polished lives that the great rough truths of raw existence had been rubbed and buffed away, and in which human souls...barely remembered how to touch.... (F 86)

Notwithstanding Solanka's phenomenal financial success, he discerns that people in America were highly disappointed because their expectations were high. A predominant subject in his view is the crashing of dreams in a land where the right to dream was the very "national ideological cornerstone" exemplified by the character of Jay Gatsby (F 184).

Solanka's melancholy does not sublimate. Whereas Ormus' disappointment with America fuels his music, Solanka continues to be pursued by the furies. Whereas it is the 'Orpheus and Eurydice' tale from classical literature that forms Rushdie's metaphor in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, in *Fury* Rushdie evokes the three Furies from Roman mythology. In Greek mythology the Erinnyes were female

personifications of vengeance. Roman literature represented them as the Furies. From their dwelling in the underworld this triad rose to earth to pursue the wicked. Robert Graves views these Erinnyes as personifications of the pangs of conscience.²⁸ They had the power to kill one who had rashly or inadvertently broken a taboo. Celia Wallhead notes that most of the men in *Fury* are caught up in a situation of escape from a “killing or a near-killing”.²⁹ The novel makes an attempt to comprehend the nature of rage and violence in modern society in relation to Solanka and the other characters. This fury finds expression in varied forms of personal and social breakdown. Interestingly, the novel is peopled with self exiles, refugees, fugitives and migrants.

Malik’s seemingly inexplicable rage stems from numerous factors. The most imminent factor that triggered his flight to another continent was the loss of control over his creation, the doll Little Brain. Later, the narrator mentions that there were little cracks forming in his seemingly ideal marriage that affected his decision to leave. In his own admission, the fact that his marriage had inevitably begun to lack the sentiment of the “overwhelming” (*F* 178), is a fact that Solanka is unable to reconcile with.

Subsequently, Solanka is gripped by spells of fury. These frequently end up in fury induced memory blackouts. The situation is aggravated by his drinking bouts. Each of his blackouts corresponds with the serial murders of young affluent blondes that form a sub-plot in the novel. For a while Solanka is seized by suspicions as to whether he could be the notorious Dr. Jekyll Mr. Hyde persona responsible for the killings; but ultimately the murderers are traced.

To discover the roots of Solanka’s fury the reader must go into his past in “forbidden Bombay” (*F* 80). His own father having deserted the family while Malik

was just a baby, Malik's pretty mother remarried within the year. Malik is given his stepfather's last name. The identity of his biological father remains shrouded in mystery thereby depriving him "of history as well as feeling" (F 221). The stepfather subjected Malik to sexual abuse after dollifying him. It was only after a neighbour; Mr. Venkat confronted his parents, that the torment ended. The dresses and bows that he was forced to wear were then destroyed. Malik refused to part with his dolls "the only family he could bring himself to trust" (F 223). This is a part of the past Malik seeks to destroy and escape from.

Even the beautiful Neela, who literally stops traffic with her drop-dead-gorgeous looks, is a migrant in America. Hailing from the Indian diaspora, her ancestors left India in the 1890s to work as indentured labourers in the South Pacific island of Lilliput-Blefuscus. Modelled on the Fiji islands, the name Lilliput-Blefuscus is borrowed by Rushdie from the fictional islands in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* that is inhabited by the tiny people. Mildendo is the capital of Lilliput. This metropolis is the birthplace of Neela. Although Neela had made New York her home, her roots had a strong influence on her. She was passionate about fighting for the rights of her community against the indigenous Elbee community. The strife in Lilliput-Blefuscus arose on account of the indigenous Elbee community fearing a coup from the Indo Lillys, while the latter were fighting for their rights given the fact that they were treated like second-class citizens in spite of working there for four generations.

Neela gets embroiled in the political events that lead to the masked counter-coup in Lilliput-Blefuscus. She ultimately sacrifices her life in a bid to save Malik and some others when she realises that the coup has only degenerated into a fanatical power struggle. This political agitation that occupies the last part of the book is one of the sub-plots of the novel. With Neela in his life, Solanka had come to

believe that her love was the antidote, “the philosopher’s stone” (*F* 206), that could transmute his fury into ecstasy. Solanka’s sharing the story of his own dollification and sexual abuse with Neela, affords him a release analogous to the exorcism of the furies pursuing him.

Mila Milo is also a migrant. She accompanied her Serbian father to America, her mother having died when she was barely three years of age. A young internet entrepreneur, she led a gang of young “stormtroopers of the technologized future” who lounged in the streets in their spare time (*F* 119). The members of this fashion conscious gang were creative artists who designed websites for the rich and famous. In Mila’s assessment, if these geniuses “wanted to hit Gates with a virus, you can bet he’d sneeze for *years*” (*F* 118). Prior to Neela’s entry into Solanka’s life, it is Mila Milo who inspires Malik Solanka to direct his fury creatively. Mila goads him to embark upon the creation of the ‘Puppet Kings’. Little Brain provides the common ground for Mila’s encounter with Malik. Mila is a self proclaimed fan of Little Brain to the extent that she has even modelled herself to resemble her idol. Solanka and Mila also share a past shadowed by paedophilic abuse. They engage in erotic games. It is ultimately Mila’s techno-savvy gang that brings Malik’s project on the Puppet Kings to life in cyberspace.

Before Mila Milo undertook the ‘renovation’ (*F* 118) of Malik Solanka, her most challenging project was the restoration of her boy friend Eddie. Yet another immigrant in America, Eddie’s life was fraught with a family tragedy. His uncle Raymond who was a Vietnam war veteran, had retreated from the world to a cottage in the mountains, his soul scarred by the war. Eddie’s mother and the love of a woman called Carole manages to cajole him away from his retreat fifteen years later, only for events to end in a bloodbath. After Eddie’s father ridicules Carole’s sexual

promiscuity, both Carole and Raymond are found dead the next morning. Eddie's father disappears and his mother takes to alcohol. Mila tries to rescue Eddie from his internal exile.

Mila Milo's father - Milo Milosevic - was a famous Serbian writer who immigrated with Mila to New York after being offered a place at Columbia University. To distinguish their last name from Milosevic the fascist gangster, he changes his last name to Milo. He lived a hedonistic life in America. Upset by the anti-Serb sentiment that broke out in his homeland during the war, he decided to return to his roots. He felt compelled to act as the moral conscience of the place through his writing. The strife stricken situation in his homeland provides him an excuse to flee an alleged incestuous situation with his daughter. The narrator asserts that Milo intended to escape "the consuming Fury" in the form of his daughter Mila, to confront what he believed was the "lesser peril" – his troubled homeland (*F* 134). However, death claims him in his homeland. As Mila puts it: "the fury blew him to pieces" (*F* 114).

Solanka's friend from his student days at Cambridge, the half-Polish Krystof Waterford-Wadja, known as Dubdub, goes on to attain celebrity status in academics. He travels the world and delivers a series of lectures. But this phenomenal success only aggravated Dubdub's existential crisis. "The more he became a Personality, the less like a person her felt" (*F* 27). He survives three suicide attempts before finally succumbing to death brought on by clogged arteries.

Malik's black African-American friend Jack Rhinehart's fury stems from American racism. Enraged by ethnic strife among blacks he turned to associating and forming close friendships exclusively with whites. He even marries a white woman: "His label changed. He stopped hyphenating himself and became, simply, an

American" (*F* 57). Ironically, this journalist who had achieved distinction for his radical investigation of American racism, turns to writing lucrative profiles of the rich and famous. Solanka discerns that beneath Jack's suave exterior there was a suppressed fury that mirrored Solanka's own rage. He reckons that the self-loathing rage he saw in the eyes of his friend stemmed from his rejection of his roots. He refused to admit the dark secret that he had been seduced by the desire to be accepted into the "white man's club" (*F* 58). Jack's wife Bronislawa refuses to grant him a divorce despite his indulgence in a string of affairs with white women. His craving for acceptance ultimately costs him his life. His yearning to be part of a crazy cult leads to his death. Jack is mindlessly murdered by the three boys responsible for the serial concrete murders in a foiled attempt to make him a scapegoat.

The Jewish plumber Joseph Schlink is another refugee in America. A Polish Jew by birth, he has had to deny his past to survive the holocaust. During the war he plugged leaks on a Nazi U-boat. Solanka's housekeeper is a Polish lady.

A self-exile of a very different nature in the text is from Malik Solanka's past in Bombay. Mr Venkat, the renowned banker and father of the ten year old Malik's best friend Chandra, takes on sanyas on his sixtieth birthday. He bids farewell to his old life. Theirs was a family unit that seemed happy enough to merit Malik's envy. Malik was very fond of Mr.Venkat for it was Mr Venkat's firm intervention that ended Malik's sexual abuse at the hands of his stepfather. Mr. Venkat donned a Gandhian loincloth, took up a begging bowl and wooden staff, and left in quest of knowledge and peace. He left his family well provided for. Though Malik's mother tried to explain the philosophy of sanyas to him it was beyond his grasp. He could only empathise with his friend Chandra who broke his father's music records shouting: "I hate knowledge! And peace, too" (*F* 81).

Ali Majnu, the young expletive-spewing Muslim taxi driver who Malik encounters twice in New York, gives expression to the bitterness of the third world in his vociferous abuse sparked off by road rage. "Beloved Ali was Indian or Pakistani, but, no doubt out of some misguided collectivist spirit of paranoiac pan-Islamic solidarity, he blamed all New York road users for the tribulations of the Muslim world" (*F* 66). Ali swears profusely in Urdu. When he realises that Solanka understands Urdu he makes a sheepish attempt to explain that the abuses are unintentional. Solanka muses upon the potency of words and their potential to turn into deeds.

Fury is thus peopled with migrants. Solanka himself is a migrant, refugee, self-exile and fugitive all rolled into one. Malik Solanka occupies a tactical place in the novel as outsider as well as insider. He may be facing a major identity crisis but his is also the rage of the worldwide Everyman. Of course, this global city is a microcosm of the world and what happens here happens everywhere. The fury lurks within everybody. As the narrator asserts: "The whole world was burning on a shorter fuse" (*F* 129).

Rushdie interprets fury in its constructive as well as destructive *avatar* in this novel, as he did in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Rai is associated with Aristaetus as well as Lord Shiva in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*: "But Aristaetus, who brought death, also brought life, a little like Lord Shiva back home. Not just a dancer, but Creator and Destroyer, both" (*GF* 22). Rai is well aware of his "double self as ruthless *tant-pis* killer and the giver of immortality also" (*GF* 222). In *Fury*, artistic creation is viewed as fury akin to that of Shiva:

Life is fury, he'd thought. Fury - sexual, Oedipal, political, magical,
brutal - drives us to our finest heights and coarsest depths. Out of furia

comes creation, inspiration, originality, passion, but also violence, pain, pure unafraid destruction, the giving and receiving of blows from which we never recover. The Furies pursue us; Shiva dances his furious dance to create and also destroy. (*GF* 30-31)

In *Shame*, Sufiya Zinobia's apocalyptic fury finds its articulation in acts of violence. The beast of fury literally explodes in the finale of *Shame*. This prefigures the narratorial comment in *Fury*; "Human life was now lived in the moment before the fury, when the anger grew, or the moment during-the fury's hour, the time of the beast set free-or in the ruined aftermath of a great violence"(*F* 129).

Both *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* are concerned with protagonists who are artists. It is music and photography that enable the characters to transcend boundaries and attain their hybrid status in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. It is the creation of dolls and cyber-denizens that allows Solanka to go beyond precincts. The relationship between the artist and the creation is interrogated in various respects with pertinent references to Galatea and Pinocchio. For instance, the autonomy of the work of art is dealt with vis-à-vis Solanka's loss of control over his creation. It is tempting to trace a congruence with *The Satanic Verses* in considering the concept of the work of creation taking on a life of its own. Similarly, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* the theme of the autonomy of art is examined with reference to Ormus' claim that songs revealed themselves to him via his dead twin Gayomart Cama, years before they became hits abroad. In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* it is the pictures that Rai Merchant finds in the spool of camera roll hidden in the murdered photographer's heel that bring him the success he yearns for, unmindful of the intention of the original artist. The writer thus pontificates on the role of the artist and the creation.

Interestingly, Rushdie's novel was published in September 2001 following the tragedy of 11th September 2001. There were a series of coordinated suicide attacks by Al Qaeda on the United States wherein the hijackers intentionally crashed airliners into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City and into the Pentagon. These terrorist attacks led to an overwhelming number of deaths and casualties. Celia Wallhead observes that the cover of the book featuring storm clouds hovering above the Empire State Building seems suggestive of the doom looming over the twin towers of the World Trade Centre. She notes how this image is "fatefully prescient".³⁰ In his article "Let's Get Back to Life" written a month after the tragedy of 9/11, Rushdie draws attention to his prediction in January 2000 that "the defining struggle of the new age would be between terrorism and security".³¹ In the novels examined in the following chapter - *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown* - fundamentalism and terrorism are explored in greater detail.

Much of the response to *Fury* found the novel intensely autobiographical. John Sutherland points out that Malik Solanka may be a version of his author "but he is also everyman", for "the fury which Rushdie analyses is universal in AD 2000".³²

Some personal demons like incest, the immense pressure that comes with celebrity and fame, material excess, murder, metropolitan life with its superficial relationships haunt the migrants and are brought under scrutiny in the novel. The narrator points out: "As the bonds of family weakened, so the Furies began to intervene in all of human life" (*F* 251). Not a single relationship in the novel is sound and unassailable, from marriages to friendships. Malik's and Eleanor's marriage, once considered unbreakable was admired in their friend circle as an ideal marriage until Malik walked out. Eleanor is the purported victim. She deserves credit for trying to understand Solanka, and make the marriage work. However, she and their closest

family friend Morgen Franz lose no time becoming lovers. Jack Rhinehart's wife Bronislawa Rhinehart initially ignores his extra marital affairs and refuses to grant him a divorce, but relents in the end. Jack Rhinehart's relationship with Neela does not stop his good friend Malik from getting involved with her. Malik and his first wife Sara Jane Lear married hastily in their twenties, only to regret the mistake and separate. Sara went on to marry a millionaire who she sued for his millions, after his unfaithfulness to her. Dubdub dates Perry Pincus the socialite of the literary circuit. The three beautiful socialites are murdered by their own boyfriends. It is a warped New York with shaky relationships.

The mythical Furies and dollification are two central tropes in the novel. The protagonist Malik Solanka has a past shadowed by his own dollification and sexual abuse as a child at the hands of his stepfather. From being victimised to creating dolls, Solanka finds that lines between the real and the unreal blur. Little Brain outgrows her creator "and was making her own way in the world" (F 97) endorsing products, hosting talk shows, acting in movies, publishing her memoirs. Her fictive history broke all publishing records. Her fan base cut across boundaries of gender, age, class, language and race. Interestingly, Little Brain's first book of memoirs was initially placed by *Amazon* (the e-commerce company on the internet) in the non-fiction category. The narrator claims that the decision to move it into the fictional category was resisted by her fans who argued that she was "no longer a simulacrum. She was a phenomenon. The fairy's wand had touched her, and she was real" (F 98).

The simulacrum is able to influence real lives and events as the doll triggers off Solanka's exit to America. It is in New York that he meets Mila who professes her decade-long obsession with Little Brain. She has even modelled herself on the doll in terms of style and appearance. As Mila's association with Malik Solanka increased,

she “began quite deliberately to be the doll for him, to dress more and more precisely in the doll’s original sartorial image and to act out for a much-aroused Solanka a series of scenarios derived from the early shows” (*F* 124-5). Solanka allows himself to view her as the doll come alive.

Even as the simulacrum increasingly impacts the real; in a mutual reversal, reality apes the simulacra:

But now living women wanted to be doll-like, to cross the frontier and look like toys. Now the doll was the original, the woman the representation. These living dolls, these stringless marionettes, were not just “dolloed up” on the outside. Behind their high-style exteriors, beneath that perfectly lucent skin, they were so stuffed full of behavioural chips, so thoroughly programmed for action, so perfectly groomed and wardrobed, that there was no room left in them for messy humanity. (*F* 74)

The dollification of the three young girls who were ultimately murdered by their own boyfriends is deliberated upon. They were merely trophies, “fully accessorized Oscar-Barbies” (*F* 72). For all their affluence, accomplishments, beauty and fairy-tale lives, these girls succumb to the pressures of a glamour seeking society. Alice Spencer notes that in *Fury* the notion of creation seems to accompany that of the work of art whirling out of control, often accompanied by destructive implications for the artist personally as well as the world around him”.³³

Real people form the basis for the characters created by Malik for his Puppet Kings project. The website goes on to become a bigger hit than Little Brain. People from Malik’s life inspire the cyborgs in the website. “Real life had started obeying the dictates of fiction, providing precisely the raw material he needed to transmute

through the alchemy of his reborn art” (*F* 170). While reality provides the inspiration for fiction, later in the novel in a reversal, the real is inspired by the fictional. These puppets from the imaginary planet Galileo-1, step into the political affairs on earth itself. The characters responsible for the political counter-coup in Neela’s homeland of Lilliput-Blefuscu, raid a toy store and don the masks and costumes of the cyborgs created by Malik Solanka. These masked characters lead the armed assault even adopting the slogan “Let the Fittest Survive!” from the fictional cyber story (*F* 227).

In the midst of this political revolution that takes the form of a strange charade, Solanka goes to Lilliput-Blefuscu in pursuit of Neela. He finds his own face staring at him from a large billboard cut-out of the leader of the coup. The commander of the coup is using the mask of the character Kronos modelled on Solanka’s face. Solanka thus seemed to be wearing the face everyone knew. Ironically, “Here in the Theatre of Masks the original, the man with no mask, was perceived as the mask’s imitator: the creation was real while the creator was the counterfeit!” (*F* 239). Neela has donned a mask of herself. Solanka had designed the mask of the puppet Zameen after Neela. The streets of Lilliput-Blefuscu were peopled by characters using masks of acquaintances from Solanka’s life that provided the basic for the creation of the characters in the website. In this encounter between the original and the imitation, the frontiers that separate these categories itself dissolve.

The geographical and historical location of the plot offers Rushdie a strategic space for an engagement with issues of neo-imperialism. It is the global city of New York, the most affluent city on earth. Global capitalism is at its peak, so is the electronic boom. Judi Nitsch avers that the coup in Lilliput-Blefuscu presents Rushdie “the possibility of neo-imperial subversion” in the form of “a local rebellion that utilizes the internet for politically empowering and ethnically liberating purposes”.³⁴

Rushdie attempts a critique of globalisation. He deliberates on location and dislocation, but seems to stop short of delving below the surface of these issues. Malik is too caught up in his own afflictions and furies namely, crises of identity, career, relationships and thus this postcolonial migrant is not able to effectively offer the serious critique that his position allows him. Solanka is captivated as well as repulsed by the flamboyant opulence and consumption of material goods. The novel unfolds with a survey of American opulence. The narrator's tone of sarcasm towards these tokens of materialism and globalisation is unmistakable. Malik even heralds the portent:

Rome did not fall because her armies weakened but because Romans forgot what being a Roman meant. Might this new Rome actually be more provincial than its province; might these new Romans have forgotten what and how to value, or had they never known? ... O Dream-America, was civilization's quest to end in obesity and trivia...? (F 86-7)

Malik does not manage to sustain the critique that he embarks upon. His personal demons assume precedence. Infact, he seems to make the transition into the cosmopolitan city of New York rather smoothly. He even employs the medium of the internet to emerge a greater professional and financial success than before. Technology is not an unproblematic panacea for Solanka. Its ramifications are evident in the misuse of the latex masks of the characters of the Puppet Kings by the insurgents in Lilliput-Blefuscu. In this novel the work of art insists on breaking off the strings of the creator.

Rushdie has a penchant for adventure narratives. His favourites include *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and Sindbad's exploits. In the opinion of Justyna

Deszcz, the psychologically, culturally and geographically displaced protagonist Solanka attempts to create a fairy tale utopia as a means of establishing his identity.³⁵

Fairy tales usually have cheery endings. Reality differs. At the end of the novel, the globetrotter returns 'home'. It is not a literal homecoming but one in the Rushdian sense. Neela is martyred. Solanka has made his way back to London and sequestered himself after Neela's death. He wants to meet his son. His day merely "began, passed, ended" (F 258). Perhaps Rushdie's comment on Oz, one of the most famous and universal fairy-tale utopias is relevant here since Rushdie the migrant sees in *The Wizard of Oz* a parable of the migrant condition. Dorothy embodies the human dream of leaving, of escape. When asked by the good witch Glinda as to what she had learned, Dorothy replies, "If I ever go looking for my heart's desire again, I won't look further than my own backyard. And if it isn't there, I never really lost it to begin with." Rushdie adds:

So Oz finally became home; the imagined world becomes the actual world, as it does for us all, because the truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started out to make up our own lives, armed only with what we have and are, we understand that the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that "there's no place like home" but rather that there is no longer any such place as home: except, of course, for the homes we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz, which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began.³⁶

Like George Lamming asserts in his essay in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, "The pleasure and paradox of my own exile is that I belong wherever I am".³⁷ "Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too!" is what one can wish the Rushdie protagonist.³⁸

Rushdie is inclined to believe that the experience of being uprooted as a result of migration, does not necessarily lead to the lack of roots but a kind of a “multiple rooting”, of hailing from “too many places”.³⁹ He employs the perspective of the migrant to embark upon a critique of national politics and satirise the forces of globalisation. Many migrant writers seem to grapple with the multiple identities that Rushdie does. Rushdie's message does not have implications only for the literal migrant. It is universal insofar as we are all, in a way, migrants. For, as Martin Heidegger avers: “Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world.”⁴⁰ Rushdie marshals the motif of migrancy to foreground issues of rootlessness, liminality and hybridity. The city assumes focus as a site of alienation as also of belonging in Rushdie's fiction, thereby complicating the notion of the metropolis as home.

Notes

¹ Edward Said qtd. in Iain Chambers, Migrancy, Culture, Identity (London: Routledge, 1994) 2.

² Chambers 5.

³ Salman Rushdie, "The Ground Beneath My Feet," The Nation 9 July 2001 2007. 15 Nov. 2007 <<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20010709/rushdie>>

⁴ Salman Rushdie, "The Location of Brazil," Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991 (London: Granta; New Delhi Penguin, 1991) 124-5.

⁵ Rushdie, "Gunter Grass," Imaginary Homelands 279.

⁶ Rushdie, "The Location of Brazil," 124.

⁷ Homi Bhabha, "How Newness Enters the World," The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994) 224.

⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, ed., introduction, Nation and Narration (London: Routledge, 1990) 6.

⁹ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," Imaginary Homelands 15.

¹⁰ Bhikhu Parekh qtd. in Jasbir Jain, ed., introduction, Writers of the Indian Diaspora: Theory and Practice (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1998) 12.

¹¹ Harveen Sachveda Mann, "'Being Borne Across': Translation and Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses," Criticism 22 Mar. 1995, HighBeam Research. 1995. Wayne State University Press. 9 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>

¹² Salman Rushdie, The Ground Beneath Her Feet (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999). Henceforth referenced parenthetically in the text as *GF* with page number.

¹³ Rushdie, "Günter Grass," Imaginary Homelands 280.

¹⁴ M. D. Fletcher, "The Politics of Salman Rushdie's Fiction," introduction, Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, ed. M. D. Fletcher (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994) 1.

¹⁵ Rachel Falconer, "Bouncing Down to the Underworld: Classical Katabasis in The Ground Beneath Her Feet," Twentieth Century Literature 22/12/2001
<<http://www.highbeam.com>>

¹⁶ Chambers 27.

¹⁷ Falconer <<http://www.highbeam.com>>

¹⁸ Salman Rushdie, "Salman speaks," interview with Peter Kadzis, Boston Phoenix May 6-13, 1999 Phoenix Media Group. 15 Nov. 2007
<<http://72.166.46.24/archive/books>>

¹⁹ Arundhati Roy, Power Politics 2nd ed (Cambridge: South End Press, 2001).

²⁰ Christopher Rollason, "Rushdie's Un-Indian Music: The Ground Beneath Her Feet," Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights, eds. Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Joel Kuortti (New Delhi :Atlantic, 2003) 95.

²¹ Salman Rushdie, interview with Peter Kadzis.

