

SALMAN RUSHDIE

CROSS CULTURAL CONTEXTS

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Preface

This study aims to locate Salman Rushdie's works in cross cultural contexts by examining his interactions with various national cultures, ranging from Grimus to Fury with the exception of Haroun and the Sea of Stories to which it refers occasionally. It also considers his literary essays published under the title Imaginary Homelands and refers to his recent essays, entitled Step Across This Line. It is indeed a critical challenge to attempt a dissertation on the subject due to the voluminous critical commentary on the author's work. However, it has been felt necessary to delineate Salman Rushdie's works in a multicultural perspective because more than any Indian author writing in English, he occupies a hybrid status with reference to British as well as American literature. He has also written about Pakistan in Shame, and about Indian politics and culture in Midnight's Children. In The Satanic Verses he has recorded the plight of displaced Asians in Britain and in The Moor's Last Sigh has given expression to the composite heritage of India by highlighting the hybrid culture and glory of the Moors. He has also designated the multicultural aspects of American culture, its mixture of Polish, Italian, Greek, Jewish, Spanish, French, Latin as well as its ethnic "Red" Indian culture in his The Ground Beneath Her Feet and his last novel, Fury. To move around in this kaleidoscopic scene of poly-culture is almost to feel the centripetal and centrifugal forces of cultural syncretism, which sometimes explode in a blitzkrieg of disparate cultures with a tenuous attempt at unity and at other times we find a suitable point of reference, where all cultural perspective may dialectically interact with each other to produce a multi-layered referentiality of meaning and existence.

This study begins by examining the existing critical commentary on Rushdie through the past three decades and shows the lacunae in critical studies, thereby explaining the necessity of the present dissertation. In this way the first chapter indicates and describes the context of critical opinion, against which studies on Rushdie's hybrid culture like that of the present, ought to be placed. Thus it shows how this dissertation explores the theme of identity with reference to the artist's personality, which in Rushdie may be termed as both acentric and ahistorical because it transcends the geographical boundary of space as well as the historical limitations of space.

The second chapter is entitled "The Theoretical basis of Cultural Pluralism in Rushdie: The Post-Colonial Scenario", where attempt has been made to locate the migrant artist in the complex project of revisiting, remembering and interrogating the colonial past. The site of cultural collaboration has been explained in terms of both collision as well as collusion between the coloniser and the colonised. It is argued that the overall strategy of dismantling the colonial project entails a theory of the "hybridisation" of discourse and power. Such strategies implicate the reformation of identity in strategies of subversion that redirect the gaze of the discriminated back upon the source of colonial power. In this sense, Rushdie may be said to enact the role of the colonial hybrid, who articulates in himself an ambivalent space, where authority itself is questioned and negated, thereby modifying the conditions of dominance into grounds of intervention. In this manner, Rushdie is seen to subvert the novel of empire into the novel against the empire itself.

In this chapter the theoretical basis of Rushdie's hybrid status has been explained in terms of a double perspective, wherein the author as migrant has been designated as being both insider and outsider in the worlds he inhabits. The migrant as exile has been theoretically explained as being situated in an in-

between position, hovering between nations, cultures and ideologies. Therefore any appreciation of Rushdie is bound to start from such a critical premise which interrogates concepts like nationhood, identity and the postcolonial condition.

The third chapter illustrates the theoretical basis of Rushdie's cultural plurality by analysing his literary and cultural essays collected under the title, Imaginary Homelands. In these essays written during the years 1981-1991, Rushdie has attempted to explain and illustrate the proliferation of cultures across national boundaries through the use of English as a world language. As a migrant, Rushdie defends his position at the confluence of cultures by illustrating his sense of loss as well his sense of having gained something. Being culturally displaced, all migrant authors possess a partial or fragmentary approach to experience. And yet, Rushdie finds their liminal status highly compelling and challenging because it stamps their works with themes of quest, a quest not for real homelands but for countries of imagination, where geographical boundaries and historical limitations have been lost. Again, the migrant himself incarnates the clash of cultures in his use of English, which he modifies and adopts for his own purposes, creating in the process a very different language from that of the British. In this chapter, Rushdie's inclination to magical realism has been explained by referring to his own ideological standpoint and which aligns him with other exponents of the genre like Gunter Grass and Marquez.