²² Salman Rushdie, "A touch of vulgarity," interview with Laura Miller, *Salon* 16 April 1999 25 Mar. 2005 <<http://www.salonmag.com.books/int/1999/04/16/>>

²³ Salman Rushdie, "The Ground Beneath My Feet."
<<http://www.thenation.com>>

²⁴ Roshan Shahani qtd. in Rollason 95.

²⁵ Salman Rushdie, "On Adventure," Imaginary Homelands 225.

²⁶ Chambers 5.

²⁷ Salman Rushdie, Fury (London: Jonathan Cape, 2001) Henceforth referenced parenthetically in the text as *F* with page number.

²⁸ Robert Graves qtd. in Celia M. Wallhead, "A Myth for Anger, Migration and Creativity in Salman Rushdie's *Fury*," Commonwealth Fiction : Twenty First Century Readings eds. Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Alessandro Monti (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2002) 173.

²⁹ Wallhead 173.

³⁰ Wallhead 169.

³¹ Salman Rushdie, "Let's Get Back to Life," The Guardian 6 Oct. 2001, 25 Aug. 2005 <humanities.psydeshow.org/political/index.htm>

³² John Sutherland, "The Sound and the Fury," rev. of *Fury*, by Salman Rushdie, Guardian Weekly 6 Sept. 2001, 26 Feb 2008 <<http://books.guardian.co.uk>>

³³ Alice Spencer, "The Puppet-Master's Fury: Malik Solanka as Artist," Salman Rushdie: Critical Essays, eds., Mohit Ray and Rama Kundu, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2006) 158.

³⁴ Judi Nitsch "The Ambivalent Tourist: The 'Colonial' Male Spectator in the Global City in Salman Rushdie's *Fury*" <http://www.case.edu/affil/sce/Texts_2002/>

³⁵ Justyna Deszcz, "Solaris, America, Disneyworld and Cyberspace: Salman Rushdie's Fairy-Tale Utopianism in *Fury*," Reconstruction 2.3 (2002): 47 pars, 15 Feb. 2006 <<http://reconstruction.eserver.org/023/TOC.htm>>

³⁶ Salman Rushdie, "Out of Kansas," Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002 (New York: Modern Library, 2003) 30.

³⁷ George Lamming, "The Occasion for Speaking," The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, eds., Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995) 17.

³⁸ Uma Parameshwaran, "Home is where your feet are, and may your heart be there too!" Writers of the Indian Diaspora: Theory and Practice, ed. Jasbir Jain (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1998) 30.

³⁹ Salman Rushdie, Interview by Michael T. Kaufman, New York Times Book Review 3 Nov. 1983: 23.

⁴⁰ Martin Heidegger qtd. in Chambers 1.

IV

A Return to Roots: Revisiting the Imagined Homeland in***The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown*.**

...the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time.

-Salman Rushdie (*Imaginary Homelands* 9)

Rushdie traverses geographical, political and cultural boundaries in the course of his writing only to return to the Indian homeland in *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *Shalimar the Clown*. In both these novels the Indian nation assumes a fundamental thematic focus. The experience of alienation within a third world context is deliberated upon. Rushdie takes a look at the history of India fraught with turbulence in the last century in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, whereas it is the issue of Kashmir that assumes precedence in *Shalimar the Clown*.

The deliberation on the nation that that began in *Midnight's Children* is carried forward in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Whereas *Midnight's Children* ended with the Emergency, *The Moor's Last Sigh* moves into the crises of the 1980s and 1990s, furthering the political critique. *The Moor's Last Sigh* locates itself in modern India and draws upon Spanish history, which forms the backdrop and a recurrent motif in the text. The 'Moor' of the title of the novel is historically Sultan Boabdil, the last Arabic-Islamic ruler of Granada, the final bastion of Moorish governance in Spain. The legend goes that when King Boabdil surrendered the city to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain in 1492, he turned back and released a sigh at the spot that continues to be called 'Suspiro del Moro' – the Moor's sigh. It is this sigh that is referred to in the title. Medieval Spain had been a blend of Eastern and Western culture. The acceptance of Jews and Christians by the Muslim rulers had led to a prosperous

multicultural society. This fertile diversity ended with the new Catholic monarchs introducing the inquisition into Spain to unite the mixed populace of Muslims, Jews and Christians into a national Church. Many of the persecuted Jews and Moors chose to leave the country rather than repudiate their faith. The departure of these peoples impoverished the country in cultural terms.

Paul Cantor¹ argues that *The Moor's Last Sigh* furthers Rushdie's "interrogation of the postcolonial myth of cultural authenticity." According to him, the novel is an attempt to celebrate cultural hybridity wherein Rushdie reviews Indian society in the light of Moorish Spain. He feels that Rushdie's fascination with Spanish history owes to his perception of Spain as an exemplar of a multicultural civilisation, in the light of sectarian conflicts that have rent India apart in the twentieth century. Cantor holds out a note of caution against the tendency to form simplistic equations between imperialism and "monoculturalism" on the one hand, and to equate anti-imperialism with multiculturalism on the other. He lauds Rushdie's exploration of the complexity of the issue he raises wherein "his use of Spanish history turns out to be part of a larger project of rethinking imperial history in general."

In his review of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, J. M. Coetzee² highlights Rushdie's argument that the tolerant Arab rule led to a creative co-mingling of cultures that the Spanish inquisition brought to an end. He feels this view tends to ignore the weaknesses of the historical Boabdil. In actuality, Boabdil is supposed to have been a diffident person controlled by his mother and deceived by Ferdinand of Spain. However, Coetzee admits that the modelling of Moraes on Boabdil is an interesting proposition. He concedes that the thesis of Rushdie's novel that: "Hindu intolerance in India bodes as ill for the world as did the sixteenth-century Inquisition in Spain", is a provocative one.

The narrative begins in retrospect with the narrator Moraes Zogoiby - nicknamed Moor - recounting his story after having escaped incarceration in Spain. Moor charts down his story while he is held captive by Vasco Miranda in the latter's tower in Benengeli, situated in Spain. Following his escape, he is engaged in nailing the pages of his story to the trees around, evoking Martin Luther's famous nailing of his theses to the church door at Wittenberg. A reference to this act is made on the opening page itself. Unlike Martin Luther, however, the Moor has no lofty agenda. He mainly wants his story to be known before his likely arrest.

The story charts four generations of the Da Gama-Zogoiby clan. It takes into account their origins in Cochin on the Malabar Coast, follows their life of power and opulence on Malabar Hill, the elitist locale in Mumbai, and plays out its finale in Spain. Rushdie chooses to approach the story from the standpoint of two small minorities in the nation – the Jews and Christians. Francisco Da Gama and Epifania Menezes get married in 1900. They subsequently build an empire on the spice trade. Their marriage leads to the birth of two sons, Camoens and Aires. The homosexually inclined Aires and his wife Carmen bear no children while the union of Camoens and Isabella leads to the birth of a daughter, Aurora. The only heir to the family, Aurora Da Gama finds a mate in the Jew, Abraham Zogoiby. The four children born of their union include Christina, Inamorata, Philomena and Moraes - the central character.

Moraes' life becomes an allegory for that of the Indian nation. He is a hybrid character in terms of race. His lineage interweaves history and the fabulous, tracing back to Vasco da Gama, the Jews of Cochin, and Boabdil - the last Moorish sultan of Spain. The probability of Moraes Zogoiby being Prime Minister Nehru's son is also proposed, with the insinuation that Nehru and Aurora could have been lovers.

Through this suggestion of multiple paternities, Farhad Idris feels that Rushdie is making an attempt to let Moraes embody the turmoil of the entire nation.³

Like Boabdil, the Spanish Moor that he is palimpsested over, Moraes Zogoiby, in his metaphorical role is “a unifier of opposites... a symbol – however approximate – of the new nation . . .” (*MLS* 303).⁴

The personal self thus becomes an analogy for the nation. Like the city of Bombay, the Moor and his mother Aurora exemplify hybridity. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem's life mirrors that of the nation. In *Shame* Sufiya's mind refuses to keep pace with the development of her body. Similarly in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Moor is afflicted by an irredeemable premature ageing condition wherein his body ages at twice the normal speed. An accelerated gestational period of just four and a half months - instead of the usual nine months - foreshadows his development. “A double-speed existence permits only half a life” (*MLS* 145), thus, at the age of ten the Moor “was a child trapped in the six-foot-six body of a twenty-year-old giant, and possessed, from these early moments of self-consciousness, by a terror of running out of time” (*MLS* 152). “My inside and outside have always been out of sync”, Moraes declares. He subsequently goes on to compare himself with the city of Bombay:

I mushroomed into a huge urbane sprawl of a fellow, I expanded without time for proper planning, without any pauses to learn from my experiences or my mistakes or my contemporaries, without time for a reflection. How then could I have turned out to be anything but a mess? (*MLS* 161-162)

Besides the Moor ageing far too quickly, he has a congenital abnormality in the form of a clubbed right hand. In addition to his woes, he is later rendered impotent. The Moor is a misfit because he cannot belong to the world he lives in - his

genealogy and physiology render this problematic. His origins as a Cochin Jew and his physiological condition ensure that he is alienated from the society to which he craves to belong. He jokes about his Catholic – Jewish origins: “I, however, was raised neither as a Catholic nor as a Jew. I was both, and nothing: a jewholic-anonymous, a cathjew nut, a stewpot, a mongrel cur. I was ... a real Bombay mix” (*MLS* 104). For Rushdie, his beloved metropolis Bombay with its eclectic mix, its cosmopolitanism, its resilience, its contradictions, its excesses, is the quintessence of India.

Similarly, Aurora is regarded as an “incarnation of the smartyboots metropolis” (*MLS* 139). Her home in Bombay welcomes all kinds of artists with an open-minded, unprejudiced attitude. Likewise, her artistic imagination was characterised by inclusion. Her paintings offered an affirmation of pluralism in theme and technique. Worlds bled into each other and collided on her canvasses. “Call it Palimpsest” was her exhortation regarding this merger of “universe”, “dimension”, “country” and “dream” (*MLS* 226). Her art was:

an attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation; she was using Arab Spain to re-imagine India, and this land-sea-scape in which the land could be fluid and the sea stone-dry was her metaphor ... of the present, and the future, that she hoped would evolve. (*MLS* 227)

Aurora had embarked upon her artistic career with a huge mural covering every inch of the walls of her room, populated with every kind of icon apart from the divine. But the trajectory of her art only gets darker. Over the span of her artistic career she traces the course of her family and the nation, depicting the decline of India’s idealistic pluralism and ending with a tragic palimpsest.

John Ball Clement notes that the parallel between the Spanish and Indian context enables a “prophetic critique”.⁵ Medieval Spain with its multicultural ethos can be viewed as a kind of parallel to the secular pluralist ideals of Gandhi and Nehru. However, like this European counterpart that became coercive, India’s fate could run a similar course under the shadow of dangerous sectarian forces like communalism.

The proponent of communalism in the text is a character that caricatures the Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray. Called Raman Fielding in the novel and nicknamed Mainduck, this political cartoonist later becomes a full-time communalist politician and founder of the Hindu nationalist party ‘Mumbai’s Axis’. When the Moor is disowned by his family following Uma’s ploy, and deceived by Uma, the love of his life, it is Mainduck who comes to his rescue. After Moor’s release from prison, he unhesitatingly becomes an agent of Mainduck for six years, embracing his role without ado. This period gives him a clear idea of Mainduck’s ideology. The Moor finds that in Mainduck’s bizarre conception, cricket was regarded as an essentially Hindu game under constant threat from other communities within the country. He makes the following observation about Mainduck’s austere agenda:

He was against unions, in favour of breaking strikes, against working women, in favour of sati, against poverty and in favour of wealth. He was against ‘immigrants’ to the city, by which he meant all non-Marathi speakers, including those who had been born there, and in favour of its ‘natural residents’, which included Marathi-medium types who had just stepped off the bus.... He derided the Marxist analysis of society as class struggle and lauded the Hindu preference for the eternal stability of caste. In the national flag he was in favour of the colour saffron and against the colour green. He spoke of a golden age

‘before the invasions’ when good Hindu men and women could roam free. ‘Now our freedom, our beloved nation, is buried beneath the things the invaders have built. This true nation is what we must reclaim from beneath the layers of alien empires.’ (MLS 298-99)

The religious fundamentalism in *The Moor's Last Sigh* is accompanied by what Idris terms “fascist xenophobia”.⁶ The divisive rhetoric impacts even the cultural arena. The novel sees the rise of religious nationalism culminating in the destruction of the city of Bombay. Events like the seizure of the golden temple by Sikh terrorists, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and the destruction of the Ayodhya mosque in 1992 had a domino effect. Subsequently, men like Mainduck whose scheme was to subdue the minority factions in the country, gained momentum. It is noteworthy that such divisive forces had staunch support from the youth and the powerful classes in the city. The Moor is well aware that:

...they are not inhuman, these Mainduck-style Hitlers, and it is in their humanity that we must locate our collective guilt, humanity's guilt for human beings' misdeeds; for if they are just monsters – if it is just a question of King Kong and Godzilla wreaking havoc until the aeroplanes bring them down – then the rest of us are excused. (MLS 297)

The onus for the state of affairs is a collective one. The culprits are identified by the narrator as the individual self:

...the barbarians were not only at our gates but within our skins. We were our own wooden horses, each one of us full of our doom...We were both the bombers and the bombs. The explosions were our own evil – no need to look for foreign explanations, though there was and is

evil beyond our frontiers as well as within. We have chopped away our own legs, we engineered our own fall. (*MLS* 372)

Rushdie's "sigh" in this novel is for the increasingly parochial track that the nation - characterised by a multicultural ethos - has embarked upon. An evocation that is a Rushdie favourite, that of Oz and a quest for home, is used to satiric ends in the novel. The Moor ironically finds sanctuary in the service of the proponent of fundamentalism:

... in that surreal stratum, with a tin man, a toothsome scarecrow and a cowardly frog for company (for Mainduck was certainly a coward – he did none of his own rough stuff), I found, for the first time in my short-long life, the feeling of normality, of being *nothing special*, the sense of being among kindred spirits, among people-like-me, that is the defining quality of home....

So, mother: in that dreadful company, doing those dreadful deeds, without need of magic slippers, I found my own way home. (*MLS* 304-5; original parenthesis and emphasis)

J. C. Ball regards the act of the Moor joining Mainduck's forces as a narrative device employed to give the reader an insight into the world of the fundamentalist leader and thereby facilitate Rushdie's satire. The Moor surrenders his quest for normality when he realises that it is beyond his grasp. Instead, he begins to use his deformed limb in a renewed attempt at self-definition. In the Moor's complicity with forces of fundamentalism, J. C. Ball views signs of a satiric despair and all-embracing pessimism in the writer.⁷ It is in the act of the Moor embracing Mainduck's way as the future, that the concept of hybridity that he embodies at the outset, reaches its nadir. From his role as a "standard-bearer of pluralism", the Moor is thus transformed

“into a semi-allegorical figure of decay” (*MLS* 303). The victim turns into the victimiser, the very perpetrator of violence. As a symbol of the new nation, the Moor is equated with a nation that is readily embracing partisan forces.

Rushdie’s pessimism bears itself out in the fate of Adam Braganza. If *The Moor’s Last Sigh* updates the political agenda of *Midnight’s Children*, even the characters have advanced from one text to the other. In *Midnight’s Children* Aadam Sinai is invested with the hope for a new forward-looking India. Saleem envisages this second magical generation of “potent kiddies, growing waiting listening, rehearsing the moment when the world would become their plaything” (*MC* 448). The infant Aadam Sinai, son of Shiva and Parvati in *Midnight’s Children* who was adopted by Saleem Sinai, reappears in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* as Adam Braganza. After Saleem’s mysterious disappearance, he takes on the name ‘Braganza’ after the Braganza sisters who take care of him.

Adam makes an appearance in *The Moor’s Last Sigh* as a smart suave articulate, techno-savvy seventeen year old; whose management principles make an impression on Moor’s father Abraham Zogoiby, the formidable owner of ‘Siodi Corp’ enterprises. Abraham is so impressed that he adopts Adam as his own son and gives him the Zogoiby family name. But Adam Zogoiby comes to no good. Beneath his charismatic veneer he is a hypocritical and glib manipulator. By the end of the novel he is implicated in the financial scam and relegated to prison. Charges against him include smuggling, dealing in arms, corruption, and money laundering.

Abraham’s flourishing business is in actuality a distraction, a decoy, for his large scale smuggling operations. It is a secret he guards closely. His wealthy empire is built on such covert activities. On the night of India’s independence a drunken Vasco Miranda is unable to control his rage. He is incensed by the Hindu-Muslim

violence, the growth of fundamentalism and the dishonesty in the country. His definition of Indian democracy is: “one man one bribe” (*MLS* 167). In an outburst of anger he tells Abraham Zogoiby:

Let me give you a tip. Only one power in this damn country is strong enough to stand up against those gods and it isn't blankety blank sockular specialism [secular socialism]. It isn't blankety blank Pundit Nehru and his blankety blank protection-of-minorities Congress watch-wallahs. You know what it is? I'll tell you what it is. Corruption. You get me? Bribery. (*MLS* 166)

Abraham's financial success owes much to corruption. Farhad Idris reads *The Moor's Last Sigh* in the light of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. He observes that Fanon's view that the “national bourgeoisie plays a detrimental role in the development of a decolonized country”, is borne out in the Indian context.⁸ Idris feels that Rushdie insinuates that this class is responsible for many of India's post-independence troubles. Rushdie draws attention to the imbalanced distribution of wealth in the country, with a few large corporations controlling most of the wealth.

As an infant in *Midnight's Children*, Aadam embodied the nostalgic idealism of his creator, and therein the hope of a new pragmatic resilient generation. This promise comes to naught in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Adam and Abraham stand for the threat that “corporate colonialism poses to national identity”. In this case, instead of religious nationalism, we encounter “economic postnationalism”.⁹ The Hindu fundamentalism of Mainduck is only rivalled by the corrupt capitalism of Abraham Zogoiby. “Ram Rajya”, suggestive of local and communal concerns; and “RAM Rajya” evocative of technological capitalism, assumes prominence (*MLS* 343).

In spite of the valorisation of plurality, the pessimism in the novel is pervasive. The chapter titled “Bombay Central” witnesses the destruction of Moor’s family. By the end of the novel the Moor has lost his family and his beloved. The city he loves is also being destroyed. As a secular Bombayite, Rushdie invokes the elephant-headed God Ganesh in *Midnight’s Children*. In *The Moor’s Last Sigh* the charming God who is the patron of new ventures comes to be associated with forces of fundamentalism. Aurora Zogoiby has fallen off the precipice while performing her annual dance during the Ganpati festival. Abraham Zogoiby turns out to be his wife’s putative murderer.

Abraham is also suspected for the death of Mynah his daughter, a lawyer by profession. Cancer claims Ina. The devious woman in Moor’s life, Uma Sarasvati, meets her death in a freak accident as she attempts to kill the Moor. Mainduck meets his nemesis at the hands of the Moor. Abraham Zogoiby perishes in the explosion of Siodi Enterprises. Nadia Wadia the former ‘Miss India’, who is betrothed to the Moor, has her face slashed. Nadia Wadia’s feeble expression of hope “The city will survive....Better days will come” (MLS 377), seems to parody Saleem’s hope in *Midnight’s Children*.

As an allegory of the nation, Saleem fragments in *Midnight’s Children*. The Moor, as Laura Moss discerns, is not accountable for history. Instead, he is impacted by historical forces and devoid of the potential of “substantial political agency”.¹⁰ The Moor is thrust into the position of a migrant. He escapes from Bombay that is being ripped apart by explosions. Violence eliminates all hybridity. Moor takes along with him his uncle’s stuffed dog called Jawahar. The name of the dog is an ironic comment on the Nehruvian ideal. Moor goes to Spain with the intention of recovering his mother’s stolen paintings from Vasco. In Benengeli, a town in Spain, he enters a Kafkaesque world. He ends up being imprisoned in the tower of Vasco’s fortress.

Held captive along with him, is a Japanese painting restorer called Aoi Uë. She is forced to restore the image of Aurora from beneath Vasco's portrait of "The Moor's Last Sigh". The palimpsests are ultimately restored, only to be destroyed. Writing the story of his life for Vasco Miranda becomes the Moor's mode of survival. This recalls Scheherazade from *A Thousand and One Nights*. Jonathan Greenberg notes that Moor becomes a writer after his exile from the home country, the loss of family and his incarceration.¹¹ Vasco Miranda dies of a drug overdose in the dramatic turn of events that lead the book to its climax.

The end of the novel sweeps back to the beginning. It finds the Moor nailing the pages of his tale to the trees around. Art seems to triumph ultimately. The novel has been regarded as "a paean to the power of the aesthetic".¹² The notion of art does seem to temper the pessimism in the novel. J. C. Ball, on the other hand, finds the structure of the work - with the beginning containing the end - reflective of the "gloomy fatalism". Moor knows his days are numbered. His strength seems to be leaving him. He is after all, a thirty-six year old, trapped in a seventy-two year old physique. Just as the dissolution of Saleem in *Midnight's Children* is reflective of the national degeneration; the accelerated ageing and impending arrest of the Moor mirror the collapse of the Indian nation. The last line contains his "hope to awaken, renewed and joyful, into a better time" (MLS 434). He gazes upon the Spanish Alhambra in the distance which stands as a testament "*to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self*" (MLS 433).

Early in the narrative, Moraes' grandfather had envisioned a utopia:

...dawning of a new world ... a free country ... above religion because secular, above class because socialist, above caste because enlightened, above hatred because loving, above vengeance because

forgiving, above tribe because unifying, above language because many-tongued, above colour because multi-coloured, above poverty because victorious over it, above ignorance because literate, above stupidity because brilliant, freedom ... the freedom express, soon soon we will stand upon that platform and cheer the coming of the train...(MLS 51; original emphasis)

None of his imagined hopes have come to pass. The India Moraes leaves behind seems to have a bleak future.

With Rushdie, the trope of the palimpsest becomes a valuable narrative device to deal with the issue of national identity. Originating from the Greek *palimpsestos*, meaning “to scrape”; the palimpsest is characterised by diverse layers apparent beneath the surface. It was Jawaharlal Nehru who viewed India as a palimpsest on which many cultures had inscribed their contributions. Each of these merited regard. Nehru’s well-known description of India was that of:

an ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed and yet no succeeding layer had completely hidden or erased what had been written previously though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us.¹³

The palimpsest is employed as a dominant trope in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. It typifies the city of Bombay, the characters and the paintings in the novel. In fact, the multiple referents of the title include two paintings called “The Moor’s Last Sigh”. Both of these paintings are palimpsests. Early in the story Abraham Zogoiby

commissions Vasco Miranda to paint a portrait of Aurora and their child. An irate Abraham rejected Miranda's rendition of a bare-breasted Aurora. Miranda subsequently painted over the previous picture. He painted a portrait of an Arab on a horse representing the last sultan Boabdil seen leaving from the Alhambra. He named the painting "The Moor's Last Sigh". It is this painting that launches him on his international career. He attains commercial success as a muralist. Ten years later, Aurora embarks upon a palimpsest of the same title just before her death. Under the layer of the painting of the Moor she has painted a portrait of her murderer. This figure turns out to be Abraham Zogoiby, Aurora's husband. The concept of the palimpsest, of the "overneath" above the "underneath" (*MLS* 180), is explored in relation to most of the characters in the novel.

Vasco Miranda for instance, is an enigmatic and eccentric character. One day he presents himself in a state of penury at Aurora's gates. He falls in love with her. When the pregnant Aurora asks him to paint the children's nursery with cartoon figures, Vasco accomplishes this task and moves into the Zogoiby residence 'Elephanta'. He resides there for thirty-two years inspite of his great commercial success and homes abroad. He claims to hail from Loutulim in Goa. Vasco is a character shrouded in mystery. Despite references to Goa - like the Goan liberation, its cuisine including "Goan chourisso sausage and ... sarpotel", "mando love songs ... contraband cashew and coconut feni liquor ... fishy Goan tales", villages like "Loutulim with its houses of red laterite stone and its windows with panes of oyster shell"; towns like "Mapusa", and "Marmagoa" (*MLS* 156-57) - the veracity of Vasco's past is never really explored.

Abraham Zogoiby has his own secret life. His son asserts that Abraham "had created a mild-mannered secret identity to mask his covert super-nature" (*MLS* 179).

Outwardly, he was a complacent and mild husband, father and businessman. Behind this exterior, there lurked a darker persona of a black-marketer who supplied girls to the city brothels, smuggled heroin, indulged in trafficking of arms and even nuclear weapons. It was a “Mogambo-ish underworld” that he ruled (*MLS* 180). A complex secret life is hinted at in relation to Aurora Zogoiby as well. Uma Saraswati reveals to the Moor that the owner of the Parsi art gallery - Kekoo Mody, Vasco Miranda as well as Mainduck are his mother’s lovers. Despite his initial scepticism, Moor began to wonder if Uma’s accusations had a base in actuality. He began to wonder if Aurora’s art was just a façade to her real self.

The notion of the “secret identity” (*MLS* 152) is entrenched in all the four Zogoiby children via the pictures that Vasco Miranda had painted on the walls of their nursery. All sorts of well-known characters from the make-believe world of cartoons populated the walls. In addition there were the masked heroes: “Bruce Wayne and his ward Dick Grayson ... mild mannered Clark Kent who was the space-immigrant Kal-El from the planet Krypton, who was Superman ... Diana King who was Wonder Woman the Amazon Queen (*MLS* 152).

The super-heroic is not always a position of power. Moraes exemplifies this in the manner in which he uses his clubbed hand and his bizarre physical development to destructive purposes rather than constructive ends. He admits his obsessive desire for an ordinariness that is beyond his grasp:

It was from these walls that I first learned how profoundly a super-hero could yearn for normality, that Superman ... wanted more than life itself that Lois Lane should love him as a meek wimp in specs.... with my hand like a club and my personal calendar losing pages at super-speed I was exceptional all right, and had no desire to be. Learning

from the Phantom and the Flash.... I set about devising a secret identity of my very own. (As had my sisters before me; my poor, damaged sisters.) (*MLS* 152; original parenthesis)

Names in Rushdie's novels are usually significant. All the four Zogoiby children's real names are not used in this novel. Christina Zogoiby the eldest girl is nicknamed Ina - her name is thus sliced in half. Later, she assumes the stage name Gooddy Gama. Inamorata is nicknamed Minnie after the famous cartoon rodent. After she becomes a nun she is called Sr. Floreas. The label Mynah sticks with Philomena Zogoiby on account of her voice. Moor gets the appellation from his ancestor the Spanish Moor.

In the case of Uma Saraswati, her entire background had been embellished if not fabricated. She is able to switch identities effortlessly. Unlike Aurora who believes in multiculturalism, in the case of Uma, the multicultural ideal is reduced to a fashion statement. The detective Dom Minto's findings had little correspondence with her own account revealed to the Moor. The detective's version of her past unearthed an Uma with a disordered spirit, repeated mental anomalies, a penchant for malicious lies and manipulating people, of clinging to her invented histories. The narrator deems it possible that the essential self was lost: "she no longer had a clear sense of an 'authentic' identity that was independent of these performances" (*MLS* 266).

The narrator reflects at length on this layering that has extended to the characters:

The city itself, perhaps the whole country, was a palimpsest, Under World beneath Over World, black market beneath white; when the whole of life was like this, when an invisible reality moved phantomwise beneath a visible fiction, subverting all its meanings. . .

How could any of us have escaped that deadly layering? ...How could we have lived authentic lives? (*MLS* 184-85)

Just as the notion of pluralism has been adversely affected, the palimpsest reveals its negative aspects. It is issues like coming to terms with a colonial history, religious conflict, the Emergency, the rise of the neo-colonial capitalists, unscrupulous capitalism, rampant corruption, and prevailing sectarianism leading to a kind of barbarism, that this novel deals with in the main. In *The Moor's Last Sigh* community is largely exclusionary. Religious fundamentalism has wreaked havoc and secular pluralism has taken a beating. The idea and ideal of a heterogeneous India has suffered tremendously with forces of exclusion gaining mileage. According to Rushdie:

...of all the many elephant traps lying ahead of us, the largest and most dangerous pitfall would be the adoption of a ghetto mentality. To forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be, I believe, to go voluntarily into that form of internal exile which in South Africa is called the 'homeland'.¹⁴

You still think that home, at the end of a long journey, is a place where a man finds peace.

- Salman Rushdie (*The Enchantress of Florence* 231)

The Moor's Last Sigh was Rushdie's nostalgic celebration of the long gone havens of racial harmony such as the spice plantations of Cochin and the Moorish civilisation of Andalusia. In *Shalimar the Clown* he turns to a place close to his heart, to Kashmir as a lost paradise. An eden endowed with natural and man made beauty

with its lakes, snow capped peaks, pristine valleys and Mogul gardens, Kashmir has constantly engaged Rushdie's imagination. Charmingly evoked at the opening of *Midnight's Children* and in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Kashmir provides the backdrop for this novel that turns the spotlight on the collapse of a paradise, and the transmutation of artiste into terrorist.

The sweep of Rushdie's canvas extends from Kashmir, to the 1960s in Strasbourg and Paris of World War II, to present-day Los Angeles. Through the tale of a personal cataclysm, Rushdie explores the obdurate issue of Kashmir in recent history, and thereby, concerns of nationalism, religious bigotry, and imperialism.

The novel opens in 1991 in Los Angeles with the murder of the U.S. diplomat Max Ophuls by his chauffeur Shalimar. The crime is committed at the doorstep of the diplomat's daughter called 'India'. She has been named after the country of her illegitimate birth. The narrative then assumes a circular movement, journeying back five decades through the Partition of India, the Second World War and the tragic destruction of Kashmir, delving into the stories of the major characters. *Shalimar the Clown* is divided into five sections - 'India', 'Boonyi', 'Max', 'Shalimar' and 'Kashmira' - each named after a major character.

In Kashmir, Rushdie zooms into the village of Pachigam, which is an embodiment of the syncretic culture. This village is famous for its talented cooks and cuisine, and the 'bhand pather' - theatrical performers who stage the traditional plays of the valley. The village comprises Muslims and Hindus coexisting in harmony. Their intermingling has led to the evolution of a common culture.

The title character Shalimar the Clown, also known Noman Sher Noman is a tight-rope artiste. He is the son of the Muslim headman of the village Abdullah Noman who leads the bhand pather – the troupe of artistes. Shalimar was in love with

Boonyi Kaul. Boonyi is the daughter of Pyarelal Kaul, the Hindu Pandit of the village. Boonyi's mother who had died in childbirth, had been a good friend of Shalimar's mother. The young lovers Shalimar and Boonyi consummate their love at the age of fourteen. At the discovery of their physical liaison, the two families find a mature acceptable resolution in the form of marriage. Regardless of the antipathy of the mullahs and the soldiers in the valley, the parents are convinced that Kashmiriyat: "the belief that at the heart of Kashmiri culture there was a common bond that transcended all differences", would prevail. Abdullah Noman thus states: "There is no Hindu-Muslim issue. Two Kashmiri - two Pachigami - youngsters wish to marry, that's all. A love match is acceptable to both families and so a marriage there will be; both Hindu and Muslim customs will be observed" (SC 110).¹⁵

The love story of Boonyi and Shalimar is interrupted by the arrival of Max Ophuls on the scene. This U.S. ambassador to India, is beguiled by Boonyi's charms during her mesmerising dance performance as Anarkali. In turn, Boonyi who had been harbouring a sense of dissatisfaction with her claustrophobic existence seizes the opportunity to abandon her husband and old life for a life of luxury with Max, in Delhi. She bargains for an apartment and dance lessons in return for fulfilling Max's physical desires. It is too late by the time a ruined Boonyi realises her mistake. She returns home to Kashmir after having made the supreme sacrifice of her daughter. In the meanwhile her existence in the village has been wiped out. She does not exist in official terms. She is informed that she is a "dead person." "Your life has been ended. It's official" (SC 223).

In the interim, the cuckolded Shalimar is driven by revenge. He bides his time, directing his rage into the Kashmiri resistance. He becomes an easy victim to greater political forces who exploit his personal sentiments to their own political ends.

Around this basic love story is woven the bigger story of the history of Kashmir since the Partition. Boonyi and Shalimar share the date of their birth. They were born on the same night in October 1947 in the Shalimar gardens during a feast at which their parents were hired to cook and perform for the maharaja. Kashmir is invaded by the Kabailis - the Pakistan backed tribals - on the day of the birth of Boonyi and Shalimar. This event influenced the maharaja's decision to accede to India in return for military aid. The accord of the peaceful valley is shattered by the twin forces of nationalism and religious bigotry that begin to infiltrate the idyllic region. The Indian army and the Islamic fundamentalists play villainous roles. At first, the Indian military are fighting an unacknowledged war unwillingly, but gradually they themselves turn into embittered perpetrators of oppression.

At the heart of the novel is the awful fate of Kashmir. The parts of the novel set in Kashmir are the strength of the book. The writer's passion expresses itself eloquently in the context of his destroyed homeland. The initial peaceful coexistence of the different communities is underscored. However, "massive state repression, intercommunal violence and increasingly fanatical religious ideologies turn the traditional magical vistas into a bloody Himalayan dystopia."¹⁶

Rushdie bases the name Max Ophuls on the well-known German-Jewish director of the same name. The original Max Ophuls was born in 1902. As a Jew in Nazi Germany, he fled to France and later to the United States. He ultimately returned to France to make his four greatest films there before his death. The character of Max Ophuls that Rushdie creates in *Shalimar the Clown*, is larger than life. His handsome looks match his brilliant urbane mind. A celebrated Resistance hero, his escape from occupied France is supposedly part of legend. As an academic, he predicts the end of the cold war and the ascent of third-world economies. He is a foreign diplomat and

chief of U.S. counter-terrorism. Hailing from the contested Franco-German borderland of Alsace, he claims to understand all about “shifting frontiers, upheavals and dislocations, flights and returns, conquests and reconquests” (SC 138). As the ambassador he endears himself to Indians. However, Max’s illustrious career suffers severely following the scandal of the illegitimate daughter with Boonyi in India.

Boonyi believed that her “ravenous longing for something she could not yet name” would be satiated with the entry of Max on the scene (SC 114). Her husband Shalimar was merely a clown. The assurance of her husband’s love was not enough to satisfy her ambitions. And so, as per her arrangement with Max, she became his mistress. In return she requested dance lessons from a great dance teacher, the opportunity to pursue her education, and a good place in which to live.

The fifty-five year old ambassador Max finds that he is falling in love with Boonyi despite himself. On the contrary, Boonyi discovered that all the lavish imported gifts she received, failed to make her happy: “She had it all upside down and backward, her heart scolded her. What she thought of as her former imprisonment had been freedom, while this so-called liberation was no more than a gilded cage” (SC 195). In addition, her dance guru refused to tutor her. Boonyi’s descent downhill was accelerated by her role in shaping Max’s views and thereby affecting diplomatic matters regarding Kashmir.

Boonyi’s room increasingly began to feel like a prison. She became a tobacco-chewing addict and her teeth began to decay. She turned to food for solace, and became a veritable glutton: “If her world would not expand, her body could.” (SC 201). In *Midnight’s Children*, it is Saleem’s grandmother who begins to expand unnaturally during her oath of silence. In *Shame*, Omar bloats with the repression of his desires. Similarly, Boonyi bloats tremendously and her beauty fades. When Max

finally decides that she has to go, she uses the trump card of her pregnant state. This leads to “the biggest Indo-American diplomatic rumpus in history” (SC 194). After Max was recalled to America in disgrace, his wife Peggy Ophuls takes charge of Boonyi’s new born child. Boonyi had named the girl-child Kashmira Noman. Peggy renames her India Ophuls. She subsequently packs Boonyi off to Kashmir.

Rumpelstiltskin, a slave in a fairy tale bearing the same name, forms an intertext in *Shalimar the Clown*. The tale is supposed to have originated in Germany, and the Brothers Grimm are credited with documenting the tale. Peggy Ophuls alludes to this fairy tale in which the miller’s daughter was bound by her promise towards a little dwarf. In return for his aid in saving her life, the miller’s daughter agreed to give the dwarf her first born. Consequently, he returns to stake his claim after the birth of her child. Peggy Ophuls, Max’s wife, plays the role of the manikin in *Shalimar the Clown*. Boonyi is distraught at the loss of her infant. She returns to Pachigam in disgrace. Her father and in-laws have had her declared dead officially with the intention of protecting her from her husband’s wrath. Boonyi retires to a cave atop the mountain and lives a solitary existence till Shalimar returns to wreak his vengeance.

India Ophuls, Boonyi’s daughter is a glamorous twenty-four year old at the opening of the book. A bright student, she is in the process of planning a documentary about Los Angeles. Weekly boxing sessions and training in martial arts take up her free time. She is beautiful, confused about her past, indulges in casual sex and is unable to commit to a relationship. She detests her name and begins to discover her roots only after the homicide of her father. As a child her careless surrogate mother Peggy neglected her. She was regarded as a problem child. It was only after her seventh birthday that she got to know of the existence of Max, her father. Max was allowed to visit her only twice a year and this limited the mutual adoration of the

father and daughter for each other. India turns into a delinquent in her teens. She is finally rescued by Max and taken to live with him in the U.S. There she blossoms into a proficient athlete and brilliant student displaying an interest in fact-based films. Just when she was all set to make her father proud of her, Shalimar cut Max's life short.

After the death of her father, India takes on the name Kashmira. She decides to visit Kashmir in search of the biological mother she has never known. She subsequently visits the grave of her mother. In the course of her journey she discovers love in the form of Yuvraj Singh. It is only after the trial and imprisonment of Shalimar that she feels her life return to normality.

Shalimar is portrayed as a young talented artiste marrying his childhood sweetheart. He feels compelled to avenge his honour after his wife betrays him. At the consummation of their love as teenagers, Shalimar tells Boonyi: "Don't you leave me now, or I'll never forgive you, and I'll have my revenge. I'll kill you and if you have any children by another man I'll kill the children also" (SC 61). His actions in the course of the plot seem propelled by this early oath.

Rushdie traces the metamorphosis of this artiste into assassin. Early in the novel we are given a peek into Boonyi's sentiments that Shalimar could not "hurt any living soul." She wonders: "How could he cause her harm when he would not harm a fly?" (SC 50). Shalimar joins the militants after being cuckolded by Boonyi:

He became a person of value and consequence, as assassins are. Also, his secret purpose was achieved. He had passports in five names and had learned good Arabic, ordinary French and bad English, and had opened routes for himself...." (SC 275).

Shalimar avenges himself by killing Max and Boonyi. He intends killing Kashmira as well. However, the end of the novel finds Kashmira armed and prepared for him.

An image that assumes significance in the novel is that of the tightrope depicted on the jacket of the book. Shalimar's magic-realist prison escape has guards and villagers swear that:

a man had run flat-out off the corner of a walled area near the adjustment centre on death row and had simply taken off, had continued on his way as if the wall stretched out into the sky like the wall of China or such, had gone scooting up into the air just as if he were running up a hill, his arms stretched out...and maybe he ran all the way to Paradise. (*SC* 395)

This is foreshadowed at the very beginning when Shalimar recalls his father teaching him to walk the tightrope he tells the young Boonyi that one day he wouldn't need the rope, for he would just "walk into empty air and hang there like a cosmonaut without a suit" (*SC* 57). The tight-rope walk and the notion of flying become apt images for the novel where history becomes a kaleidoscope viewed aurally.

Rushdie avidly engages with urgent issues like religious fundamentalism, the influence of America and the psychopathology of terrorism. He writes passionately about the destruction of the village of Pachigam by the Indian Army: "Approximately one hundred alleged insurgents and their alleged associates were being shot dead every day" (*SC* 313). "Shootings, hangings, stabbings, decapitations, bombs" were commonplace (*SC* 361).

Hammirdev Suryavans Kachhwaha is an officer of the unit of the Indian army in Kashmir, with an obsessive-compulsive disorder. His camp is called 'Elasticnagar'

on account of its ability to stretch to accommodate the soldiers flooding in. The ruthless General Kachhwaha is elated at the decision of the political echelon to pronounce Kashmir a zone of unrest. For, “In such a disturbed area, search warrants were not required, arrest warrants ditto, and shoot-to-kill treatment of suspects was acceptable” (SC 290). The insurgency, in his view, “was pathetic. It fought against itself. Half of it was fighting for that old fairy tale, Kashmir for the Kashmiris, while the other half wanted Pakistan, and to be a part of the Islamist terror international” (SC 291).

The ethnic cleansing leads to the exodus of the pandits in huge numbers. The query “why was that” becomes an urgent refrain in an incensed passage:

... and the pandits of Kashmir were left to rot in their slum camps, to rot while the army and the insurgency fought over the bloodied and broken valley, to dream of return, to die while dreaming of return, to die after the dream of return died so that they could not even die dreaming of it, why was that why was that why was that why was that why was that. (SC 297)

With greater tracts of land being occupied by the soldiers, there is a piling up of military hardware in the valley. Scrap metal junkyards sprang up, forming eyesores on the landscape. From this overflow emerges an interesting Rushdie creation – the legend of the iron mullahs:

Then one day by the grace of God the junk began to stir. The men who were miraculously born from these rusting war metals, who went out into the valley to preach resistance and revenge, were saints of an entirely new kind. They were the iron mullahs. It was said that if you

dared to knock on their bodies you would hear a hollow metallic ring

....They were to be honoured, feared and obeyed. (SC 115)

Whereas previously the words ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ were merely descriptive, not divisive, the militant mullahs advocated their brand of extremism. Stark frontiers began to be erected between the once amicably coexisting communities. In addition to his condemnation of the Indian army posing as protectors, Rushdie condemns the legions of Islamic fundamentalist resistance groups fuelled by Pakistan and Afgan funding. “LeP posters had appeared in the village ordering all Muslim women to don the burqa and adhere to the dress and behavioural principles laid down by the Taliban in Afganistan” (SC 277). Kashmiri women, who were not accustomed to the burqa, ignored the posters and had to pay a price. Reprisals took the form of beheadings and other kinds of deaths. “Women teachers were doused with acid for failing to adhere to the Islamic dress code. Threats were made and deadlines issued and many Kashmiri women put on, for the first time, the shroud their mothers and grandmothers had always proudly refused” (SC 277).

In all of Rushdie’s novels names assume certain significance. Moreso is the case in *Shalimar the Clown*. Almost all the characters in *Shalimar the Clown* seek a change in name. The title character Noman adopts the name Shalimar – which literally means ‘abode of joy’ - as his professional name. Boonyi believes that the name is his way of celebrating the coincidence of their simultaneous birth in the Shalimar gardens. She, in turn, was originally named Boomi meaning the earth, but prefers being called Boonyi after the local chinar tree.

Similarly, Boonyi’s mother was named Pamposh after the lotus flower but preferred being called Giri, i.e. walnut kernel. Pandit Kaul, Boonyi’s father is also dissatisfied with his name on account of it being common, but retains his name.

Colonel Hammirdev Suryavans Kachhwaha prefers the nickname 'Hammer'. Instead, people just shorten his name to Kachhwa Karnail which translates into "Tortoise Colonel". Max Ophuls adopts a series of names as he assumes various identities throughout the Resistance.

Most displeased with the name given to her just because she was conceived in the East, is Max and Boonyi's daughter, India. To her, the name didn't feel right. Rather, it felt "exoticist, colonial, suggesting the appropriation of a reality that was not hers to own" (SC 5). She was convinced the name didn't suit her. "She didn't want to be vast or subcontinental or excessive or vulgar or explosive or crowded or ancient or noisy or mystical or in any way Third World" (SC 5-6). She tells her father early in the novel, "...speaking of names, I wanted to finally tell you, mine is pretty much a burden. This foreign country you made me carry around on my shoulders. I want to be some other name and smell as sweet" (SC 14). She decides to rechristen herself Kashmira, after the name given to her by her biological mother. The last section of the book that traces her journey to India in search of her mother and her past is aptly titled Kashmira.

As always, Rushdie borrows freely from popular culture. Allusions from literature and popular culture abound. On the first page of *Shalimar the Clown*, Scheherazade, *Star Trek*, and Sigourney Weaver find a mention. Gorbachev, the Mandelas, Ayatollah Khomeini, Pr. Ronald Reagan, John Kennedy, Dr. Radhakrishnan, De Gaulle, Roosevelt, Churchill, Dean Rusk, Kennedy, Akbar, Morarji Desai, Indira Gandhi, Bhutto, Pr. Zakir Hussain, Martin Luther King, Napoleon; are among the political figures cited in the text.

Allusions to literary texts and figures include William Faulkner, Thomas Mann, Fitzgerald, the *Katha Sarit Sagar*, Saint-Exupéry, Achilles, Mowgli, Tarzan,

Keats, Rip Van Winkle, Heraclitus, Troy, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Mycenaé, Iphigenia, including a Rushdie favourite: Scheherazade and Shahryar. Some popular cultural references include films like *Ghostbusters*, *The Magnificent Seven*, Keanu Reeves' movie *Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey*, Chaplin, Clark Kent, Superman, Joan Baez. There is also reference to Madhubani painting and Warli tribal art.

The story of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam* forms an intertext to the tale. As the legend goes, the Mughal Prince Salim who was later to become Emperor Jehangir, fell in love with the courtesan Anarkali. Since she was not of noble ancestry his father the Emperor Akbar forbade the romance. As per the decree of the emperor, Anarkali was to be buried alive in a wall. No evidence exists to prove the existence of the young dancing beauty Anarkali, but the legend has inspired literature, art and cinema. The superhit 1960 film *Mughal-e-Azam* that is based on the story of Anarkali, is referred to in *Shalimar the Clown*. Boonyi's fate in the novel literally becomes a parallel to Anarkali's destiny. Boonyi who is a talented dancer with the bhand pather seduces Max:

Just as Anarkali dancing her sorceress's dance in the Sheesh Mahal, the hall of mirrors, at the Mughal court, had captured Prince Salim's heart, just a Madhubala dancing in the hit movie had bewitched millions of gaping men, so Boonyi in the hunting lodge at Dachigam understood that her dance was changing her life It would be up to her to ensure that her story has a better ending than the court dancer's.

(SC 181)

Boonyi thus abandons home and hearth to follow Ambassador Max - the prince she has bagged - to Delhi. It is not long before she despairs of her situation. She compares her entrapment to the mausoleum of the legendary Anarkali:

Anarkali's punishment for the temerity of loving a royal personage was to be bricked up in a wall. Boonyi had seen the movie, in which the filmmakers had found a way of allowing the heroine to live: Emperor Akbar, relenting, has a tunnel constructed under her tomb to allow Anarkali to escape into exile with her mother. A lifetime's exile wasn't much better than death, Boonyi thought. It was the same as being bricked up, only in a larger grave. (SC 181-182)

When a disillusioned Boonyi decides to break free from her lonely life as Max's mistress, she is forced into making the supreme sacrifice of her newborn daughter, in return for a trip back to Kashmir. On her return to Pachigam she is reduced to a life of exile, evocative of Anarkali in *Mughal-e-Azam*. Acting on the advice of her father, Boonyi retires to a forlorn woodshed. It is the hut that the prophetess Nazarebaddoor had retreated to before her death. There, Boonyi embraces her cloistered fate and awaits Shalimar's return. Shalimar had promised both their fathers that he would not harm her for as long as they lived. He comes back to wreak his vengeance after the death of their respective fathers releases him from his oath.

The 'Cinderella' story is invoked in the context of Max's wife. The facade Peggy Ophuls maintained to keep up appearances of the romance of their marriage, disintegrates with the entry of Boonyi into Max's life. Just as Cinderella's carriage turns into the pumpkin at the end of the magic hour, Peggy Ophuls realises that the "beautiful fiction of her marriage would finally have to yield to the unpalatable facts. The glass slipper didn't fit her any more. It was on another woman's foot" (SC 187). Having lost her husband, Peggy is determined to fulfil her dream of begetting a baby in India. Unable to bear a child herself, she gets a distraught Boonyi to part with her child.

Cinderella thus metamorphoses into Rumpelstiltskin with the birth of Boonyi's baby, in Rushdie's version of the tale (SC 211). Peggy tells Boonyi the story of the miller's daughter. The intervention of the little manikin who spun the straw into gold as desired by the king, saved the life of the miller's daughter. She ends up marrying the delighted king. But, the dwarf turns up at the birth of the child to claim his reward. In *Shalimar the Clown*, Peggy takes Boonyi's baby to England, far away from her father and mother. She has Boonyi deported to her home in Pachigam. The miller's daughter had promised Rumpelstiltskin her baby to save her life. Boonyi "... had exchanged her baby for a phiran, a head scarf, a shawl, a packed lunch, a Fokker Friendship flight and a Jeep ride" (SC 219).