The fourth chapter analyses Grimus, Rushdie's first novel from a multicultural perspective, illustrating his art of mythical transposition whereby he places his protagonists in foreign cultures to bring about their heterogeneity. In Grimus this is done through his use of the metaphors of alchemy, anagrams and imaginary characters like that of the Gorf and the Flapping Eagle.

The fifth chapter deals with Midnight's Children. It explains the hybrid status of the novel and shows how Rushdie uses the circumstances surrounding

the individual's spatial dislocation in the post-independence era to interrogate postcolonial identity and history. This chapter explains how Rushdie's novel is not merely a commentary on cultural plurality and the textuality of history but also embodies his supreme attempt to portray the fantastic and the real in a hybridisation of the English language. In effect, Midnight's Children becomes one of the best examples of magic realism.

The sixth chapter deals with Shame. Rushdie's fiction shows the cross-cultural contexts in the characters, who themselves illustrate the operations of freedom, absolute and mythic, by belonging everywhere and nowhere. The reality of Pakistan is shown to be fragmentary at best. In this country which is both real and imaginary, Shame is seen to symbolise an emotion which is found in all kinds of nations, societies, histories.

The seventh chapter again elaborates how Rushdie's protagonists are able to choose a certain adopted country and its culture as a substitute for their own homes and questions and the possibility of locating one's roots in a foreign country especially with reference to Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses. The migrant as well as the postcolonial has been situated between cultural collectives or what has been termed as a "Third Space" wherein he accepts and celebrates his fragmentation of identity as pure liberation from all sorts of constraints. This chapter positions Saladin in such a state of positive hybridity. The disparate cultural roles of the migrant in Saladin have been thoroughly examined in this context.

Chapter eight shows how The Moors Last Sigh contains Rushdie's hybrid and philosophic vision of his birthplace, the Indian subcontinent. This varied cultural panorama has been incarnated in the story of the last member of the Moors, called Moraes Zogoiby. Here, the complexities of the colonial encounter become evident in Rushdie's analysis of the trans-historical situation

in that of Mooristhan and Hindusthan, where the hybridity of the colonial subject is questioned.

Chapter nine illustrates the cultural plurality of Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama in The Ground Beneath Her Feet. This chapter shows how Rushdie's novel positions the migrant in cultural cross currents, highlighting his rootlessness and exile and despair. In the stories of the mutant and the migrant of Vina and Ormus we find Rushdie's illustration of varied cross cultural encounters, which show such characters in constant metamorphosis and change and where there can be no stable reality and identity.

In chapter ten, the play of migrant metaphors within the arena of cross cultural contexts becomes focused in the story and lifetimes of Malik Solanka, with reference to Rushdie's novel Fury. Both the positive and negative aspects of the American attempts towards repackaging identity and the coalescing of the fiction of migrant metaphors within one dominant trope of Solanka's exploits have been analysed in Fury. Like Solanka, his heroines have also been shown to embody the power of fury as creative energy, which can transform cultures in multicultural America.

The conclusion once again emphasises how Rushdie has come to locate himself at the centre of several cultural cross currents and has thereby fashioned his own particular brand of hybrid identity and ontology in the postcolonial context. His delineation of both the positive and negative aspects of his hybrid culture in a hybrid language is unique in postcolonial literature because of his frankness and acceptance of changing values in a rapid transitional world.

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Contents

Preface.....	i-v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Contents.....	vii
List of Abbreviations.....	viii
Chapter I:	
The Critical Scene.....	1-18
Chapter II:	
The Theoretical Basis of Cultural Pluralism in Salman Rushdie: the Postcolonial Scenario.....	19-66
Chapter III:	
Imaginary Homelands.....	67-93
Chapter IV:	
Grimus.....	94-109
Chapter V:	
Midnight's Children.....	110-140
Chapter VI:	
Shame.....	141-155
Chapter VII:	
The Satanic Verses.....	156-183
Chapter VIII:	
The Moor's Last Sigh.....	184-203
Chapter IX:	
The Ground Beneath Her Feet.....	204-222
Chapter X:	
Fury.....	223-245
Chapter XI:	
Conclusion.....	246-249
Select Bibliography.....	250-262