"The question of origins is one of the two great questions" (SC 211) says a character in *Shalimar the Clown*. With this novel harking back to a place dear to him – the Kashmir of his grandparents, Rushdie returns to his roots. As a political novelist engaged in the re-examination of history, he makes a devastating examination of a doomed love in a doomed region. It is his response to the threat of the imposing subject of fundamentalism.

It may be too far-fetched to expect a happy ending in the context of present day Kashmir. The novel does seem to hold out a ray of hope for Kashmira. She meets Yuvraj Singh in India and is gradually convinced that their love has a chance. The end finds Kashmira prepared to deal with Shalimar, her prospective assailant. Closure is not to be expected with Rushdie. However, such an end that holds out the prospect of new beginnings is a rare one in Rushdie's corpus of work.

Rushdie's umbilical ties with the Indian homeland thus continue to resurface in his work. He has always been intrigued by the complexity of India and revelled in it. "My' India" he claims, "has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism,

hybridity: ideas to which the ideologies of the communalists are diametrically opposed".¹⁷ In an essay written in 1987, Rushdie recollects that when *Midnight's Children* was published in 1981 Indians criticised the ending for being far too pessimistic about the future. The crisis of the nation state however, has only intensified since the publication of *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie bemoans the fact that reality in India has been so appalling. He laments the sad truth that in the wake of the events post 1981 - like the communally sparked violence - reality seems so much darker. Rushdie makes the cynical assertion that in hindsight, the end of *Midnight's Children* - with its hint of a more practical generation taking over the reins from the children of midnight - now seems "absurdly, romantically optimistic".¹⁸

In the precarious present, it is perhaps more imperative than ever to espouse plurality, multiplicity and ambivalence over individualism, fundamentalism and closure regarding matters of culture and identity. Rushdie is convinced of the Indian talent for resilience. He is certain that the functioning anarchy of old will continue to exist, although he is clueless as to how that will happen.¹⁹ In his essay "Imaginary Homelands", Rushdie recalls a powerful image from Saul Bellow's novel. The protagonist interprets a dog's bark as its protest against the limit of dog experience, and a supplication for opening up the universe. Perhaps, this plea that Rushdie quotes at the end of his essay, best expresses the supplication of the novels under consideration: "For God's sake, open the universe a little more!"²⁰

Notes

¹ Paul A. Cantor, "Tales of the Alhambra: Rushdie's Use of Spanish History in The Moor's Last Sigh," Studies in the Novel 22 Sept. 1997, Highbeam Research 1997. University of North Texas. 3 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>

² J.M. Coetzee, "Palimpsest Regained," rev. of The Moor's Last Sigh, by Salman Rushdie, New York Review of Books 43:5, 21 Mar. 1996 6 Oct 2006. <<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1598>>

³ Farhad B. Idris, "The Moor's Last Sigh and India's National Bourgeoisie: Reading Rushdie through Frantz Fanon," Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie ed., M. Keith Booker (New York: G. K. Hall, 1999)

⁴ Salman Rushdie, The Moor's Last Sigh, (London: Vintage, 1996). Henceforth referenced parenthetically in the text as *MLS* with page number.

⁵ John Clement Ball, "Acid in the Nation's Bloodstream: Satire, Violence, and the Indian Body Politic in Salman Rushdie's The Moor's Last Sigh," Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights, eds. Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Joel Kuortti, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003) 46.

⁶ Idris 161.

⁷ Ball 45-47.

⁸ Idris 154-158.

⁹ Alexandra W. Schultheis, "Postcolonial lack and Aesthetic Promise in The Moor's Last Sigh," Twentieth Century Literature 22 Dec. 2001. Highbeam Research 2001. Hofstra University. 9 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>

¹⁰ Laura Moss, "'Forget Those Damnfool Realists!' Salman Rushdie's Self-Parody as the Magic Realist's 'Last Sigh'," ARIEL 29.4 (1998): 123.

¹¹ Jonathan Greenberg, "The Base Indian" or "the Base Judean"?: Othello and the Metaphor of the Palimpsest in Salman Rushdie's The Moor's Last Sigh," Modern Language Studies 29.2 (1999): 97 JSTOR. 20 March 2006 <<http://www.jstor.org>>

¹² Schultheis

¹³ Jawaharlal Nehru qtd. by Sonia Gandhi. "Conflict and Coexistence in our Age," address, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford University, 29 Nov. 2002 1 Oct. 2006 <www.oxcis.ac.uk/mpl/Gandhi.doc>

¹⁴ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991 (London: Granta; New Delhi Penguin, 1991)19.

¹⁵ Salman Rushdie, Shalimar the Clown (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005). Henceforth referenced parenthetically in the text as *SC* with page number.

¹⁶ Suhayl Saadi, "Storm in the Valley of Death," rev. of Shalimar the Clown, by Salman Rushdie, Independent 9 Sept. 2005, 1 Oct. 2006 <<http://enjoyment.independent.co.uk>>

¹⁷ Salman Rushdie, "The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987," Imaginary Homelands 32.

¹⁸ Rushdie, "The Riddle of Midnight" 33.

¹⁹ Rushdie, "The Riddle of Midnight" 33.

²⁰ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" 21.

V

Writing in a Postcolonial / Postmodern Space:**Rushdie's Narrative Landscape**

To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free.

- Salman Rushdie (*Imaginary Homelands* 17)

Postcolonial discourse is a response to the process of imperial expansion. Postcolonial writers like Rushdie engage with the experience of colonisation and assert themselves by accentuating their differences from the postulations of imperial nuclei. The cultural space Rushdie occupies as an Indian, born into the postcolonial moment, living a good part of his life in Great Britain, drawing from both Eastern and Western cultural and literary traditions, is intriguing to the postcolonial critic. His work is dominated by themes of identity that collapse colonial constructs of Western supremacy over Eastern culture. This positions him as a prominent Indo-Anglian postcolonial writer. His work engages in a critique of the dissatisfactory political governance of the Indian subcontinent even as he records the “totality of neo-colonialism as a world system”.¹ Apart from his thematic concerns, Rushdie's work attempts a subversion of colonial constructs in structural terms via postcolonial strategies that engage in decentring – like parody, intertextuality, indeterminacy of meaning, irony, magic realism, plurality, and in terms of narrative and language.

Postcolonialism employs many of the devices and tropes associated with postmodernism. While postcolonialism is interested in deconstructing the binary of the centre and margin, postmodernism engages in the deconstruction of metanarratives. Linda Hutcheon² discerns that “post-modern and the post-colonial” share concerns in terms of techniques like magic realism, themes like history and

marginality, and devices like irony and allegory, “even if the final uses to which each is put may differ.” She notes that the expression of their concerns assumes similar forms: “for example, both often place textual gaps in the foreground but their sites of production differ; there are those produced by the colonial encounter and those produced by the system of writing itself.” Hutcheon thus cautions against confusing the two.

Catherine Cundy underscores Rushdie’s defiance to being bound by postmodernity and postcoloniality. To classify Rushdie’s writing as “postmodernist, magical realist or fantasist” she surmises, “is often to deny its arguments, its formal innovativeness and its political dimension”.³ Rushdie is convinced about the manner in which “the creation of a false category can and does lead to excessively narrow, and sometimes misleading readings of some of the artists it is held to include”.⁴ He feels that such categories inadvertently divert attention from what actually merits notice.

With an awareness of the dangers inherent in labelling Rushdie’s work, it is necessary to deliberate upon Rushdie’s choice of narrative mode. Rushdie has been simultaneously claimed by postmodernism and postcolonialism. *Midnight’s Children* has been viewed as “the quintessential fictional embodiment of the postmodern celebration of de-centring and hybridity”.⁵ Although Rushdie defies being slotted in any literary convention, his work has inherent inclinations toward postmodern aesthetics. M. D. Fletcher assesses Rushdie’s fiction principally as “postmodern writing of a humorous and biting variety”.⁶ If Rushdie can be considered postmodern at all, according to Aijaz Ahmed, he is so, specifically in the sense that “his intellectual and artistic formation is essentially modernist, but there are distinct articulations and emphases in which he clearly exceeds that basic formation”.⁷

Rushdie's most acclaimed work has been hailed for envisioning an interface between the postmodern and the postcolonial. Both postcolonialism and postmodernism are concerned with the idea of authority. While the former tries to debunk strictures of imperial authority, the latter makes an attempt to debunk authority in general. Postmodernism and postcolonialism are similar in their concerns with decentring, subverting the dominant discourse and interrogating metanarratives. As a result, it is the "marginal" and the "ex-centric" that assumes new significance.⁸

Postmodernism, in general, lays emphasis on difference, particularity, ahistoricity, playful depthlessness, ironic detachment and fissures instead of closure. It privileges the micro-narrative. The postmodern moment is significantly characterised by a collective scepticism regarding domineering grand narratives in the wake of international events like fascism, Nazism, imperialism, and the world wars. Rushdie's most important work presents history as a tussle between different accounts that compete with each other and refuse to endorse any as definitive. Official accounts are brought under critical scrutiny in his work thereby foregrounding the very process of writing history.

Linda Hutcheon argues that "postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges." "Fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical, and inescapably political", Hutcheon opines that postmodern writing is best characterised by works that are historiographic metafiction in that they are self-reflexive while at the same time they deliberately tamper with history.⁹ *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* have been considered in the light of this analysis. Rushdie's depiction of histories seem to approximate Dipesh Chakrabarty's stipulation for "a history that deliberately makes visible, within the very structure of its narrative forms, its own repressive strategies

and practices...so that the world may once again be imagined as radically heterogeneous".¹⁰ Rushdie's work not only exposes the fictionality of narrative, but also underscores the fact that narratives in turn have their own agenda. His work occupies a place of note among works like Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum*, García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The General in His Labyrinth*, E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime* and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Metafiction

Metafiction is regarded as a form of writing within postmodernism. Fictional work that is concerned with the nature of fiction in order to explore the relationship between fiction and reality, are metafiction. Patricia Waugh describes metafiction as fiction which deliberately and methodically draws attention to its "status as an artefact" so as to embark upon a reflection of its own process of construction, as also to examine the "possible fictionality" of the world beyond the work of fiction".¹¹ Modernist self-consciousness differs from that of contemporary metafiction. For, while the former is also introverted and draws attention to the text as an aesthetic construct, it doesn't indulge in a systematic parading of its own craft.¹² Metafictional works, Waugh suggests, are those which "explore a *theory* of writing fiction through the *practice* of writing fiction".¹³ They self-reflexively draw attention to their position as a work of art, constantly reminding the reader that the work under consideration is a construct. The metafictional tendency is as old as the novel itself. It can be traced back to Henry Fielding, Robert Browning and Dickens. However, it has witnessed a resurgence in the contemporary novel.

Rushdie's work interrogates an ordered reality and also an ordered fictional world. It displays an ambiguity about the legitimacy of its depictions. It is self-

conscious about its craft and literary genre. It is characterised by parody and an aesthetic of excess. M. D. Fletcher is of the opinion that the metafictional nature of Rushdie's writing is reflective of the pivotal role of style and choice of language.¹⁴ Keith Wilson's reading focuses on the status of *Midnight's Children* as metafiction, as a novel that foregrounds its own creation as well as other works.¹⁵

Nancy E. Batty considers how *Thousand and One Nights*, which could well be considered one of the early metafictional works, offers Rushdie the "precept and the organizing principle" for *Midnight's Children*.¹⁶ Subsequently, the many references to the text are deftly woven into *Midnight's Children*. They serve to maintain suspense and postpone the closure of the narrative. *Midnight's Children* abounds with self-reflexive narratorial asides. For instance, the narrator states: "Muhammad (on whose name be peace, let me add; I don't want to offend anyone.)" (MC 163). Consider the following intrusive segment:

... I must interrupt myself. I wasn't going to today, because Padma has just started getting irritated whenever my narration becomes self-conscious, whenever, like an incompetent puppeteer, I reveal the hands holding the strings; but I simply must register a protest. So, breaking into a chapter which, by a happy chance, I have named 'A Public Announcement', I issue (in the strongest possible terms) the following general medical alert.... (MC 65)

The reader is frequently addressed: "You will permit me, for a moment, to describe the General's dog Bonzo. Excuse me: the General's old beagle bitch" (MC 285). Or again:

It was – or am I wrong? I must rush on; things are slipping from me all the time – a day of horrors. It was then – unless it was another day-

that we found old Resham Bibi dead of cold, lying in her hut which she had built out of Dalda Vanaspati packing-cases. (MC 414)

The unreliability of the narration is foregrounded. The narrator admits that because of the paucity of time in telling his story, errors and exaggerations are likely. For instance, he makes a confession: "To tell the truth, I lied about Shiva's death", (MC 443) and goes on to explain the reasons for his fib.

In the view of Linda Hutcheon this "provisionality" and doubt do not undermine the seriousness of the work. Instead, they define the "new postmodern seriousness that acknowledges the limits and powers of 'reporting' or writing of the past".¹⁷ Such fiction plainly declares "there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths".¹⁸ Self-reflexive novels points to their own inadequacy in representing reality while at the same time highlighting the potential of narrative.

The errata in *Midnight's Children* have been deliberated upon in many of the readings of the text, as also by Rushdie himself. He points out that most of the errors - including the blunder with reference to the date of Gandhiji's assassination - are deliberately introduced. The reader is expected to "maintain a healthy distrust" of the narration. Given the fact that the novel has to do with memory, the writer feels that Saleem's unreliable narration could serve as an analogy for the manner in which we constantly negotiate and interpret the world.¹⁹ Responses to the text have also focused on the role of Padma Mangroli as a possible naratee surrogate, functioning as an indicator of reader-response. Nancy Batty regards her as the "co-creator" of the narrative.²⁰

As *Midnight's Children* draws to a close, the narrator explicitly deliberates upon various possible endings. He wants his culmination to surge to a peak, but has to

reconcile with “shreds” instead. “This is not what I had planned” he contends, “but perhaps the story you finish is never the one you begin” (*MC* 426).

Shame is relentlessly self-reflexive, inserting the condition of writing into the text, foreshadowing events, and constantly prompting that the narrative is an imposition of the order of a writer. The narrator in *Shame* repeatedly interrupts the narrative via a metanarrative that reveals the memories and deliberations of the narrator in a radically subjective mode. The narrator draws attention to the invented nature of the tale: “I must get back to my fairy story,” he asserts, “because things have been happening while I’ve been talking too much” (*S* 71). He continues: “You can imagine how depressed I am by the behaviour of Omar Khayyam Shakil. I ask for the second time: what kind of hero is this? (*S* 142). Or again: “I command this death scene back into the wings at once: shazam!” (*S* 23). He casts doubts on his own narration in his reflection as to whether Sufiya’s retardation could be a result of injuries to the head motivated by hate. He admits that the elections he has described may not have been as straightforward as he made them seem. The participation of the reader is consciously solicited with direct references to the “dear reader” (*S* 69). The narrative is controlled by a narrator who self-consciously posits himself as a migrant and deliberates upon migrancy at length. The metanarrative constantly seems to be monitoring the narrative.

The Moor’s Last Sigh also engages the reader explicitly. In anticipation of a possible reader query the narrator steps in: “You ask: But if the name was his mother’s, then how come the son ...? I answer: Control, please, your horses” (*MLS* 70). In another instance, the narrator states: “And so for the yarn of the Moor: if I were forced to choose between logic and childhood memory, between head and heart,

then sure; in spite of all the foregoing, I'd go along with the tale" (85-86). The narrator clarifies that he is recounting his version of the stories he has been told:

In what follows you will find stranger tales by far than the one I have just attempted to debunk; and let me assure you, let me say to-whom-it-may-concern, that of the truth of these further stories there can be no doubt whatsoever. So finally it is not for me to judge, but for you.

(*MLS* 85)

Similarly, regarding the blurring of the frontiers between the waking world and the dream world, the narrator in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* interjects:

I should (belatedly) excuse my (post)colonial clumsinesses and hope that you are not put off by the oddness of my tale ... while Apuleius happily admits to the fictionality of his fiction, I continue to insist that what I tell you is true. (*GF* 388)

The narrator deliberates upon the creation of the fictional world. He discusses the creative choices that occupy the creator's mind and how the work draws upon "every scrap it could find": the inventor's past, bits of gossip, current events, myth and legend, high and low culture (*GF* 190).

Even in *Shalimar the Clown* the author suggests that the "ungenerous reader" may recognise an amalgamation of Max's story with that of the great author pilot Saint-Exupéry. The narrator highlights and goes on to deliberate upon an inaccuracy in Max's memoir which contained reflections on a later Saint-Exupéry publication called *Flight to Arras* of which, the narrator is convinced, he could not have been aware. But he goes on to add that Max's book was acclaimed. "The error wasn't important. He got away with it. Even those critics who spotted the blunder said it was within the bounds of poetic licence" (*SC* 161).

In the act of foregrounding their internal self-reflexive tendencies, their internal systems, such metafictional works, paradoxically, become real. In the act of laying bare the processes of writing, the reader is no passive consumer, nor is there any notion of identification with the protagonist; instead, the act of reading is rendered a collaborative activity. The “dear Reader” is transformed into “an acknowledged fully active player in a new conception of literature as a collective creation rather than a monologic and authoritative version of history”.²¹ The intervening unreliable narrator functions as a standard satirical device. Hutcheon regards self reflexivity (as also irony and allegory) as modes that have the power to surmount the complicity of writing in English.²² Patricia Waugh feels that the paranoia that pervaded the metafiction of the sixties and seventies is now looking towards “celebration, to the discovery of new forms of the fantastic, fabulatory extravaganzas, magic realism”.²³

Magic Realism

‘We are not a nation of “averagis” he [Vasco Miranda] argued, ‘but a magic race. Will you spend your life painting boot-polish boys and air-hostesses and two acres of land? ... In your own family you can see the disproof of such a world-view. Forget those damnfool realists! The real is always hidden – isn’t it? – inside a miraculously burning bush! Life is fantastic! Paint that ...’ (MLS 174)

Postcolonial and postmodern writing finds an expedient and effortless device in magic realism as it problematises accepted narrative conventions. Linda Hutcheon affirms that many critics have highlighted the magic realist technique as a site of juxtaposition between postmodernism and postcolonialism. She points out that the

challenge magic realism poses to generic categories and realism are part of the agenda of both postcolonialism as well as postmodernism.²⁴

Homi Bhabha's theories in the postcolonial arena grant a central place to magic realism, referring to it as "the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world".²⁵ In the view of Stephen Slemon, magic realism regarded as post-colonial discourse can be viewed as providing "a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity".²⁶ Magic realism plays an active role in literary decolonisation with its opposition to the master-discourse. Many magic realist texts reconfigure structures of autonomy and destabilise established power structures.

Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris discern the vital difference in the intention of realism and magic realism. In their observation, realism operates in an ideological and hegemonic manner. While magical realism also functions ideologically, it operates "less hegemonically," for its agenda is "not centralizing but eccentric". Thereby a space is created for diverse interactions. They feel that the "ontological disruption" of magic realist texts work towards and reflects disruption in political and cultural terms. Magic then, is often offered as "a cultural corrective, requiring readers to scrutinize accepted realistic conventions of causality, materiality, motivation".²⁷

Magic realism challenges the authority and contests the ideological hegemony of the dominant mode. Writers like Rushdie who draw from magic realism often self-reflexively retrieve non-western cultural forms like myth and legend, within the western form of the novel. Stephen Slemon notes that in its literary applications, the concept of magic realism has never really managed to clearly distinguish itself from neighbouring forms such as fabulism, fantasy, metafiction, the baroque, or the

marvellous. This has resulted in its abandonment by some critics. However, Slemon considers the term retains enough significance to keep it in “critical currency”.²⁸

A literary and artistic mode, it is generally conceded that the expression of Magic Realism originates with Franz Roh the German art critic in 1925. The term gained currency in the field of Latin American literary studies finding its most cited exponents among those like Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Luis Borges and García Márquez.

Oxymoronic in nature, the magic realist draws from the real as well as the magical. The combination of realistic narrative and naturalistic technique as well as the inclusion of surreal elements of dream and fantasy, characterise magic realism. Wendy B. Faris observes “Magical Realism combines realism and the fantastic in such a way that the magical elements grow organically out of the reality portrayed”.²⁹ While they are entrenched in a realistic framework, magic realist works contain mystical elements. The two seem to co-exist without internal discord, each with its own internal logic. The magic in these texts is never completely assimilated into the realism, “yet it also exists symbiotically in a foreign textual culture”.³⁰ The magic, as Zamora and Faris suggest, is not “quixotic madness.” On the contrary, it is “normative and normalizing”.³¹ Stephen Slemon suggests, “in the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between two oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a fictional world from the other”.³² This irresolvable contradiction and competition between the twin worlds intensifies reader participation contributing to the self-reflexive text that is co-created by the reader.

In what is hailed as the classic exponent of magic realism, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the dichotomies between the real and the magical are blurred. Physical laws are defied. Two characters engage in a four-day eating duel, everybody in the

town lose their memory, characters levitate into heaven while folding laundry, a rainstorm rages for all of four years, eleven months and two days. Events are rendered almost believable by meticulous stylistic precision and numerous everyday details framing the occurrence. Márquez eliminates the barrier between objective and imaginary realities in the creation of a total fictional universe. Patricia Merivale notes that *Midnight's Children* draws its magic from García Márquez and owes its realism to Günter Grass.³³

Rushdie states that his writing has always grown out of contemporary reality. It is for this reason that he does not find the magic realist category very useful. He feels it is not an adequate description of his work in that, "the phrase magic realist, in the way in which it gets read, stresses the magic and forgets the realist".³⁴ The author disavows the association of his writing with magic realism aligning his work with surrealism instead. This recalls Marquez who adamantly maintained that he was not a magical realist but rather a social realist. The fantastic it is felt, can sideline the political edge of the work. It can thereby encourage passivity with the reader entranced by the style failing to bother about the issues that merit concern. V. S. Naipaul indicts this mode of "fantasy and extravagance". He feels that it "dodges all the issues. It is safe... empty, morally and intellectually." To him, it seems "an aspect of the corruption of the countries out of which it emerges."³⁵ Naipaul's categorical censure does not single out Rushdie but it does make a significant point. Rushdie however, defends magic realism as for its ability to give expression to a "genuinely 'Third World' consciousness".³⁶

Michael Gorra, on the other hand, avers that the fantastic and mythic assume significance because they have much to offer in terms of a means of engagement with politics at large, to probe ideology as a grand narrative, and as a method to embrace

events beyond the scope of the rational that realism depends upon.³⁷ Rushdie's brand of magic realism is employed in the service of serious political reality. He knows that Márquez's world is not removed from reality. "Macondo exists" and therein, asserts Rushdie, lies its magic.³⁸

Rushdie's in-between sensibility renders his work amenable to the magic realist mode. His novels are hailed as some of the most recognised exemplars of the blend of magical realism with hard political reality. For instance, Wendy B. Faris upholds *Midnight's Children* as the best example of magical realism.³⁹ His works rank among those of writers like Günter Grass, Italo Calvino, Angela Carter, Peter Carey, Jeanette Winterson, Milan Kundera and Ben Okri.

At this juncture it would be appropriate to be mindful of Jeanne Delbaere-Garant's caveat regarding the categorisation of works under the label of "magic realist writers". She argues that magic realism is often employed "sporadically" in an author's work, and intermittently even in those of his or her texts commonly considered as magic realist.⁴⁰

Prodigies, prophecies, fairy tale patterns, legendary exploits, hallucinatory exaggerations, bizarre correlations and overdeveloped sensory organs find a place amidst the ordinary and the normal all through Rushdie's *oeuvre*. Rushdie draws inspiration from Dickens' use of superimposing the unreal over a completely naturalistic setting. Magic realism is an integral part of *Midnight's Children* where it principally involves the magical abilities of Saleem and the children born at the stroke of midnight of India's independence. They are endowed with faculties like time travel, prophecy, flight, alchemy, sorcery. The two closest to midnight were Saleem and Shiva: "to Shiva the hour had given the gifts of war" while Saleem was bestowed

“the greatest talent of all - the ability to look into the hearts and minds of men” (MC 200).