List of Abbreviations

G	:	<u>Grimus</u>
F	:	<u>Fury</u>
I.H.	:	<u>Imaginary Homelands</u>
M.C.	:	<u>Midnight's Children</u>
M.L.S.	:	<u>The Moor's Last Sigh</u>
S.V.	:	<u>The Satanic Verses</u>
T.G.B.H.F.	:	<u>The Ground Beneath Her Feet</u>

Chapter I

The Critical Scene

Salman Rushdie, the Indian-born British novelist was born in Bombay in 1947. He is the author of eight novels — Grimus (1974), Midnight's Children (1981), Shame (1983), The Satanic Verses (1988), Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990), The Moor's Last Sigh (1996), The Ground Beneath Her Feet (1999) and Fury (2001), and a collection of short stories entitled East, West (1990). He has also published four works of non-fiction — The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey (1987), Imaginary Homelands: Essay and Criticism 1981-1991 (1991), The Wizard of Oz (1992) and Step Across This Line: Collected Non-Fiction 1992-2002 (2002). Salman Rushdie was awarded Germany's Author of the Year Award for his novel The Satanic Verses in 1989. In 1993, Midnight's Children was adjudged the "Booker of Bookers", the best novel to have won the Booker Prize in its first twenty five years.

For well over a quarter century Salman Rushdie has been a gigantic literary figure across the world. His Midnight's Children (1981) has given a new direction as well as orientation to fiction and especially to post-colonial writing. It is primarily the multicultural aspects of his writing, along with several layers of meaning, explicit as well as implicit,

within the intertextual richness of his novels, that has made him the foremost exponent of postcolonial fiction. But for him, postcolonial fiction would have remained where it was. Since he has been a much discussed author, it is supremely difficult to compile a critical overview of critical studies, bearing upon his works. However, as this thesis directly focuses upon the multicultural aspects of his work, attempt will be made to delineate those segments of criticism, directly relevant to the object of this study. Again, such an attempt must be securely foregrounded against the past and current critical scenario, thus providing an apt starting point for the present critical evaluation. But even before we undertake such a venture, it is worthwhile to remember that in the domain of critical observations on Rushdie, the earliest collection of essays may be found in 1982 by Maria Couto in Encounter, Uma Parameswaran in Toronto South Asian Review, and Tariq Ali in New Left Review. Although Midnight's Children was highly acclaimed by critics, it was actually in 1988-89 that the literary world was shaken by controversy over the publication of The Satanic Verses in 1988. It gave rise to what came to be known as the "Rushdie Affair" and highly polemical views began to be expressed, sometimes to the complete exclusion of any mention of his novels. The inter-cultural conflict which ensued had serious repercussions on Rushdie the person as well as Rushdie the novelist. However, with the publication of his later novels Rushdie has emerged from the political and religious quagmire and since has been re-embraced by the literary world.

An overview of existing criticism on Rushdie is a vast project and can be charted under specific genres or types of literary criticism. Rather if we go by decades then a clear picture of the Rushdie canon emerges. During the end of 1980s, one of the most important features of the Rushdie canon may be located in the critical orientation in postcolonial studies sparked off by Bill Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in their seminal critical enterprise, entitled The Empire Writes Back (1989). Ashcroft *et al.* has shown how postcolonial literature questions the Eurocentric ethos. Postcolonial texts owe their uniqueness to their hybrid character and here Ashcroft *et al.* show and how Rushdie's Midnight's Children "illustrates the possibilities of undoing the assumption of logocentric texts" by mixing the written word with the oral narrative traditions of both ancient India as well as that of the Arabs (1989, 184). Different cultures interact and mediate in order to illustrate the notion that writing is "a social practice with an indelible social function" (1989, 185).