Saleem’s telepathic abilities enable him to engineer and influence events. As an infant, he is able to influence the fate of horse races depending on the horses betted upon by his mother. He dreams up the death of his classmate Jimmy Kapadia, which comes to pass. He feels that even with trivial movements of “bowls of chutney” he engineers larger events like Ayub Khan’s coup (MC 348).

Saleem’s sister had the gift of being able to converse with birds and cats (MC 151). His grandmother Naseem Aziz “eavesdropped on her daughters’ dreams” in order to find out what they were up to (MC 55). Amina Sinai and the women in the family are afflicted by premature ageing.

There are seers like who levitate via cheap tricks like a concealed shelf, but who mouth bizarre prophecies that come to pass. The seer Ramram thus presages the entire life of Saleem:

A son, Sahiba, who will never be older than his motherland – neither older nor younger. . . . Spittoons will brain him – doctors will drain him – jungle will claim him – wizards reclaim him! Soldiers will try him – tyrants will fry him He will have sons without having sons! He will be old before he is old! *And he will die . . . before he is dead.*

(MC 87-88; original emphasis)

Saleem notes early on in the narrative that hairline cracks have begun to make an appearance on his hands, anticipating his literal disintegration by the end of the book.

The fabulous mingles with the mundane in the course of incidents that are filled with descriptions of details, manners and speech. According to local legend the assassination of Mian Abdullah who loathed the Muslim League and opposed the

Partition is ascribed to “his purchase, at Agra railway station, of a peacock-feather fan, despite Nadir Khan’s warning about bad luck” (*MC* 47). His murder is followed by a canine attack on the killers:

But now – listen! – Abdullah’s humming rose out of the range of our human ears, and was heard by the dogs of the town. In Agra there are maybe eight thousand four hundred and twenty pie-dogs ... and all of these turned and ran for the University, many of them rushing across the railway tracks from the wrong side of town ... one of the killers’ eyes cracked and fell out of its socket. Afterwards the pieces of glass were found ground into the carpet! (*MC* 48)

The association of numerical specificity with the exaggeration imbues it with a sense of the real. The text is dense with precise dates and numerical figures like the 1001 children of midnight.

In his rendition of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre the narrator states, “They have fired a total of one thousand six hundred and fifty rounds into the unarmed crowd. Of these, one thousand five hundred and sixteen have found their mark” (*MC* 36). Saleem portends: “I shall eventually crumble into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous and necessarily oblivious dust” (*MC* 37). Tai Bibi, the whore who claimed that she was five hundred and twelve years old was rendered irresistible by a bewitching ability “a mastery over her glands so total that she could alter her bodily odours to match those of anyone on earth” (*MC* 319).

It is of interest to note that Rushdie’s particular magical realism leads the reader into questioning the categories of the real and the fantastic. Some of the seemingly wondrous events lend themselves to mundane interpretations. Saleem’s

return to India in Parvati's basket of invisibility for instance, can be viewed in literal as well as metaphorical terms.

Shame has elicited readings in terms of an apologue.⁴¹ The three mothers of Omar Khayyam and the circumstances regarding his strange birth border on the preternatural; "twin phantom pregnancies accompanied the real one" (*S* 20) in their solidarity to transmute the ignominy of conception outside wedlock. Omar Khayyam becomes an autodidact in the "arcane science" of hypnosis (*S* 34). He practises hypnosis on the servants during his confinement. Later he uses hypnosis to seduce Farah Zoroaster.

Talvar Ulhaq, Naveed's husband, is clairvoyant. This puts him at the forefront of his police career, enabling him to divine crimes before they are thought of. In addition, he is able to foresee in Naveed Hyder "the children who had always been his greatest dream" (*S* 164). He takes pride in siring children in arithmetical progression. Naveed gives birth to twins in the first year of civilian rule and each subsequent year on the very same date surpasses the number of children birthed the previous year by the addition of one more. At the time Naveed is driven to hang herself with her dupatta, she is pregnant with eight children.

The transformation of the naive Sufiya Zinobia into a beast akin to the white panther is also within the realm of the paranormal. A potion distilled by a local Hakim to save her life from meningitis had the side-effect of retarding the progress of time inside her body" (*S* 100). This is similar to Saleem's accelerated growth rate losing its phenomenal facet after being administered "diluted venene of the king cobra" to cure him from a near-fatal typhoid attack (*MC* 148).

In contrast with Sufiya's irreversible "inner deceleration" (*S* 100), *The Moor's Last Sigh* has Moraes Zogoiby ageing double time. During a visit to the caves at

Lonavala, a mysterious crone is witness to Aurora's casual wish to have her children grow up really quick. The crone's equally strange incantation ultimately results in the birth of Moraes who laments "I have aged twice as rapidly as the old earth and everything and everyone thereupon" (*MLS* 144).

Early in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, Vasco reveals a secret to Moor that he had a needle left inside him after an appendix operation. It did not trouble him, but he was convinced that one day it would pierce his heart and cause his death. Consequently, Vasco Miranda literally explodes in the finale with the broken needle hinted at earlier in the text supposedly puncturing his heart. The narrator wonders whether Vasco's death was due to a drug overdose. He goes on to assert that this was: "the needle of retribution that had been planted in him ... it was the splinter of ice left in his veins" by the Moor's mother Aurora, compared to the Snow Queen from the fairy tale (*MLS* 432).

Protagonists in most of Rushdie's novels are ridden with some kind of outlandish affliction. Besides Saleem's literal disintegration, there is his humungous nose: "...this colossal apparatus which was to be my birthright, too. Doctor Aziz's nose - comparable only to the trunk of the elephant-headed god Ganesh" (*MC* 13). In *Shame* Sufiya's protracted mental progress is juxtaposed with the guilt-stricken Omar's physical expansion. At eighteen Omar bloats as his desires are repressed to get "fatter than fifty melons" (*S* 53). Likewise, Boonyi turns to food for solace in *Shalimar the Clown*. In addition to his accelerated growth rate, the Moor has a deformed right hand "the fingers welded into an undifferentiated chunk" resembling a club (*MLS* 146).

Ormus Cama in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* has a telepathic link with his dead twin Gayomart who prompts him Western pop music before it is written or

becomes popular in the West. He thus heard “all the songs in advance, two years, eight months and twenty-eight days before anyone else” which adds up to “one thousand and one nights” (*GF* 96).

The notion of a parallel world is adroitly invoked in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. The text reveals the other world palimpsested over our own reality. Even Ormus’ death is shrouded in mystery. A woman who seemed to resemble Vina emptied a handgun into Ormus’ chest and simply disappeared:

There was a line of female footprints in the snow. Where the footprints stopped there was a red wig, a pair of leather pants, a sequined bustier and a pair of stiletto shoes. Otherwise, nothing. No automobile tracks. Nothing, not even any witnesses, not at that time or any later date. It was as if a naked woman had flown through the air of Upper West Side Manhattan and disappeared and nobody saw a thing. (*GF* 570)

Ormus’ baffling assassination merits comparison with Shalimar’s enigmatic walk into thin air in the finale of *Shalimar the Clown*. The incarcerated Shalimar makes a bid to escape during a jailbreak. While none of the men responsible for the jailbreak manage to escape, Shalimar scales the prison wall effortlessly. The flabbergasted witnesses refused to budge from their concurrence that:

... a man had run flat-out off the corner of a walled area near the adjustment centre on death row and had simply taken off, had continued on his way as if the wall stretched out into the sky like the wall of China or such, had gone scooting up into the air just as if he were running up a hill, his arms stretched out, not like wings, really, more to balance him, or so it seemed. He ran higher and higher until the lights of the prison couldn’t pick him out any more, and maybe he

ran all the way to Paradise, because if he did fall to earth someplace in the neighbourhood then nobody in the San Quentin community ever heard a thing about it. (SC 395)

In *Shalimar the Clown*, magic realism takes the form of omens of different kinds, predictions, portentous dreams, uncanny afflictions and telepathic interaction. Shalimar for one, seems to scare his mother even before his birth for no apparent reason. This mystifying apprehension stays with her even though he is a sweet and gentle child. As time progresses her fears are realised with Shalimar hardening into a cold blooded terrorist.

Nazarebaddoor the Gujar tribal prophetess in *Shalimar the Clown* is an optimistic clairvoyant whose vision darkens after the neighbouring villagers of Shirmal raid Pachigam. What she envisages is grave enough to compel her to relinquish food and drink and sequester herself in her little cottage. She foreshadowed events in the prophecy to Shalimar's mother "what's coming is so terrible that no prophet will have the words to foretell it" (SC 68). Even after her death, Nazarebaddoor appeared to villagers in their dreams offering timely counsel and caution and averting certain disasters.

Peggy Ophuls who is unable to bear children dreams that she will get pregnant and have a child in India. This is fulfilled when she does return to England with Boonyi's baby. Colonel Kachhwaha is plagued by an oppressive memory that renders it impossible for him to sleep or forget small everyday things. He meets his gruesome end due to bites from king cobras, purportedly in response to the snake curse invoked upon him by Firdaus Noman. Reportedly, snakes had made their journey from the Himalayas to wreak vengeance for the wrongs against Kashmir and had attacked the General *en masse*.

“In the old stories, love made possible a kind of spiritual contact between lovers” (SC 257). Boonyi and Shalimar discover that a telepathic channel had been opened when they first fell in love continues to remain operative. They are able to contact each other telepathically through time and distance. Later, even Kashmira and Shalimar discover that they can exchange thoughts via this strange non-verbal link.

A *mélange* of history and fantasy, *The Enchantress of Florence* could be viewed as containing more magic than realism for “magic was all around and would not be denied” (EF 318).⁴² It considers the essential harmony between the real and the fantastic, contending that the two sixteenth-century civilisations, the Florentine and the Mughal, dwelled in a magical world as passionately as they inhabited the material world. Jodha, Akbar’s favourite consort is a figment of his imagination summoned into reality in the text. The passion and power of Tansen’s song scorch his own body as it lights up the lamps in the neighbourhood (EF 195). Water prophecies come to pass. For instance, Anup Talao the private pool of the emperor, “the life-giving lake” of Fatepur Sikri (EF 347) reputed to herald a warning when the kingdom is in trouble, dries up driving the monarch away from his beloved city. A glimpse of the Emperor Akbar at his window and being glimpsed by him in turn led to miraculous cures. “Glimpsing transferred the emperor’s potency to the Glimpsed” (EF 318).

Although magical realist literature varies in its structure and presentation, one universal theme is the use of the fantastical to highlight and challenge the setting’s paradigm, rather than merely as a plot device or setting. Rushdie’s best work manages to interweave the macro and the micro, the big political picture and the individual experience. The magical is woven into reality in a manner that blurs boundaries between the two. The implied reader is not disconcerted by the presence of the preternatural. The fantastic operates within a space that functions to alert the reader to

the absurd within the serious as well as treat the absurd seriously. It forces into question the absurdity of our daily lives. Ultimately it is rooted in a locale where legends superstitions and portents are present in tandem with technological advances. Like the narrator of *Midnight's Children* puts it: "Sometimes legends make reality, and become more useful than the facts" (MC 47). "Yes, there's no other explanation, stranger things have been known to happen in this country of ours, just pick up any newspaper and see the daily titbits recounting miracles in this village or that" (MC 55).

Foreshadowing

An overt foreshadowing of forthcoming events in the creation of suspense is another technique employed by Rushdie's texts. Gérard Genette has termed this technique "repeating prolapses".⁴³ One is offered an intermittent preview of incidents yet to occur. The first person narrator Saleem for instance, constantly anticipates future events in *Midnight's Children*. Early in the narrative he says: "In the brandy bottle of the boatman Tai I see, foretold, my own father's possession by dijinns ... and there will be another bald foreigner ... and Tai's gas prophesies another kind...and pie-dogs aren't far away" (MC 17) Some of the frequent presagings including the announcement of the impending arrival of Evie Burns, anticipating clandestine events at the Pioneer Café, heralding the arrival of his alter-ego Shiva (MC 179). Saleem wonders if the death of his friend Jimmy Kapadia could have been caused by his dreaming it up, as his mother believed. In which case he forestalls: "Jimmy Kapadia was my first murder victim. Homi Catrack was to be the next" (MC 249). The enigmatic divination of Ramram the seer, regarding Saleem's life, is an instance of how the narrative is structured in larger terms.

Nancy Batty invokes Gérard Genette's remarks about the oracle in *Oedipus the King* to emphasise how narrative is a construct. She points out that the oracle functions as "a metadiegetic narrative in the future tense, the mere uttering of which will throw into gear the "infernal machine" capable of carrying it out."⁴⁴ Similarly, the entire plot of *Midnight's Children* is oriented by the prophecy of the dubious guru Ramram Seth:

‘A son, Sahiba, who will never be older than his motherland [...] ‘Spittoons will brain him - doctors will drain him - jungle will claim him - wizards reclaim him! Soldiers will try him - tyrants will fry him...’ He will have sons without having sons! He will be old before he is old! *And he will die . . . before he is dead.*’ (MC 87-88; original emphasis)

The narrator of *Shame* heralds the birth of a brother to Omar at the age of twenty whose conception will only deepen the mystery surrounding Omar's own birth (S 24). The many foreshadowings in *Shame* include the "scandalous marriage" of Good News Hyder which putatively impacted future events (S 65, 163). "So it will not be long before Sufiya Zinobia and Omar Khayyam, patient and doctor, future wife and husband, come together" (S 123) asserts the narrator. The death of Iskander Harappa is foreshadowed casually as is the subsequent incarceration of Rani and Arjumand Harappa at Mohenjo (S 107).

The death of Aurora and Uma the two significant women in Moor's life and the fate that has overtaken him at the end of *The Moor's Last Sigh*, are forecast on the opening page of the text:

Both of them dead, of unnatural causes, and I in a far-off country with death at my heels and their story in my hand, a story I've been

crucifying upon a gate, a fence, an olive tree, spreading it across this landscape of my last journey.... On the run, I have turned the world into my pirate map, complete with clues, leading X-marks-the-spottily to the treasure of myself' (*MLS* 3).

The narrator prefigures the birth of Moraes Zogoiby eighteen years prior (*MLS* 73). The preview to Aurora's death ends with a hint at Moor being disowned by his family: "By that time however, although she was still my mother, I was no longer her son" (*MLS* 126). The narrator prepares the way for his deformed hand, declaring: "Ruined limbs play a central rôle in our saga, too" (*MLS* 139).

The opening line of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is just one of the many portends in the narration presaging the last day of Vina's life (*GF* 3, 5, 162, 438). Vina Apsara's role in inspiring Ormus' musical genius is envisaged (*GF* 47) as is Darius' murder (*GF* 193), and the exit of Rai from India (*GF* 247). "There will be a tragedy" (*GF* 298) the narrator forewarns, before the accident that results in Ormus' coma. The narrator notifies the reader that the subsequent attack that leads to Ormus' death will come "fifteen months later, after the earthquake songs" (*GF* 382).

The death of Max is suggested rather early in *Shalimar the Clown* (*SC* 13). The transmutation of Noman aka Shalimar into assassin is also indicated (*SC* 55). The stage for his extraordinary prison escape is set early in the story with his father exhortations to think of the rope as "a line of gathered air", and Shalimar's prediction to Boonyi that one day he would simply "take off". "One day I won't need the rope at all. I'll just walk into empty air and hang there like a cosmonaut without a suit" (*SC* 57). The return of the vicious Gegroo brothers, who were considered dead, is foretold twenty years ahead as is the portent that the day of their return would mark the last day of Zoon's life (*SC* 128).

Intertextuality

A term coined by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality proposes that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another”.⁴⁵ All systems of meaning are composed by the manner in which they transform previous systems of meaning. A work is not autonomous but gains its significance in the light of existing texts. It is the relationship of a literary text to other texts and to language at large that determines a literary text. Many texts play a part in the formation of a code that enables signification.

Writing then becomes a re-writing, foregrounding the texts that it invokes, in the process. The intertext bears a dual semantic charge, operating like a “lexical Janus”.⁴⁶ In the words of Kristeva, “the notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double”.⁴⁷ Thus there is no direct transference of meaning via writer to reader, but meaning is shaped by the codes operating on the reader as well as writer, in the form of other texts. Intertextuality subverts conventional perceptions of authorship as it undermines the text as a self contained totality, underscoring the reciprocal nature of texts. In existing in dialogue with other texts and contexts, it has been regarded as a tapestry, a weave of strands that has both a horizontal and vertical analyses of prior relations to other texts.

According to Roland Barthes, a text exists as:

a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations ... The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as to never rest on any one of them.⁴⁸

Authorial authority is no longer a given, and the relationship between text, author and reader is problematised. The death of the author decreed by Roland Barthes, endorses the intertextuality of the text. Boundaries of the text are obscured and the text becomes a kaleidoscopic entity. This network of associations gives the text a fecund palimpsestic nature, subjecting it to constant reinterpretation. Moreover, the response of the reader assumes a central focus. Interpretation becomes an exercise in determining the rules governing the task of reading. A skilled reader can decipher a text by means of those rules, enunciating the knowledge that may not be apparent in the text but is implicit in the reader. The reader's own cultural make up and reading forms decisive intertexts as a text is composed in the act of reading.

A significant part of the galvanising energy of Rushdie's texts is contributed by their eclectic intertexts. Allusions to cinema, myth, epic, religious texts, fable, fairy tale, gossip, proverbs and superstitions, popular songs and films, comics, advertisements, news items, anecdotes, as well as Rushdie's other work, come together on his canvas. "Postmodernism" as Hutcheon maintains, "directly confronts the past of literature - and of historiography, for it too derives from other texts (documents). It uses and abuses those intertextual echoes, inscribing their powerful allusions and then subverting that power through irony".⁴⁹

Cinema in general and the Indian cinema in particular is pertinently summoned as both motif and methodology in the work of Rushdie. Colloquially termed "Bollywood", it is Bombay cinema that offers and enables a projection of an otherwise problematic representation of India for its audience. Benedict Anderson's theory regarding the significant role of the print medium accounting for the rise of nationalism among a people, may be invoked in connection with the invented narrative function performed by cinema especially in a country like India. Anuradha

Dingwaney Needham singles out *Midnight's Children* as a narrative that heavily depends on an "acute insider's familiarity with that most ubiquitous icon of the subcontinent's popular culture – Bombay cinema". This has implications for Rushdie's work as a whole. His sense of the fantastical has been shaped by the films of his childhood. Early in *Midnight's Children*, the narrator informs the reader of his strategy in the novel and paves his path with the insertion of a casual but suggestive parenthetical comment: "(nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary)" (MC 33).

The narrator of *Midnight's Children* dexterously interweaves film lexis. The narration is replete with the rolling of the camera, close-ups, zooms, long-shots, sound-track music, fade-outs (MC 32, 237). For instance, the narrator states:

permit myself to insert a Bombay-talkie-style close-up – a calendar ruffled by a breeze, its pages flying off in rapid succession to denote the passing of the years; I superimpose turbulent long-shots of street riots, medium shots of burning buses and blazing English-language libraries ... through the accelerated flickering of the calendar we glimpse the fall of Ayub Khan...the leaders of the Pakistan People's Party and the Awami League shimmer and fade out...." (MC 346)

The clandestine meeting of Nadir Khan with Saleem's mother viewed by Saleem through "the dirty, square, glassy cinema-screen of the Pioneer Café's window" is presented in terms of cuts, extreme close-ups, screen-names, even "cruel censor's cut", as the actors play out their roles in the love scene (MC 216-17). Batty draws a parallel between the "trailers" in episodic cinema and the foreshadowing of the narrator.⁵⁰ The narrator signals the "next-attractions and coming-soons galore" (MC 346). The motif of switched babies that forms the basis of the plot of the text, as also

that of amnesia from a blow to the head, have been regarded as typically formulaic fare in Hindi cinema. When Saleem loses his memory he relates his situation to a cinematic device: “I am forced to admit that amnesia is the kind of gimmick regularly used by our lurid film-makers. Bowing my head slightly, I accept that my life has taken on, yet again, the tone of a Bombay talkie...” (MC 350).

The Moor's Last Sigh has the Moor stating: “I am going through time faster than I should...Somebody somewhere has been holding down the button marked ‘FF’, or, to be more exact, ‘x2’”(MLS 143). He likens Aurora’s accelerated pregnancy to “a movie special effect” (MLS 144). The western film intertexts include references to *El Cid* who “also loved a woman called Ximena” (MLS 52). In the conflict between the Moor and his father Abraham Zogoiby he is reminded of the struggle between fathers and sons in movies like *Blade Runner* and *Star Wars* (MLS 169). When Moor’s sister joins the novitiate she visits home in her “Audrey Hepburn *Nun’s Story* outfit” and the servants jokingly call her “Minnie mausi” (MLS 211) The narrator invokes the immortalised lines of Yul Brynner, as Pharaoh in *The Ten Commandments* : “So let it be written. So let it be done” (MLS 322).

Among the Indian cinematic intertexts in *The Moor's Last Sigh*, *Mother India* - graded among “the top three all-time mega-grossing Bollywood flicks” (MLS 137) - is one of the most significant ones. Sunil and Nargis Dutt the stars of *Mother India* are among the guests at one of Aurora’s soirees. The film has a special import in terms of Moor’s club for a hand. For, just as Sunil Dutt’s character in the movie had his arms crushed by a rock, the narrator in the text asserts: “ruined limbs play a central rôle in our saga, too” (MLS 139). In addition the narrator alludes to other movies like *Mr. India*, wherein “the great Sridevi, at her voluptuous-siren best in the wettest of wet

saris, stole the movie” which included the memorable villain “the dada of all dasas: *Mogambo*” (MLS 168).

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* the narrator makes a reference to Eros Cinema, Metro, Regal, and Broadway Cinema at Dadar. Vina Apsara is infatuated with Raj Kapoor (GF 126-7). Rai’s reminiscences of India include movie stars like Vijayantimala and “Madhuri Dickshit” (GF 417). The narrator wonders: “Oh, why must everything I say end up sounding like a *filmi gana*, a goddamn cheap Bollywood song?” (GF 248). A reference is made to *Mughal-e-Azam* which bursts into colour for the famous dance sequence (GF 416).

Mughal-e-Azam also forms a significant evocation in *Shalimar the Clown*. “Just as Prince Salim was captivated by Anarkali’s performance at the Sheesh Mahal in the Mughal court, Madhubala dancing in the hit movie [*Mughal-e-Azam*] had bewitched millions of gaping men” (SC 181). Boonyi, the pretty young wife of Shalimar, also the best dancer in the village was cast in the role of Anarkali.

Anarkali’s transgression in loving royalty warranted the punishment of being walled up alive. The cinematic emperor Akbar allowed Anarkali to escape via a tunnel under her crypt. When Boonyi was immured in the lonely mountains for her indiscretion she was faced by the realisation that the escape route “was just in the movies. In real life there were no such easy escapes” (SC 227). On the other hand, the three fundamentalist Gegroo brothers were also sealed off in the Shirmal mosque “like Anarkali”. They find a secret tunnel and make an escape (SC 262). Filmic allusions in *Shalimar the Clown* include Sigourney Weaver in *Ghostbusters*, Chaplin, and *The Magnificent Seven*, among numerous others.

The allusion to film in *Fury* is pervasive. The protagonist imagines his own life as a *Dekalog* movie. “A Short Film About Desertion” (F 33). This text is dense

with references to Western films like *Dumbo*, *Schindler's List*, *Eyes Wide Shut*, the *Pink Panther* movie, *The Exorcist*, *Rosemary's Baby*, etc. There are numerous references to contemporary movies like *The Matrix*, *The Cell*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Solaris*, *Close Encounters*, the *Terminator* series, *Blade Runner* etc. There is a veritable catalogue of movie stars from Woody Allen to Angelina Jolie. For instance, the fictional film based on Solanka's creation Little Brain has stars like "Marty, Bobby, Brad, Gwynnie, Meg, Julia, Tom and Nic" keen to be cast (*GF* 99).

Rushdie pays tribute to the film industry in terms of cinematic icons and techniques as well as a route of identification. He finds the cinematic space a perfect setting for the particular sensibility of the migrant. In 'The Location of Brazil' he states:

Migrants must, of necessity, make a new imaginative relationship with the world, because of the loss of familiar habitats. And for the plural, hybrid, metropolitan result of such imaginings, the cinema, in which peculiar fusions have always been legitimate... may well be the ideal location.⁵¹

Myth plays a significant intertextual role in the dynamics of Rushdie's work. Mythical archetypes are drawn upon and interwoven with contemporary reality throughout his corpus of work. His characters "commandeer the identities of mythic figures"⁵². Explicit borrowings include the analogy with Shiva, Parvati and their son Aadam evocative of Lord Ganesh in terms of his big ears and humungous nose. A more implicit reference is to Joseph and Mary Pereira and the infant exchanged by Mary allusive of the Christian Holy Family comprising Joseph, Mary, and the child Jesus.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet contains a remarkable density of mythical intertexts. The Orphic myth forms the framework to the novel with Rushdie manipulating and subverting the intertext to suit the purpose of his narrative. Persis who foretold disaster for Bombay is likened with Cassandra who did the same for Troy (*GF* 215). In the context of Ormus and his dead twin Gayomart Cama, the narrator invokes the myth of Castor and Polydeuces the twin sons of Zeus and Leda the former of which was mortal and the latter immortal (*GF* 54). Ormus' father Sir Darius along with William Methwold engages in an examination of the parallels between myths. They compare the "viewing from the Walls in the *Iliad*, whence Helen points out the Greek warriors, to a scene in the *Ramayana* wherein spies standing with Ravana identify Rama and his allies" (*GF* 44). The myth of Kama and Rati is evoked when Vina Apsara resuscitates Ormus from his coma. Just as Rati pleaded for Kama's life and appeased Shiva to bring her husband back to life (*GF* 148). Vina, in being claimed by the earth, is compared with Persephone and the pure Sita.

Fury draws upon the Roman myth of the three furies: Tisiphone, Alecto and Megaera, the female embodiments of vengeance. Malik Solanka has a glimpse of Mila Milo as an avatar of the furies in her spurring him on to work. In the confrontation with the three women in his life - his wife Eleanor Masters Solanka, Mila Milo, and his current lady love Neela - Solanka views the descent of the "malevolent Divine" (*F* 233). Even with the end of the struggle in Lilliput-Blefuscus and the sacrifice of Neela's life, the furies "were hungrier, wilder, casting their nets more widely. Just as the Erinnyes pursued Orèstes the narrator is convinced that "from New York to Lilliput-Blefuscus there was no escape from the beating of their wings" (*F* 251).

The *Ramayana* is pertinently evoked in *Shalimar the Clown*. As the fourteen year old Boonyi prepares to meet Shalimar who she is in love with, she reflects upon the magic dividing line drawn by Laxman, and abduction of Sita. She wonders if Shalimar is “her epic hero or her demon king, or both” (SC 50). This deliberation early in the story powerfully portends events to follow. In Rushdie’s subversion of the myth, things are bound to go awry. Whereas Sita was abducted, Boonyi in the role of Sita had elected to elope with “her American Ravan”. She lived as his mistress and bore his child. Her husband Shalimar “misplaying the part of Ram – fought no war to rescue her”. Further, while Ravan preferred death to admitting defeat, Max Ophuls allowed his baby with Boonyi to be claimed by his wife who sent Boonyi home in disgrace in the “contemporary bowdlerization of the tale” (SC 263).

Rushdie’s novels draw upon the fairy tale. An opening sentence such as: “Once upon a time, in the far northern principedom of Kif, there lived a prince who had two beautiful daughters....” (MC 320), is extremely rich in literary and pragmatic presuppositions. It links the story to a series of other stories, identifies it with the conventions of a genre, and subtly invites the adoption of certain attitudes towards it.

The fable and fairy tale mode are employed to set up boundaries between the real and the fictive. Rushdie blurs and subverts those boundaries. The very opening of *Shame* in which the dominant mode is fantasy, employs the fairy tale motif: “In the remote border town of Q...there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters” (S 11). The ‘once upon a time’ fairy tale refrain is reinforced throughout the novel. The traditional fairy stories of ‘Sleeping Beauty’ and ‘Beauty and the Beast’, are subverted. Consider the following passage that deftly brings together and reconfigures both myths:

There was once a wife, whose husband injected her with knock-out drugs daily. For two years she lay on a carpet, like a girl in a fantasy who can only be awoken by the blue-blooded kiss of a prince; but kisses were not her destiny....There was once a Beast. When it was sure of its strength, it chose its moment, and sprang through a wall of brick. (*S* 242-43)

In similar fashion, Ormus' coma in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* that lasted three years, is likened to the isolation of "Snow White asleep in her coffin" (*GF* 308) till he is rescued by Vina. In this case it is the female who awakens the male. When Vina becomes rich and famous she reaches out to Marion a cruel caretaker from her past. The text notes: "Cinderella invites her wicked stepmother to the ball (*GF* 363). A besotted Rai describes his first glimpse of Vina as "Cinderella of Troy" (*GF* 69).

The Hans Christian Andersen story of the 'Snow Queen' is called upon in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Just as Kay in the tale carries the splinter of ice, the Moor declares that his own white-haired mother had been Vasco's Snow Queen, "whom he loved, and from whom ... he finally fled, with the cold splinter of bitterness in his blood" (*MLS* 155). *The Moor's Last Sigh* as well as *Shalimar the Clown* brings into play the Rumpelstiltskin motif. "I want to tell you a fairy-tale" avows the narrator, "once upon a time, my father Abraham Zogoiby gambled heavily, and lost" (*MLS* 110). His losses led him to swallow his pride and beseech his mother for her treasure chest with the old jewels. While beyond "a little manikin danced, singing Rumpelstiltskin is my name...." In return for her investment there is Flory Zogoiby's stipulation to Abraham: "bring me your firstborn" Doubly evocative of the biblical injunction wherein the Lord commands Abraham to sacrifice his first born son, the narrator states: "A line from legends hung between this mother and this son" (*MLS* 111).

In *Shalimar the Clown*, Max and Boonyi's illegitimate daughter is demanded by Max's bitter wife Peggy in return for Boonyi's passage back to Kashmir. "Do you know the tale of Rumpelstiltskin?" (SC 211), Peggy (in the role of rumpelstiltskin herself) asks the unwitting Boonyi. In terms of Peggy's reaction to her husband's affair with Boonyi earlier in the text, the Cinderella story is summoned. The spurned wife rues the end of the wonderful fiction of her wedded life: "Pumpkin time, Cinders", Peggy told herself, "the magic spell was about to break, her gown would once again be an ashy rag, her footmen would turn back into mice The glass slipper didn't fit her any more. It was on another woman's foot" (SC 187).

Almost every Rushdie novel nostalgically attempts a capture in one way or another of the loss of his beloved city of Bombay characterised by excess. The hybridity and plurality that characterises India in Rushdie's perception, finds its representation in the city of Bombay in his work.

In an interview Rushdie recalls the Bombay of the fifties and sixties. He states that it felt "like a kind of enchanted zone, at the time. It was a wonderful, exciting, vibrant city to grow up in. And I fell in love with it then and forever."⁵³ In *Midnight's Children* when the Sinai's relocate to Pakistan, Saleem unequivocally declares: "I won't deny it: I never forgave Karachi for not being Bombay" (MC 307). "The flat boiled odours of acquiescence" in Karachi left him depressed and yearning for "the highly-spiced nonconformity of Bombay" (MC 308). When his family begins to advocate a quest for purity in the new religious land, Saleem is unable to join in. Different religions mingle in his head after having lived "in a country whose population of deities rivalled the numbers of its people" (MC 310). The history of Bombay is invoked at length.

A major part of *The Moor's Last Sigh* is set in Bombay which becomes synecdochic for the hybridity of India. The moor defines himself as a "jewholic-anonymous, a cathjew nut, a stewpot, a mongrel cur. I was--what's the word these days?--atomised. Yessir: a real Bombay mix" (*MLS* 104). Born a decade after independence he equates his own fantastic growth rate with the phenomenal growth of Bombay (*MLS* 162).

The writer is elegiac about the lost Bombay of his early years. The narrator affectionately recollects the cricket games at Cross Maidan, swimming lessons on Sunday at the Willingdon club, jaunts to familiar places like Juhu beach, Aarey Milk Colony, and Taraporevala Aquarium (*MLS* 206). He captures the turbulent Crawford market "with its vendors of chickens both live and plastic", "the rum dens of Dhobi Talao, the chawls of Byculla. He recalls eating watermelon at Apollo Bunder, chaat at the Worli seaface, proclaiming, "with my inexhaustible Bombay of excess, I fell deeply and for ever in love" (*MLS* 193).

While *The Moor's Last Sigh* celebrates the city of Bombay, it also laments its increasing insularity. The increasing inflexibility and lack of tolerance in the city of Bombay - and India by extension - looms large as a concern in the novel. Laying stress on the centrality of Bombay in chapter eighteen, the narrator meditates on how the charm of Bombay stemmed from the fact that it belonged to no one and thereby everyone. He rues the Ayodhya issue and sardonically pontificates upon fundamentalist politicians and communal forces overtaking his beloved city. Zeeny Vakil lays stress on fundamentalists seeking excuses for conflict: "they will find Vyasa's cradle under Iqbal's house, and Valmiki's baby-rattle under Mirza Ghalib's hang-out" (*MLS* 351).

Christopher Rollason notes that Bombay revisits Rushdie's work insistently as the "symbol of a specifically Indian version of multiplicity, tolerance and (in the subcontinental sense) cosmopolitanism". He draws attention to the fact that the change of nomenclature from Bombay to Mumbai in 1995 was foreshadowed in Rushdie's version of the communal group "Mumbai's Axis" in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.⁵⁴

The Ground Beneath Her Feet is located in Bombay in the first half. The narrator, Rai, a Bombayite like Ormus asserts, "I was a Bombay *chokra* through and through" (*GF* 78). He calls to mind familiar places. The narrator's father V.V. Merchant being an architect, excavator and amateur local historian with a particular fondness for Bombay, many little known facts regarding the city come to light in the text: "Chinchpokli is 'tamarind hollow' and Cumball Hill is named after the lotus flower and Bhendi Bazaar is situated where once the ladies'-fingers grew" (*GF* 60-61).

With Rushdie staking claim to an eclectic heritage, a study of the various influences in his work is rendered an interesting proposition. Jokes, anecdotes, news items, proverbs, telegrams, superstition, advertisements, allusions to comic books, cartoons, song lyrics, personalities and literary figures are resourcefully exploited within Rushdie's pages which comprise a veritable register of popular and literary icons and works.

What is described by the narrator as a "joke" is related in *Shame* wherein God visits Pakistan and quizzes the various dictators for the messy political situation in the nation (*S* 112). "A post-communist joke" (*GF* 371) is cited as a parable in relation to Ormus' ten year celibacy oath. A "malicious and probably untrue story" about Graham Greene the novelist is inserted in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (430). A

number of the popular jokes associated with emperor Akbar and his jester Birbal are inserted into the text of *The Enchantress of Florence*, some of them raising profound questions. In one instance the witty Birbal is asked what his message would be to the staunch believers of the world had he been an atheist. He retorts that he would tell the faithful that they were all atheists as well, while he merely believed in one God less than them. He reasons that since. “ ‘ All true believers have good reasons for disbelieving in every god except their own,’ ” it is the believers who prompt him to believe in none (*EF* 44-45).

Aurora's penchant for relating morbid bedtime stories takes the form of “the parable of the scorpion and the frog”, which the narrator considers analogous to the relationship between his parents. The scorpion stings the frog who had ferried him across a body of water, notwithstanding his oath that he wouldn't harm him. As they are both drowning the scorpion apologises: “I couldn't help it”, he rues, “it's in my nature” (*MLS* 170).

Advertisement hoardings of the Air-India rajah's poster and the Kolynos Kid are vivid images in *Midnight's Children*. The boardgame of “Snakes and Ladders” gives its name to a chapter in which the narrator draws astute parallels between the game and the vicissitudes of life: “All games have morals” declaims the narrator, and the game of Snakes and Ladders which inheres a sense of duality captures “the eternal truth that for every ladder you climb, a snake is waiting just around the corner; and for every snake, a ladder will compensate” (*MC* 141).

Resham Bibi subscribes to the superstition that women climbing mango trees will result in the fruit turning sour irrevocably (*MC* 400). The downfall of Mian Abdullah is attributed to his purchasing a peacock-feather fan, unmindful of Nadir Khan's caution about it being “bad luck” (*MC* 47).

Cartoon characters including Mickey, Donald, “Unca Scrooge with \$ signs in his eyes” Huey, Dewey and Louie, Goofy and Pluto, chipmunks, Looney Tunes and the like (*MLS* 152) populate the nursery walls of the Zogoiby children as do superheroes like Clark Kent the superman from Krypton, his love interest Lois Lane, Phantom, Batman and Robin .They inspire in Moor the notion of the secret identity.

Popular songs like ‘How Much is that Doggie in the Window?’ (*MC* 128), the bollywood classic of the fifties and sixties *kabhi méri gali aaya karó* (*F* 204), a popular number of the 90s “*What is under my choli?*” (*MLS* 357) are cited. As a novel expressly concerned with music, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is dense with intertexts of song titles and lyrics. A cover song accompanies the book which was even sung by the existing rock band U2.

Rushdie appropriates the power and tropes of sacred stories from Christianity, Hinduism, Islam as well as Zoroastrianism. Timothy Brennan has appraised how the Koran forms a significant intertext in *Shame*.

The face of cartoonist R.K. Laxman’s “celebrated Common Man” is sketched in *The Moor’s Last Sigh*. It is the only instance of its kind among all of Rushdie’s novels to date, and one easy to miss (*MLS* 229).

Political figures are cited in all of Rushdie’s novels. These include famous public figures from different countries. For instance he invokes Nehru, Gandhi, Indira and Feroze Gandhi, Sanjay and Maneka Gandhi, Morarji Desai, Pr. Radhakrishnan, Jinnah, Mountbatten, Machiavelli, Nixon, Khrushchev, Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Tilak, Arafat and Clinton.

Along with major players in politics Rushdie invokes icons from movies, music, religion, the business arena, as well as literary greats. His work attempts a blend of what may be described as the dichotomy between high and low culture. In

Fury this dichotomy is taken a step further in its erasure of boundaries. In an interview, Rushdie admits that his writing has been heading in such a direction for a long while. He says that there is still resistance from people at suggestions that Homer can be spoken about just as casually along with Homer Simpson the cartoon character, but to him that doesn't seem unusual. He wonders: "If I like the *Simpsons* and I like *The Iliad*, why shouldn't I talk about them in the same sentence".⁵⁵

Some of the allusions to writers and works of fiction, comprise: Shakespeare, Pygmalion, Marvell, Wordsworth, *Merchant of Venice*, J. Conrad, Premchand, Sadat Hasan Manto, Kafka, *The Trial*, Hercule Poirot, Sherlock Holmes, *Don Quixote*, Macbeth, Jeeves, Stephen Dedalus, Robin Hood, Baloo, Kaa, Ernest Hemingway, Yeats, Gulliver, Ahab, Ismael, Shaw, Mogwli, Rip Wan Winkle, Milan Kundera, Tolkein, *Lord of the Rings*, Sauron, the hobbits: Frodo, Bilbo, Sam Gamgee. *Thousand and One Nights* is a particular favourite with resonances throughout Rushdie's *oeuvre*.

Rushdie also cites famous personalities. A few examples include Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul II, St. Francis Xavier, Aristotle, Birla and Tata, C.G. Jung, Lata Mangeshkar, the Nawab of Pataudi, Dalai Lama, Donald Trump, Einstein, Cassius Clay Noam Chomsky, Deepak Chopra, etc. *Fury* comprises a virtual inventory of American popular figures, drawing upon popular singers, movies and movie stars in particular, from those like Angelina Jolie to Robin Williams.

Names are usually more than mere titular signifiers and have pertinent undertones in all of Rushdie's texts without exception. The intertext shapes the interpretation of the text from beyond the margins. Hutcheon states, "Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context".⁵⁶ Cynthia

Carey Abrioux observes that the manner of parodic character naming which is a vital constituent of Rushdie's pattern "is often the result of an ironic perversion of the original referent or the exploitation of the gap between the heroic overtones of a name and the brutalities attributed to the character".⁵⁷

In *Midnight's Children* for instance, Saleem's grandfather Aadam Aziz echoes E. M. Forster's Dr. Aziz, as also the biblical first man Adam. Shiva, Saleem's rival is overtly evocative of the legendary Shiva in his creative as well as destructive *avatar*. The Rani of Cooch Nahin is literally 'queen of nothing at all'. A character in *The Enchantress of Florence* is similarly called Rana of Cooch Naheen (EF 32).

Abrioux notes: "Rushdie plays with legend, history, religion, assonance, allusion, pun, 'mis'-incarnation, mock pretension as he mischievously distorts, perverts and juxtaposes".⁵⁸ In addition to the resonances evoked by the names of major characters in *Shame*, Omar's three mothers are preposterously called Chunnee, Munnee and Bunny. "Raddi, Bekar and Phisaddi" (S 250) are names of army generals all meaning useless, which is a wry indicator of Rushdie's attitude towards military rule. The matriarch Bariamma, in opposition to her name which denotes 'big mother', is almost a midget. Mohenjo Daro and Harappa echo an ancient history.

Gibreel Farishta the protagonist of *The Satanic Verses* literally echoes Archangel Gabriel while Saladin Chamcha gestures towards the twelfth century powerful muslim political leader Salahudin. Chamcha is named after the Hindi colloquialism meaning sycophant. *Grimus*, is an anagram of si murg literally meaning 'over thirty birds'.

The Moor's Last Sigh has the Zogoiby children parodically nicknamed Ina, Minnie, Mynah and Moor. Carmen Lobo who is unable to bear children is nicknamed Sahara, evocative of the desert. Reverend Oliver D'Aeth is comically called 'Allover

death' by Aurora who plays on the phonetic implications of the name (*MLS* 94). The guard with the wooden leg is nicknamed Lambajan Chandiwala by Moor's parents. Moor explains "the inter-lingual joke: lamba, long; jan, sounds like John, chandi, silver. Long John Silverfellow (*MLS* 126). The character is evocative of the lame pirate Long John Silver from Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Bishnupriya Ghosh regards this as an example of "a western signifier reinterpreted for the Indian context".⁵⁹ Lambajan even has a parrot perched on his shoulder who shrieks "Peesay-saféd-hathi!" verbally evocative of Stevenson's "pieces of eight".

Piloo's real name in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is Shetty. He takes on the last name Doodhwalla citing his reason: "milkman by fame, I am Milkman by name" (*GF* 65). His wife is called Golmatol, while his daughters are equally absurdly called Halva and Rasgulla. Nissa Shetty adopts the name Vina Apsara with connotations of the lyre and the water nymph. Likewise, most of the characters in *Shalimar the Clown* choose to change their names.

The intratextual allusion is yet another feature of Rushdie's work. The writer pays homage to his own work in the form of characters from his early texts making an appearance in subsequent ones. Aadam Sinai the foster son of Saleem in *Midnight's Children* is the most developed intratextual character in *The Moor's Last Sigh* wherein he plays a larger role than that in the former text. He gains the affection of Abraham Zogoiby and becomes his adoptive son. Among minor characters who resurface in *The Moor's Last Sigh* from *Midnight's Children*, there is the detective Dom Minto who re-enters as one of Bombay's foremost private investigators. Commander Sabarmati (who had shot his wife's lover) and his wife supposedly live in Toronto. Saleem's boyhood friend Cyrus Dubash appears in a small part as Lord Khusro who is consulted about Moor's phenomenal growth.

Zeeny Vakil the love of the Anglophile Saladin Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* migrates into *The Moor's Last Sigh* as an art critic, and is killed in a catastrophic explosion. William Methwold the British colonialist and biological father of Saleem in *Midnight's Children* re-enters *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in a more significant role. Homi Catrack from *Midnight's Children* and Aurora Zogoiby from *The Moor's Last Sigh* also have cameo roles in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Olga the Volga, the last potato witch of Astrakhan figures in a miniscule role in *Shalimar the Clown*. "Potato witchcraft" finds a mention in *The Enchantress of Florence* as well, with a reference to the fictional Olga (EF 212).

Michael Riffaterre likens the relationship between the intertext and the text to that between the unconscious and the conscious. He recognizes that the compulsion on the part of the reader to decipher the intertext has to be understood in terms of "the ubiquitous mechanism of tropes". He observes that the intertextual urge is ultimately "a reader response dictated by the tantalizing combination within each connective of the enigma and the answer, of the text as Sphinx and the intertext as Oedipus".⁶⁰ Rushdie's overindulgent texts are a demanding read. The gratification to be gained from reading him is largely dependent on the breadth of experience the reader brings along.

Language

Language assumes a central focus in postcolonial studies. It served as a tool wielded by those in authority to exert control. Helen Tiffin notes that in the binary of the coloniser–colonised, it was language that served as a means of domination.⁶¹ It is of import that Rushdie is concerned with linguistic power. In his view, “to conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free”.⁶²

There are those who are convinced that the use of the language of the coloniser not only constrains thought and is inadequate to express the reality of a local context, but it is also analogous to acquiescence with the hegemonic power of the colonial language and by extension of the coloniser. Unlike writers like Frantz Fanon who is a major proponent of the position that language has the largest implication for the colonised, or the Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong’o who eschews English, electing to write in the native Gikuyu, Rushdie throws in his lot with those who by choice embrace the English language, employing it to counter a colonial past via re-writing the standard. As a result of British imperialism, English became a part of the cultures colonised and Rushdie points out that the postcolonial writer aspires to reconstruct history via language. He is convinced that the language warrants remoulding to suit local purposes. Regarding the suitability of English to give expression to Indian themes, he states:

Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it, or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies.⁶³

Ashcroft et al note that by reworking the alien language to suit the needs and nuances of the mother language in terms of grammar, vocabulary and syntax, an ‘english’ is constructed which differs from the received standard.⁶⁴ In a similar vein, Rushdie comments on how writing in new englishes can be viewed as a salutary act of resistance, in the appropriation and re-forming of a colonial language to reflect the postcolonial experience. English, in Rushdie’s view, was another Indian language. This could not have been possible with an earlier generation, mainly on account of colonialism being that much more remote. He avers:

I don’t think it is always necessary to take up the anti-colonial – or is it post-colonial – cudgels against English. What seems to me to be happening is that those people who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it ... they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers.⁶⁵

Rushdie has been lauded for his energising use of language. His revolutionising use of English has been viewed as a subversive strategy in terms of the Empire writing back in retaliation. In Indian writing in English, Rushdie is generally accepted as an initiator and catalyst of a style that saw English being used imaginatively and with ease. There are those like Harish Trivedi who express concern about what he feels is the reconquering of India by English. He avows that “the Rushdie effect has crucially contributed to the neo-colonial entrenchment of English in India not so much as an international as a *multinational* language”.⁶⁶ However, most concur that Rushdie’s use of English indigenised it as a literary language of India. His “chutnification” (MC 459) and assault on narrative conventions transforms the language from a colonial inheritance into a new Indian-English one. Pico Iyer

acknowledges that in Rushdie's hands the novel became a narrative of the manner in which the "colonized could trump colonizer with something raucous, larger than life and triumphant".⁶⁷ Rushdie can be considered to have vanquished English in a postcolonial sense.

Rushdie's digressive, compelling narratives with their deliberate non-linearity are reminiscent of the oral storyteller. He is described as a raconteur in his best work. Anita Desai highlights a return to the demotic, a way of writing that taps into the oral tradition as a contribution of Rushdie.⁶⁸ It is a demotic that lexically draws from colloquial hybrid spoken English. The writer himself admits that the narrative method of *Midnight's Children* was inspired by the art of Indian story telling. Raja Rao has pointed out the tendency towards digression of the Indian imagination, "we have neither punctuation nor the treacherous 'ats' and 'ons' to bother us - we tell one interminable tale".⁶⁹

The whimsical narrators make constant intrusions into the narrative, exposing their fictionality and the act of creation. They repeatedly foreshadow events to come, creating suspense in the process. The oral narrative is drawn upon, with the colloquialisms that characterise the style. *Midnight's Children* is placed within the oral tradition from the very onset. The "once upon a time" in the first line is reminiscent of the opening of the traditional tale, but is subverted the very next instant, providing specifics in terms of date, locale and time of the action. The narrator frequently deliberates upon the manner in which the narration should proceed. Typical to casual conversation, sentences are left incomplete:

(... And already I can see the repetitions beginning; because didn't my grandmother also find enormous . . . and the stroke, too, was not the only . . . and the Brass Monkey had her birds . . . the curse begins

already, and we haven't even got to the noses yet!). (*MC* 12; original ellipses and parenthesis)

In her reading of *Midnight's Children*, Rukmini Bhaya Nair deliberates upon the manner in which the narration in the text is shaped as gossip. The narrative attempts to capture speech rhythms with its fragmentary nuances, pauses, hesitation, taking for granted the filling of the blanks by the listener, even the tendency to repeat oneself in speaking. "It was – or am I wrong? I must rush on; things are slipping from me all the time – a day of horrors. It was then – unless it was another day – that we found old Resham Bibi dead of cold (*MC* 413). The punctuation attempts to reflect aspects of speech in writing; incorporating and exploiting ellipses, parentheses, dashes, exclamation, question marks, colons, italics and capitalisation. The haste of the narrator leaves him out of breath, resulting in sentences that often carry on interminably leading to lengthy paragraphs bereft of periods. It is not unusual for a sentence to open frequently with "No" or "And". Colloquialisms are incorporated: "They are doing nasbandi – sterilization is being performed!" (*MC* 429). "No, that won't do" "Well then", "Oh, spell it out, spell it out" (*MC* 9). Saleem's heartless teacher Zagallo's lilt is represented: "Feelth from the jongle", "So, a leetle arguer, ees eet? he utters while a tortured Saleem answers "Aiee sir no sir ouch!" (*MC* 231).

The very first page of *The Moor's Last Sigh* refers to the two great world superpowers: 'Amrika' and 'Moskva'(3). The narrator colloquially declaims:

So I asked myself, Nadia Wadia, is it the end for you? Is it curtains?

And for some time I thought, achha, yes, it's all over, khalaas. But then

I was asking myself, Nadia Wadia, what you talking men? At twenty-

three to say that whole of life is funtoosh? What pagalpan, what

nonsense, Nadia Wadia! Girl, get a grip OK? (*MLS* 377).

The stammer of Mr. Sisodia is captured. “Your goodwife has already ist ist stated her con consent to the sus sus sale....all relevant dada documents are hee hee here” (*GF* 164).

Piloo Doodhwalla’s articulation is represented phonetically. In one instance he remonstrates with his wife: “OK? To my phace you are saying it? Arré, how to surwiwe when I am beset by traitors? When I must phight not only these sacred mooing gods but also my own wife as vell” (*GF* 115).

Rushdie’s lexis reflects the tempo and volume of the speaker in this instance:

As the banker turned to go, Malik suddenly called out to him.

“Balasubramanyam Venkataraghavan!” And then, saying it faster and louder, until he was simultaneously gabbling and screaming:

“Balasubramanyamvenkataraghavanbalasubramanyamvenkatarghavan
*balasubramanyamvenkataraghavan*BALASUBRAMANYAMVENKA
TAR GHAVAN!” (*F* 81)

Asmaan’s babytalk finds expression in *Fury*. “Ai caramba” for I can’t remember, “stared” instead of scared (*F* 209). There is an attempt to capture the Jewish plumber’s articulation: “you see, Professor, I haff followed your advice, zis advice vot to you vos chust a schoopit gag, and sanks Gott, success has blessed my effort” (*F* 212). An Indian housekeeper in *Shalimar the Clown* called Mrs Shanti Dickens discusses the crime reports: “E chopp’ ’er up, sir, just to ’magine,” she’d say with relish. “Wery wery hawful, sir, hisn’t it. Maybe ‘e is heatin’ ’er for ’is tea” (*SC* 171).

Certain shifts in narration are marked by italics and incorporate changes in tense. The end of *The Moor’s Last Sigh* for instance is italicised, recording the current jottings of the Moor in the present tense after his escape from Vasco’s fortress. An entire chapter in *Fury* which relates Solanka’s inspiration of the cyberstory of the

Puppet Kings, assumes a different font from the rest of the text (161-68). In *Shalimar the Clown*, the segments verbalising the telepathic transfer between Boonyi and Shalimar is in the present tense, frequently in direct speech, and italicised (*SC* 195, 259-261, 297-98).

There are striking changes from direct speech to reported speech that find their way into single paragraphs. Throughout the span of time Saleem is in the invading Pakistani army in *Midnight's Children* for instance, he narrates in the third person. Rukmini Bhaya Nair aptly points out that Rushdie's syntactic technique merits a thesis to itself. Note how the description changes from a casual one to a solemn tone contributed by the use of the passive construction, ultimately heightening the parodic effect:

Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. (*MC* 9)

Other techniques related to that of the oral storyteller include flashback and multilayered digressions. Fletcher avers that these collaborate in destabilising "linearity" and lead to the effect of "simultaneity".⁷⁰

There are repetitions of words, phrases and even passages. The phrase "On my tenth birthday" is repeated all of eleven times in a span of less than two pages in

Midnight's Children (205-207). At the very outset Saleem declares: "I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time" (MC 9). The phrase "once upon a time" is reinforced throughout the text. "Once upon a time there was an underground husband" (MC 216), "Once upon a time, it was a maharajah's residence; but India today is a modern country..." (MC 433). The birth of Aadam Sinai at the end of the book, bring the narrative full circle. It subverts the opening of the book in structural and linguistic terms. It literally parodies the opening as the narrator announces Aadam's birth coinciding with the Emergency:

He was born in Old Delhi . . . once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: Aadam Sinai arrived at a night-shadowed slum on June 25th, 1975. And the time? The time matters, too. As I said: at night. No, it's important to be more . . . On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms....at the precise instant of India's arrival at Emergency, he emerged. There were gasps; and, across the country, silences and fears. And owing to the occult tyrannies of that benighted hour, he was mysteriously handcuffed to history....(MC 419-20).

Words are frequently strung together conveying urgency: 'whatsitsname', 'ononon', 'whoknowswhat', 'Iswearonmymother'shead', 'whereamI', 'plaintosee', 'don'tyouthinkso', 'talldarkhandsome', 'ouchmynose', 'godknowswhatelse', 'longago', etc.

News headlines, telegrams and posters are drawn into the text of *Midnight's Children* with capitalisation assuming significance. For instance, Press headlines are inserted in the text of *Midnight's Children*.

A telegram summons the Sinai's: "PLEASE COME QUICK SINAI SAHIB SUFFERED HEARTBOOT GRAVELY ILL SALAAMS ALICE PEREIRA" (MC 295).

A poster advertising Lord Khusro's powers is inserted into the text:

LORD

KHUSRO

KHUSROVANI

* BHAGWAN *

[...]Do not heed LIES of politicians poets Reds & cetera. PUT YOUR TRUST in Only

True Lord

KHUSRO KHUSRO KHUSRO

KHUSRO KHUSRO KHUSRO

& send Donations to POBox 555, Head Post Office, Bombay-1.

BLESSINGS! BEAUTY!! TRUTH!!!

Om Hare Khusro Hare Khusrovand Om

The literalisation of metaphor forms a pervasive technique employed by Rushdie. Narrative, for Rushdie not only constructs, but also deconstructs, subtly interrogating the fictional nature of identities. Neil Ten Kortenaar draws attention to the manner in which Rushdie transforms metaphor into literal truth in *Midnight's Children*, thereby highlighting its figurative status and exposing its fictional, metaphorical nature. Rushdie seems to hint at the nation and its history as metaphorical and mediated by language and narrative. The principal metaphor of the birth of a new nation and its later fragmentation is literalised in the person of Saleem. He implores the reader to believe that he is falling apart. "I am not speaking metaphorically...I am literally disintegrating..." (MC 37). Kortenaar opines that the

metaphorical nature of the real does not detract from its truth value. He suggests that Rushdie is hinting at there being no literal level of truth. He writes: “The literal level is always already a metaphor. But the truth lies in metaphor”.⁷¹ For instance, when the Indian government froze the assets of Muslims, Ahmed Sinai’s testicles freeze in literal terms (*MC* 135). The Anglicisation of Indians is reflected in the luminous ashes of Dr. Narlikar and the literal fading of Ahmed Sinai’s skin tone to white, while similarly large numbers of businessmen were “turning white” (*MC* 179).

In *Shalimar the Clown* metaphors assume real status. The legend of the iron mullahs believes that the metal scrapyards that sprung up in the Kashmiri valley sprouted the fearsome iron mullahs who demanded obeisance. Later in the text in the aftermath of a skirmish, in the garments of the iron commando Bulbul Fakh “no human body was discovered”. Instead a sizeable quantity of pulverised machine parts was found (*SC* 316). In yet another instance, the sarpanch Bombur Yambarzal, terrorised by the militants is “literally blinded by terror”, he loses his sight (*SC* 365).

Rushdie’s pages flash with word play, rhyme, alliteration, humour, parody, pun, wit, inventiveness, engaging the reader by the manner in which he puts it to use. According to Cynthia Carey Abrioux his linguistic prowess results in the “re-infusion of colour, vigour, and blood, through syntactical and lexical challenge”.⁷² Here, for example, is his parenthesised account of what lay behind the dubbing of an Irani restaurant in Bombay ‘Sorryno’:

(so called because of the huge blackboard at the entrance reading
*Sorry, No Liquor, No Answer Given Regarding Addresses in Locality,
 No Combing of Hair, No Beef, No Haggle, No Water Unless Food
 Taken, No News or Movie Magazine, No Sharing of Liquid
 Sustenances, No Taking Smoke, No Match, No Feletone Calls, No*

Incoming With Own Comestible, No Speaking of Horses, No Sigret, No Taking of Long Time on Premises, No Raising of Voice, No Change, and a crucial last pair, No Turning Down of Volume -- It Is How We Like, and No Musical Request -- All Melodies Selected Are to Taste of Prop). (MLS 204-5; original emphasis)

Rushdie's parody and satire usually takes the form of a tongue-in-cheek pervasive humour. Note the echo of Keats when he wryly states; "But if small things go, will large things be close behind?" (MC 222). The narrator ironically talks about the starlet Zehra for instance "on her way to a bed which it would be unforgivably loose-tongued of me to suggest was already occupied" (S 110). Rukmini Bhaya Nair draws attention to the fact that the nature of the humour in Rushdie's novels is marked by a "black humour, funny-peculiar rather than funny-ha-ha" and are accompanied by a "moral penumbra".⁷³ Rushdie's humour is astute, subtle, and takes the reader by surprise. Consider the hilarity in the following lines:

...And look at the stains on the carpets, janum; for two months we must live like those Britishers? You've looked in the bathrooms? No water near the pot. I never believed, but it's true, my God, they wipe their bottoms with paper only! (MC 96)

The inside jokes in his texts are so numerous that it is a rare reader who will grasp all of them. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* for instance opens on St. Valentines Day – the last day of Vina's life which is also the day the fatwa was pronounced against Rushdie (3). Linda Richards draws attention to an instance from *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*: The photographer Rai works for a fictional photographic agency called the Nebuchadnezzar Agency. The most famous non-fictional photo agency in the world is called Magnum. She proffers this as example of Rushdie's very subtle

inside jokes because a magnum - as she points out - is a litre and a half bottle of champagne. However, a nebuchadnezzar is a much bigger bottle of champagne".⁷⁴

Again note the following reflection on photography:

Where are you now, O Titanic seer, Prometheus of film? If the gods have punished you, if you're chained to a pillar high up on an Alp while a vulture munches your guts, take comfort in the news. This just in: the gods are dead, but photography is alive & kicking. Olympus? Pah! It's just a camera now. (*GF* 210)

In *The Enchantress of Florence* Jodha is unimpressed by the gifts the foreign travellers present to Emperor Akbar. In comparison with the magnificence of the Himalayas and Kashmir, she dismisses "their *vaals* and *aalps*". In her view their kings were merely savages who had "nailed their god to a tree" (*EF* 48).

Indian readers would appreciate an apposite comment on the variable nature of time: Time, in Rushdie's experience, seems as erratic as Bombay's electric power supply. "no people whose word for 'yesterday' is the same as their word for 'tomorrow' can be said to have a firm grip on the time" (*MC* 106).

The surging prose is selected with magpie enchantment and ordered to glisten as Rushdie defamiliarises language in order to make it new. As Harish Trivedi points out, Rushdie ushered in India, "not only as the grand theme but also as part of the medium".⁷⁵ All the novels are infused with words and expressions from Hindi and Urdu. His most notable contribution was the interpolation of India into English "as a strategy for conquering it, rather as a Trojan horse".⁷⁶ The English language is subjugated by Rushdie as it "flexes and bends to reflect the energy and vigour of indigenous languages".⁷⁷ Indigenous expressions are employed in their literal translation from Hindi phraseology as in "whatsitsname", "madman from somewhere"

(MC 123) little piece-of-the moon” (MC 9). “The surviving male Camas were, all of them in their various ways, a couple of annas short of the full rupee” (GF 190).

A few examples from those ranging across his texts include words from Hindi and Urdu, like ‘tola’, ‘tamasha’, ‘kachcha’, ‘chaprassi’, ‘hartal’, ‘khansama’, ‘aag’, ‘yé Akashvani hai’, ‘haddi paelwan’, ‘rutputty’, ‘chaya’, ‘chamcha’, ‘bhanghi’, ‘khansi-ki-Rani’, ‘ek-dum’ ‘fut-a-fut’, ‘takallouf’, ‘rakshasa’, ‘sahibzadas’, ‘Ganpati Bappa Morya’, ‘baap-ré’, ‘bewaqoof’, ‘lafanga’, ‘muggermutch’, ‘bilkul’ ‘khalaas’, ‘pagalpan’, ‘nakhras’, ‘chokra’, ‘bad-tameez’, ‘hijras’, ‘kutti’, ‘jopadpatti’, ‘muhajid’, ‘talib’, ‘taleem’, ‘wazwaan’, ‘fidayeen’, ‘afsanah’; oaths like ‘bhaenchod’, ‘goonda salah’; Indigenous words are often interspersed with the English words: ‘And drinking so much, janum that’s not good’, ‘Amina Begum! . . . Wake up! Bad dream, Begum Sahiba!’, ‘You samjao that baysharram pair’.

The narrator of *Shame* mulls over the nuances of the word:

This word: shame. No, I must write it in its original form, not in this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and accumulated detritus of its owners’ unrepented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write, and so for ever alter what is written . . . *Sharam*, that’s the word. For which this paltry ‘shame’ is a wholly inadequate translation. Three letters, *shin re mim* (written, naturally, from right to left); plus *zabar* accents indicating the short vowel sounds. (S 38-9)

The few allowances made to the “monolingual English reader” include providing translations sparingly but never a glossary.⁷⁸ Sometimes an English translation follows, at other times the indigenous words just blend in without ado. An example of the former is the note to Mumtaz from her husband Nadir Khan proclaiming “*Talaaq! Talaaq! Talaaq!*” The narrator adds: “The English lacks the thunderclap sound of the

Urdu, and anyway you know what it means. I divorce thee. I divorce thee. I divorce thee” (*MC* 62; original emphasis). Another instance is: “Bombay’s garbage argot, *Mumbai ki kachrapati baat-cheet*” (*GF* 7; original emphasis).

Rushdie’s refusal to provide glossaries has been viewed as a form of resistance to the standard discourse. Meenakshi Mukherjee acclaims Rushdie’s linguistic risks, his audacious use of “mongrel street language of cities,” his temerity in literally translating idioms and metaphors and his use of bilingual puns with no apologies, footnotes or glossaries.⁷⁹ Rather than shape his work in accordance with the prevalent trends, he personalised English to suit Indian cadences.

Rushdie’s *Angrezi* is tuned in to the nuances of ordinary speech. While the medium of expression is English, the medium of experience is that of the local languages. He sabotages ‘proper’ speech with the introduction of local terms as well as invented neologisms such as ‘frankendoll’, colloquialisms like ‘loserville’, play with famous names like ‘Gush and Bore’ (an inversion of Bush and Gore) ‘Rip van Cama and William Winkle’ and a pun like ‘Derridada’. *The Moor’s Last Sigh* comprises words that are suffixed thus: ‘shutoffy’, ‘eatofy’, ‘rottofy’, ‘maddofy’, ‘killofy’, ‘takeofy’, ‘ruttofy’, ‘insaan and insanity’.

His own inventions interfere with local idiom as in ‘beastji’, ‘beautybibi’, ‘Khansi-ki-Rani’ or he invents babyish names for Saleem like “joonoo-moonoo, and putch-putch.

All sorts of onomatopoeic sounds break into the narrative. Some examples are as follows: ‘Haa!’ ‘Tch tch’, ‘fataakh!’, ‘ker-rick! Ker-rack!’ (cracking of pistachio shells), ‘chhi’, ‘ai-aiée’, ‘boom-boom-badoom’, ‘rakataka takatak’ ‘Dhhaamm! Dhhoomm! Dhhaaiiyn! Dhhaaiiyn!’

Rushdie’s defiance and violation of categories subsequently results in a re-invention, a creation of “new pluridimensional linguistic realities and, through

constant transfusion, turning the language itself into a transformative process”.⁸⁰ The insertion of Hindi and Urdu including slang, colloquialisms, puns, run on words, his neologisms, the liberties with grammar and punctuation, leads to the English language itself metamorphosing into a different form, a “hybrid Indlish”.⁸¹ Rushdie’s writing stands as a testament to his refusal to acknowledge a unitary acceptable manner of employing English. Cundy terms this indianisation of the language “Rushdification”.⁸²

A combination of all these elements serve to place Rushdie’s work outside the Euro-centric tradition, even though it employs a language and genre central to the Western literary canon. He truly stretches the language to accommodate the serious with the playful, the profound with the mundane. He subverts the linguistic canon, interrogates, indeed, rejects the authority and political clout of the standard, and mugs the Queen’s English. Perhaps Rushdie’s greatest contribution is one in terms of what could be done with received narrative and linguistic conventions. It is no wonder then, that a fellow writer like Rukun Advani regards Rushdie as a “Colossus” and pays him a supreme compliment when he says “as everyone knows, in the beginning there was Rushdie, and the Word was with Rushdie”.⁸³

Notes

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- ² Linda Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire," The Post-Colonial Studies Reader, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995) 131.
- ³ Catherine Cundy, Salman Rushdie, Contemporary World Writers (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996) 99.
- ⁴ Salman Rushdie, "Commonwealth Literature Does Not Exist," Imaginary Homelands 63-4.
- ⁵ Meenakshi Mukherjee, ed., Rushdie's Midnights Children: A Book of Readings (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003) 9.
- ⁶ M.D. Fletcher, "The Politics of Salman Rushdie's Fiction," introduction, Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, ed. M.D. Fletcher (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994) 8.
- ⁷ Aijaz Ahmed, "Salman Rushdie's Shame: Postmodern Migrancy and the Representation of Women," In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1994) 137.
- ⁸ Linda Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (London: Routledge, 1990) 12.
- ⁹ Hutcheon, Poetics 3.
- ¹⁰ Dipesh Chakraborty, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History," Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin Post-Colonial Studies Reader 388.

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¹² Waugh. 21.

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¹⁴ M. D. Fletcher, introduction 4.

¹⁵ Keith Wilson, "Midnight's Children and Reader Responsibility," Critical Quarterly 26.3 (1984): 23-37.

¹⁶ Nancy E. Batty, "Rushdie's 1001 (Mid-) Nights," Mukherjee, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 96.

¹⁷ Hutcheon, Poetics 117.

¹⁸ Hutcheon, Poetics 109.

¹⁹ Rushdie, "'Errata': or, Unreliable Narration in *Midnight's Children*," Imaginary Homelands 24-25.

²⁰ Batty 100.

²¹ Waugh 43.

²² Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire," 135.

²³ Waugh 9.

²⁴ Hutcheon, "Circling the Downspout of Empire," 131.

²⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, ed., introduction, Nation and Narration (London:Routledge, 1990) 7.

²⁶ Stephen Slemon, "Magic Realism as Post-colonial Discourse," Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community, eds. Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 422.

²⁷ Lois Parkinson Zamora, and Wendy B. Faris, eds., "Daiquiri Birds and Flaubertian Parrot(ie)s," Introduction, Magical Realism 3.

²⁸ Slemon 407.

²⁹ Wendy B. Faris, "Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction," Magical Realism 163.

³⁰ Faris 168.

³¹ Zamora and Faris, introduction 3.

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³³ Patricia Merivale, "Saleem Fathered by Oskar: Intertextual Strategies in Midnight's Children and The Tin Drum," ARIEL 21.3 (1990): 5.

³⁴ Salman Rushdie, Ryan, Laura T, "Alive and Well; Salman Rushdie Roves Freely in the World of Books," interview with Post-Standard, 17 Mar. 2002, Highbeam Research & The Gale Group, Inc., 3 Mar. 2006

<<http://www.highbeam.com>>

³⁵ V. S. Naipaul, "My Brother's Tragic Sense," Spectator 258 (1987): 22.

³⁶ Salman Rushdie, "Gabriel García Márquez," Imaginary Homelands 301.

³⁷ Michael Edward Gorra, "The Novel in an Age of Ideology: On the Form of Midnight's Children," After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1997) 146.

³⁸ Salman Rushdie, "Gabriel García Márquez," 302.

³⁹ Faris 164.

⁴⁰ Jeanne Delbaere-Garant, "Psychic Realism, Mythic Realism, Grotesque Realism: Variations on Magic Realism in Contemporary Literature in English," Magical Realism 249.

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⁴² Salman Rushdie, The Enchantress of Florence (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008) Henceforth referenced parenthetically in the text as *EF* with page number.

⁴³ Qtd. in Batty 102.

⁴⁴ Qtd in Batty 105.

⁴⁵ Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel," The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990) 37.

⁴⁶ Michael Riffaterre, "Compulsory Reader Response: the Intertextual Drive," Intertextuality: Theories and Practices, ed. Michael Worton and Judith Still (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1993) 72.

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⁴⁹ Hutcheon, Poetics 118.

⁵⁰ Batty 102.

⁵¹ Rushdie, "The Location of Brazil," Imaginary Homelands 125.

⁵² Cundy 3.

⁵³ Salman Rushdie, "Marvels of the World Unveiled," interview with Vijaya Nagarajan, Whole Earth, 22 Sept. 1999, 9 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>

⁵⁴ Christopher Rollason, "Rushdie's Un-Indian Music: The Ground Beneath Her Feet," Mittapalli and Kuortti, vol. 2. 95.

⁵⁵ Salman Rushdie, "Salman Rushdie: Out and About," interview with Dave Weich, 25 Sept. 2002, 3 Feb. 2006 <www.powells.com>

⁵⁶ Hutcheon, Poetics 118.

⁵⁷ Cynthia Carey Abrioux, "In the Name of the Nation: Salman Rushdie's *Shame*," Commonwealth 18.1 (1995): 51.

⁵⁸ Abrioux 51.

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- ⁵⁹ Ghosh, Bishnupriya, "An Invitation to Indian Postmodernity: Rushdie's English Vernacular as Situated Cultural Hybridity," Critical Essays on Salman Rushdie, ed. M. Keith Booker (New York: G. K. Hall, 1999) 143.
- ⁶⁰ Riffaterre, 77.
- ⁶¹ Helen Tiffin, "Post-Colonialism, Postmodernism and the Rehabilitation of Post Colonial History," Journal of Commonwealth Literature 23.1 (1988): 173.
- ⁶² Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," Imaginary Homelands 17.
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- ⁶⁴ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, eds., introduction to "Language," Post-Colonial Studies Reader 284.
- ⁶⁵ Rushdie, "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist," Imaginary 64.
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- ⁶⁷ Pico Iyer, "Salman Rushdie," Time in partnership with CNN, 5 Nov 2006, Time Inc. 26 Feb 2008 <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article>>
- ⁶⁸ Anita Desai qtd. in Chelva Kanaganayakam, "Fabulating the Real," Counterrealism in Indo-Anglian Fiction (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2002) 114.
- ⁶⁹ Raja Rao, Author's Foreword, Kanthapura (Delhi: Oxford UP) 1989.
- ⁷⁰ M.D. Fletcher, introduction 13.
- ⁷¹ Neil Ten Kortenaar, "Midnight's Children and the Allegory of History," Mukherjee, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 39.
- ⁷² Abrioux 53.
- ⁷³ Rukmini Bhaya Nair, "History as Gossip in Midnight's Children," Mukherjee, Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* 63.

⁷⁴ Linda L. Richards, "The Earth Moves," rev. of The Ground Beneath Her Feet, by Salman Rushdie, January Magazine 1 Apr. 1999, 16 Jan. 2008

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⁷⁵ Trivedi 73.

⁷⁶ Trivedi 73.

⁷⁷ Abrioux 52.

⁷⁸ Nair 65-6.

⁷⁹ Mukherjee, introduction 10.

⁸⁰ Abrioux 53.

⁸¹ Lola Chatterji, "Hero Hunting", The Fiction of St. Stephen's, ed. Aditya Bhattacharjea and Lola Chatterjee (New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 2000) 57.

⁸² Cundy 40.

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VI

Beyond Conclusion

'You see,' Haroun told his father, 'it wasn't only a story, after all.'

- Salman Rushdie (*Haroun and the Sea of Stories* 50)

Rushdie's work has come to be regarded among the foremost texts for a new sort of postcolonial novel dominated by "a migrant, diasporic, cosmopolitan consciousness".¹ He attempts to recreate the cultural crisis in his imagined homeland and redefine it in the postcolonial context. It is primarily the history, politics and identity of the Indian subcontinent viewed via the consciousness of a migrant postcolonial that is meditated upon in his corpus of work. Of course, these are not his only concerns but the ones he insistently returns to in his work.

Rushdie's nomadic position has heightened his consciousness of the significance of culture to the extent of it becoming a project of re-presentation in his work. He validates his posture as a postcolonial writer by accenting his "*excess of belonging*".² Rather than feeling bereft of roots he is of the view that migration can lead to a kind of "multiple rooting".³ Born and having lived in an India with a colonial past, as well as being part of the British coloniser's location, renders him with a "stereoscopic vision" instead of "whole sight".⁴ This enables him to observe both societies as an insider as well as an outsider.

At ease in the east as well as the west, Rushdie's writing, indeed his very identity has been conditioned by this hyphenated experience. His sustained interest in the experience of cultural dislocation and transplantation - which focuses on the manner in which immigrants cope with a new reality - has found expression in his fiction. As Goonetilleke states, "Rushdie transforms biography into art".⁵ He has

become an exponent of a myth of nationhood that he proposes in terms of 'Imaginary Homelands'.

Colonial and neo-imperial power structures, the notion of plural identity, migration, belonging, postcolonial social tribulations like corruption in public and private lives, cultural polarisation and fragmentation, assume pertinent thematic focus in his work. Official history is re-inscribed, foregrounding the perspectives of its protagonists, or rather, victims. Literature is installed as an arena of discourse where issues such as nationhood, history, politics, migration, hybridity and colonialism assume prominence.

Rushdie's worldview springs from a lived Diaspora experience. He validates his position as a migrant postcolonial writer by accentuating the multiple heritages it allows him access to. Labels are anathema to Rushdie who resists being slotted into any particular culture or category. For instance, in a short story he talks about ropes around his neck tugging him in different directions compelling him to make a choice. "Ropes," he declares, "I do not choose between you. Lassoes, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose".⁶

Much of the critical response hails Rushdie as an important proponent of postcolonial literature with his distance from the homeland regarded as a feature that facilitates objectivity. There are those however, who interrogate his representations of India as well as his authority to represent the Indian subcontinent, as an Indian expatriate living abroad and writing in a western literary tradition. Rushdie himself speculates upon this matter in *Shame*:

Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject...We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what

can you tell but lies? I reply with more questions: is history to be considered the property of the participants solely? (S 28; original emphasis)

In a similar vein Goonetilleke observes that “an insider’s view is not necessarily superior to a migrant’s”.⁷ Anuradha Dingwaney Needham is convinced that distance enables the creation of a space “for a mode of inquiry that is not trapped in dominant ideologies”.⁸ Furthermore, the notion of an *authentic* identity of the Indian nation itself proves elusive in the midst of the diversity that exists. Rushdie has been apt to note that the pursuit of national authenticity is an unreasonable one in the Indian context. He asserts:

... it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw...the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a *mélange* of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American.⁹

In spite of his multicultural commitment; Rushdie’s *oeuvre* is predominantly shaped and sustained by a historical and political vision of the subcontinent. In an essay the writer states:

My characters have frequently flown west from India, but in novel after novel their author’s imagination has returned to it. This perhaps, is what it means to love a country: that its shape is also yours, the shape of the way you think and feel and dream. That you can never really leave.¹⁰

The trajectory of Rushdie’s work seems to have moved increasingly westward reflective of his own geographical movement. His fiction largely narrates the Indian

subcontinent in the twentieth century and its association with the world beyond. There is a definite chronological movement from pre-independence India through an independent India, Partition, to a post-independence nation in the global era.

In terms of locale, *Midnight's Children* is set in India. Part of the action takes place in Pakistan and Bangladesh. *Shame* chronicles Pakistan. A passing reference is made to certain incidents in Britain. The Indian subcontinent forms the backdrop to *The Moor's Last Sigh* with the finale playing itself out in Spain.

Rushdie reckoned that *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* marked his farewell to India: "India, fount of my imagination, source of my savagery, breaker of my heart. Goodbye" (*GF* 249). This work marked Rushdie's ingress into a more global fictional realm. It begins in Bombay, but the characters move to London and then New York with no subsequent return to India. *Fury* takes this trend a step further with the bulk of its action unfolding in present day New York. The protagonist of Indian descent migrates to England before moving to America. With *Shalimar the Clown*, Rushdie returns to India. While it makes forays into America, the novel is set in Kashmir for the most part. Similarly, *The Enchantress of Florence* delves into Renaissance Italy even as it makes an exploration of Mughal India.

The track of Rushdie's work seems to have opened up to the West but it is the Indian subcontinent that occupies centre stage. Christopher Rollason affirms that Rushdie's fiction regarded as a whole, may be considered as "an imaginative model of the Indian subcontinent within twentieth-century history, a latter-day Asian equivalent, albeit on a smaller scale, to what Honoré de Balzac did for nineteenth-century France in his monumental *Comédie Humaine*".¹¹

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie brings to the anvil the travails and turmoil of the Indian postcolonial nation in the grip of religious, social, economic, political and

linguistic concerns, desperately trying to find itself and assert its own identity. Rushdie's impertinent portrayal of the reigning Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi and the Emergency aroused her ire. Rushdie was obliged to offer a public apology when the book faced charges of libel. It is the nation of Pakistan that *Shame* concerns itself with. The notion of progress and modernity of the new palimpsestic nation only leads to a paranoid pursuit of purity and power. The symbiosis between religion and politics ultimately witnesses an apocalyptic end. The satire is directed at the political scenario and important political figures and it is no surprise that the novel was banned in Pakistan. *The Satanic Verses* controversy of course, is part of contemporary history.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet primarily dwells on migration, pop music and love. It lampoons corruption in India with a thinly disguised target in the form of Laloo Prasad Yadav and his wife. Subsequently, *Fury* was the first American novel. The subcontinent played no real part therein, except for a protagonist of Indian origins. *Fury* deliberates upon migrancy, artistic creation and love. Boyd Tonkin is of the opinion that *Fury* seems related to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in the manner that *Shame* was linked with *Midnight's Children*. Just as *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, a "lavish rock-and-roll epic found joy in planetary pop culture, and its gigantic stars", Tonkin notes that *Fury* engages with the same forces but reveals their shadow-side: "excess, hysteria, and the vast rage of an era".¹² *The Moor's Last Sigh* was an invocation and correlation of a multicultural Spain with a Bombay that is increasingly giving way to communal agencies. The satire of Bal Thackeray in the novel resulted in a foiled attempt to ban the novel in India. *Shalimar the Clown* deliberates upon the pertinent and sensitive issue of Kashmir through a tale of love and betrayal.

Regarding his target audience, Rushdie has stated: "I write 'for' people who feel part of the things I write 'about', but also for everyone else whom I can reach".¹³

Rushdie is generally considered a remarkably contemporary writer. He addresses concerns that are pivotal to the literature of our time. These include tyranny, terrorism, fundamentalism, identity and modes of representation.

He writes with a sense of undiluted passion and glorious defiance and has consequently witnessed his books banned and mired in controversy. Nevertheless, this has not deterred him from the compulsion to be politically expressive. His targets have included totalitarianism and oppression in its various avatars. It is the Emergency that comes under attack in *Midnight's Children*, the government of Pakistan in *Shame*, the curtailing of art in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* pursues corruption in public life, ideological intolerance and issues of migrancy. These issues are also explored in *Fury*. *The Moor's Last Sigh* tackles ideological narrowness of outlook in the form of exclusive tendencies gaining currency, namely fundamentalism. Likewise, *Shalimar the Clown* engages in a critique of communalism and terrorism.

In his essays Rushdie underscores the socio-political context of art. He goes on to challenge Orwell's quietism. He considers it a mandate for writers to take sides in debates and make a fuss about injustices in society, acting as critics rather than servants of "some beetle-browed ideology".¹⁴ He feels that leaving the onus of artistically representing the world to politicians would rank among history's most "abject abdications." Rushdie is convinced of the genuine need for "political fiction", "for books that draw new and better maps of reality, and make new languages with which we can understand the world".¹⁵

A question that assumes pertinence in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is the insistent rhetorical query that ponders over the utility of stories that have no truth value. In addition to the delight they afford, there is yet another answer to be

discerned in the conversation between Haroun and the cultmaster who poisons the Ocean of the Streams of Story.

‘But why do you hate stories so much? ... Stories are fun ...’ ‘The world ... is not for Fun,’ Khattam-Shud replied. ‘The world is for Controlling.’ ‘Which world?’ Haroun made himself ask. ‘Your world, my world, all worlds,’ came the reply. ‘They are all there to be Ruled. And inside every single story, inside every Stream in the Ocean, there lies a world, a story-world, that I cannot Rule at all. And that is the reason why.’¹⁶

Rushdie is convinced that “the novel is one way of denying the official politicians’ version of truth”.¹⁷ If language can be used in the service of tyranny it can also be used to contest that domination. He certainly prefers posing questions to answering them; he favours the provisional to the absolute.

Among Rushdie’s critics, it is not easy to counter Aijaz Ahmed’s charge regarding the inability of his work to believe in “any community of actual praxis”.¹⁸ The interrogation of identity and the decentring of the individual is a concern that runs through almost his entire corpus, as does the issue of tyranny. However Rushdie has no easy solutions to political tyranny. He states categorically in *Shame*:

“I mustn’t forget I’m only telling a fairy-story. My dictator will be toppled by goblinish, faery means. ‘Makes it pretty easy for you,’ is the obvious criticism; and I agree, I agree. But add, even if it does sound a little peevish: ‘You try and get rid of a dictator some time.’ (S 257)

In response to Ahmed's charge, Samir Dayal argues that this is an appropriate position for a postcolonial novel to find itself, in this phase of the development of the emergent genre.¹⁹

Rukmini Bhaya Nair makes a pertinent observation:

Rushdie represents 'trouble' in the collective unconscious....That spasmodic mental knee jerk with which we respond each time Rushdie taps smartly on a knobby surface is evidence of this. Rushdie ... possesses an enviably accurate knowledge of the anatomy of the subcontinent. We have, thus, come to an intriguing juncture in the literary history of the subcontinent where, if a satanic figure like Rushdie did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him. It is for this reason that we must value, however much we disagree with it, his...polemic.²⁰

Edward Said considers Rushdie a significant argumentative voice. For him, Rushdie stands for all those who dare to contest power, who assert their right to imagine and articulate forbidden ideas, who argue for "democracy and freedom of opinion". He grants that the work of authors like Rushdie, in addition those like Pynchon and Márquez, act as "agents of social, intellectual and cultural change, because they introduce whole new worlds".²¹

Exposed to two worlds, to be hybrid as Kumkum Sangari observes; entails a comprehension, interrogation as well as representation of a "historical placement" within the national and international, as well as colonialism and neo-colonialism.²² While it may assume different forms, hybridity may be understood in terms of the creation of "new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization".²³ Though not bereft of negative connotations of impurity and mixed

breeds in the colonial notion, the hybrid nature of postcolonial culture has been generally viewed as an asset in the postcolonial context. Bill Ashcroft notes how hybridity and its implications may well be viewed as the “characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth”.²⁴

Hybridity resists notions of culture and identity as pure or essential in nature. The notion of hybridity assumes a central position in post-colonial discourse, especially in the work of Homi Bhabha who regards Rushdie as the very emblem of cosmopolitan hybridity. Bhabha accentuates the reciprocity between the coloniser and the colonised in his essay on ‘Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences’. He posits hybridity as a form of liminal or in-between space that he terms “a Third Space of enunciation” to articulate cultural difference. He feels that this space could possibly lead to an “*inter*-national culture”, not based on “the exoticism or multi-culturalism of the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*”. Bhabha views this space conducive to the expression of “Ourselves and Others”, and the exploration of this hybridity. In his view such a space could possibly lead us to “elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves”.²⁵

This third space is useful for a reading of Rushdie. His own identity being a hyphenated one, he is able to traverse multiple cultures with a dynamic of inclusion rather than exclusion. Rushdie blurs existing boundaries. As seen earlier, his texts draw from eclectic sources in addition to ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultural forms. In *Midnight's Children* for instance the vision of the narrative is inclusive: “Once upon a time,” Saleem muses, “there were Radna and Krisna, and Rama and Sita, and Laila and Majnu; also (because we are not unaffected by the West) Romeo and Juliet, and

Spencer Tracy and Katherine Hepburn” (*MC* 259). This hybridity extends to language. Meenakshi Mukherjee is convinced that Rushdie is trying to marshal different sources to suggest the variety of India that no single language can represent. His novelistic concerns thus interweave “the multi-lingual texture of life in the sub-continent”.²⁶

In spite of the third space being an ambivalent site where cultural signifiers lack “primordial unity or fixity”,²⁷ the space it offers is one of inclusion which “initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation”.²⁸ Rushdie’s hybrid strategy could well be viewed as a counter-hegemonic one, opening up such a third space of negotiation.

Elleke Boehmer asserts that “if the postcolonial text generally is, as Homi Bhabha observes, a hybrid object, then the migrant text is that hybridity writ large and in colour”.²⁹ Rushdie’s work is characterised by its eclecticism. His texts are deliberately fashioned from numerous other “texts”, selected so as to advance “the eclectic range of the hybrid, postcolonial work”.³⁰

Criticism has come to value the very qualities of excess: sprawling plots, characters that are larger than life, and Rushdie’s verbal extravagance. He subverts established fictional genres even as he includes them, expanding linguistic and narrative boundaries in the process. His writings straddle the geographic world and draw on a range of sources in addition to the colonial and postcolonial histories and cultures of the subcontinent, western cultural traditions as well as Islamic traditions. He self-consciously thematises this hybridity.

Rushdie’s rambling, compelling narratives draw from life itself. After listening to a story, Elfrida a character in *Grimus* says, “Stories should be like life ...

Most of life has no meaning – so it must surely be a distortion of life to tell tales in which every single element is meaningful?”³¹

Perhaps more than any other contemporary writer, Rushdie has helped to give India a modern inflection and has insisted on its claim to a place and a voice in the contemporary culture of the West. To do this he has had to carve out a space in the English language of the empire. His use of narrative not only constructs but deconstructs and subverts, continually interrogating the constructed and fictional nature of narratives as well as identities. What Nancy Batty says about *Midnight's Children* has implications for all of Rushdie's work in that they are seditious acts committed not just against the state, “but against a prescribed conception of literature”.³²

J. M. Coetzee talks about how defenders of Rushdie insist that his work be read within two narrative traditions - namely the Eastern and the Western - and how they view him as a “multicultural writer not merely in the weak sense of having roots in more than one culture but in the strong sense of using one literary tradition to renew another”.³³ The scope of Rushdie's allusions, images and vocabulary is overwhelming in its enormity. Jago Morrison is convinced that this allusion like that of Joyce is deliberate. He cautions the reader about approaching Rushdie's texts in the manner of encyclopedic reading for it would then be easy to miss the wood for the trees. He feels that an informed reader and the ability to trace intertexts is a prerequisite to reading Rushdie, for, “excess and readerly overload” are attributes of Rushdie's “aesthetic”.³⁴

Rushdie's use of English - indeed his ‘chutnification’ - made it his own. In *The Satanic Verses*, there is a sanatorium in which immigrants to England are in the process of literally being transformed into different beasts. They ascribe the act to the

power of narrative: "They describe us ... That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct".³⁵ They realise that they are being shaped by the images the British have of them. Rushdie's language has been acclaimed even in the least appreciated of his fiction. He understands the potency of language. He harnesses it remarkably to re-describe and thereby recreate. He wields it to generate maximum import and impact.

On the other hand it may be argued that in Rushdie's work, style takes precedence over plot and character development. Issue may be taken with the self-indulgence of the texts, their verbosity and lack of focus, the supposedly dubious exoticism, the density of allusion which at times could seem merely cosmetic and glib. His colossal vocabulary, myriad cultural references, odd blend of realism and fantasy, are challenging. And while the experience of reading Rushdie may seem rather demanding in an age of instant gratification, there remain those die hard Rushdie admirers like Boyd Tonkin who maintain that they "would rather read one page of flawed Rushdie" than most other novelists.³⁶

Rushdie is relevant for the insights he has to offer and the manner in which he proffers them. He remains a writer of formidable stature in world literature. Lisa Appignanesi hails him as the "Dickens" of our age, as. She says that "his superbly inventive, grandly comic stories chart the great social transitions of our globalising, post-colonial world, with its migrations, its teeming hybrid cities, its clash of unlikenesses, its extremes of love and violence", and they do so "with a richness of language and narrative which is unsurpassed".³⁷

In his essay on Márquez, Rushdie avers that the manner in which Marquez's works echo each other seems like an attempt to forward a myth of "Garcíaland".³⁸ Laura Moss draws a correspondence with Rushdie's work, advancing the suggestion

that he is consciously making an endeavour to advance a myth of “Rushdieland”.³⁹ Rushdie’s entire corpus of work resonates with certain common narratological aspects. For instance there is the notion of questionable parentage, self-reflexive tendencies, introduction of actual historical figures along with fictional ones, the fluidity of characters names, a digressive style, spatio-temporal alterations; non-linear chronology, anticipation of events, direct addresses to the reader, verbal lavishness, parody, a wry humour, magical realism, certain resonant characters, a sense of contemporaneity and oracularity.

John Sutherland is convinced that the merit of Rushdie’s work will be judged eventually by literary criticism not in terms of individual novels but in its entirety as an “oeuvre: a life-long structure”.⁴⁰ Given that Rushdie’s later work has not received sustained critical attention, there is much scope for research with reference to his later contributions, as also his literary strategies.

Writing for *Time*, Pico Iyer states:

Go into a fusion restaurant in San Francisco, listen to a DJ sampling oldies in a London dance club, visit any place in Asia where old colonial buildings are flooded with shiny new handicraft shops, and you are in the world brought into life and divined by Salman Rushdie. Some writers from former British colonies (Derek Walcott, Michael Ondaatje) have shed tropical light on the dusty monuments of English literature; still others (V.S. Naipaul and Kazuo Ishiguro) have pushed the classical novel into new exile territory. But the post-classical novel, the eruption of 21st century literary masala mixing, was set off by an Indian-born, English-speaking, overseas-based Muslim.⁴¹

Iyer concedes that whatever one thinks of Rushdie, it has to be admitted that his contribution goes beyond opening up a new chapter for the novel, to opening up a “new universe”. For Rushdie transforms the manner in which we tell stories and view the world around us.

In sum, to give Rushdie himself the last word, perhaps his greatest contribution lies in his pushing the very frontiers of thought in his attempt to “increase the sum of what it is possible to think”.⁴²

Notes

¹ Josna E. Rege, "Victim into Protagonist? Midnight's Children and the Post-Rushdie National Narratives of the Eighties," Rushdie's *Midnights Children*: A Book of Readings., ed. Meenakshi Mukherjee (Delhi: Pencraft International, 2003) 185.

² Aijaz Ahmed, "Salman Rushdie's Shame: Postmodern Migrancy and the Representation of Women," In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1994) 130.

³ Salman Rushdie, interview with Michael T. Kaufman, New York Times Book Review 3 Nov. 1983: 23.

⁴ Salman Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991 (London: Granta; New Delhi Penguin, 1991) 19.

⁵ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, Salman Rushdie, Macmillan Modern Novelists (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1998) 1.

⁶ Rushdie, "The Courter," East, West 211.

⁷ Goonetilleke 67.

⁸ Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, "The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie," Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie, ed. M.D. Fletcher (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994) 152.

⁹ Rushdie, "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist," Imaginary 67.

¹⁰ Salman Rushdie "A Dream of Glorious Return," Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992-2002 (New York: Modern Library, 2003) 180.

¹¹ Christopher Rollason, "Rushdie's Un-Indian Music: The Ground Beneath Her Feet," Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights, ed. Mittapalli and Kuortti, vol. 2. (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003) 93.

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- ¹² Boyd Tonkin, rev. of Fury, by Salman Rushdie, The Independent 7 Sept. 2001, 2001 26 Feb. 2008 <<http://www.independent.co.uk>>
- ¹³ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" 20.
- ¹⁴ Rushdie, "Outside the Whale," Imaginary Homelands 87.
- ¹⁵ Rushdie, "Outside the Whale" 100.
- ¹⁶ Rushdie, Haroun and the Sea of Stories, (New Delhi: Penguin, 1991) 161.
- ¹⁷ Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" 14.
- ¹⁸ Ahmed 158.
- ¹⁹ Samir Dayal, "The Liminalities of Nation and Gender: Salman Rushdie's Shame," Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association 31.3 (1998): 58, JSTOR. 22 Mar. 2006 <<http://www.jstor.org>>
- ²⁰ Rukmini Bhaya Nair, Lying on the Postcolonial Couch: The Idea of Indifference (New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2002) 238.
- ²¹ Edward Said qtd. in Youssef Yacoubi, "Edward Said, Eqbal Ahmad, and Salman Rushdie: Resisting the ambivalence of Postcolonial Theory," Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics, Highbeam Research 1 Jan. 2005, 3 Feb. 2006 <<http://www.highbeam.com>>
- ²² Kumkum Sangari, "The Politics of the Possible," Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., The Post-Colonial Studies Reader (London: Routledge, 1995) 144.
- ²³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies, (London: Routledge, 2004) 118.
- ²⁴ Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, Post-Colonial Studies Reader 183.
- ²⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences," Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, Post-Colonial Studies Reader 209.

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- ²⁶ Mukherjee, introduction 19.
- ²⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994) 37.
- ²⁸ Bhabha, "Locations of Culture," introduction, Location 1.
- ²⁹ Elleke Boehmer, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors (New York: OUP, 1995) 234.
- ³⁰ Stephen Baker, "'You Must Remember This': Salman Rushdie's The Moor's Last Sigh," Journal of Commonwealth Literature 35:1 (2000): 43.
- ³¹ Salman Rushdie, Grimus (London: Vintage, 1996) 175.
- ³² Nancy Batty, "Rushdie's 1001 (Mid-) Nights," Mukherjee 110.
- ³³ J.M. Coetzee, "Palimpsest Regained," rev. of The Moor's Last Sigh, by Salman Rushdie, New York Review of Books, 21 Mar. (1996) 43: 5.
- ³⁴ Jago Morrison, Contemporary Fiction (New York: Routledge, 2003) 138.
- ³⁵ Salman Rushdie, The Satanic Verses (New York: Viking- Penguin, 1989) 168.
- ³⁶ Tonkin.
- ³⁷ "What writers are saying about Salman Rushdie," English PEN 21 June 2007, 26 Feb 2008 <http://www.englishpen.org/news/_1632/>
- ³⁸ Rushdie, "Gabriel García Márquez," Imaginary Homelands 302.
- ³⁹ Laura Moss, "'Forget Those Damnfool Realists!' Salman Rushdie's Self-Parody as the Magic Realist's 'Last Sigh'," ARIEL 29.4 (1998): 123.
- ⁴⁰ John Sutherland, "The Sound and the Fury," rev. of Fury, by Salman Rushdie, The Guardian 25 Aug. 2001 <<http://books.guardian.co.uk>>
- ⁴¹ Pico Iyer, "Salman Rushdie," Time in partnership with CNN" 5 Nov. 2006, 26 Feb 2008. Time Inc. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article>>
- ⁴² Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands" 15.

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