Linda Hutcheon's The Politics of Post-modernism (1989) stresses this hybrid character of Rushdie's notion of history. She opines that Midnight's Children works against the logocentric discourse and against all sense of unity and synthesis, perceived in Western narratives since there is no mediation between "narrative form and social ground" (Hutcheon, 1989, 62). This hybridity gives to Rushdie's Midnight's Children its unique character because it was the first novel of its kind.

In fact, a novel like Midnight's Children works to foreground the totalising impulse of western — imperialistic — modes of history — writing by confronting it with indigenous Indian models of history. Though Saleem narrates in English, in 'Anglepoised-lit writing', his intertexts for both writing history and writing fiction are doubled: they are, on the one hand, from Indian legends, films, and literature and, on the other, from the west — The Tin Drum, Tristan Shandy, One Hundred Years of Solitude and so on (Hutcheon, 1989, 62).

Rushdie's writing has thus made a new departure in postcolonial fiction by bringing together several cultures, both Eastern and Western and several narrative traditions. Thus, once for all, he has challenged what Linda Hutcheon has termed "the impulse to totalise" in fiction writing by his attempt to "contest the entire notion of continuity in history and its writing" (Hutcheon, 1989, 63).

Timothy Brennan in his profound study, Salman Rushdie and the Third World (1989) has located the importance of Rushdie in postcolonial studies by explaining why and how he became so successful in the Western world by popularising the subcontinent more than Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya and Raja Rao or Nehru could have ever done.

Empire, after all, is not something done to others: it is a relationship, and it is in Rushdie's Britain that the effects of that relationship on the First World are most striking. The imperial leaders of the West for over two centuries have been English-speaking countries whose sense of literary tradition has evaded the global realities Rushdie forces into view (1989, X).

Rushdie's literary ambitions have been aptly summed up in the following comment by Brennan:

His novels — unthinkable before the age of Khomeini, Ortega and Mandela — have made modernist style a vehicle for news extravaganza, street barricade and coup. He has done what few writers in any tradition have done: recorded the totality of neo-colonialism as a world system, with its absurd combinations of satellite broadcasts and famine, popular uprisings and populist rent, forced migrations and tourism. One might say he brings British literature up to date. For he occupies more than any other contemporary writer a special place at the crossroads of the English literary scene; the old 'Novel of Empire' which he transforms and which (as he points out) still exists as television special, film and travelogue for the popular magazines; 'Commonwealth' literature — that fictional

entry created by scholars in the provinces... (1989, XII-XIII).

It is precisely in these cross cultural contexts that Rushdie ought to be placed. In this Brennan shares his critical opinion with Aijaz Ahmad and others by making Rushdie a cultural interlocutor in the realm of politics and literature. As Brennan points out:

‘we do not live in three worlds but in one’, mutually affected and affecting. Obviously, the term (*i.e.*, the Third World) has less to do with what country essentially is...than what it does. It has a political not a sociological meaning (1989, XIV).

In his study Brennan has shown how Rushdie’s “multicultural experience of exile conferred advantages only at the expense of his own identity” in his formulation of such heroes with a hybrid character like the Flapping Eagle (Grimus), Omar Khayyam (Shame), the figure of the ‘Chamcha’ in Midnight’s Children, Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses, Moraes Zogoiby in The Moor’s Last Sigh, Ormus Cama in The Ground Beneath Her Feet and Malik Solanka in Fury (Brennan, 1989, 76). Rushdie’s hybrid text, Grimus is the first novel of its kind in the Rushdie’s genre, which is unique in the manner of its mixing contemporary authors, historical personages and legendary beings “in a kind of international compendium of myth” (Brennan, 1989, 74). It is this display of international influences, “only partially and secondarily rooted

in the East”, that is simultaneously a mapping out of allegiances and an attempt which may direct what fictional forms Rushdie’s ethnic and racial alienation in England might take (Brennan, 1989, 75). Rushdie’s protagonists are all born and located in a multicultural context. They are “Chameleons” or “Changelings”, speaking in all sorts of voices, and incarnating in themselves “all things to all men and nothing to any man” (Grimus, 36). Each word of Rushdie’s characters become the “word of a different being” and he is engaged in an eternal search “for a suitable voice to speak in” (Grimus, 36).

Such themes of cultural plurality and multi-ethnic identity in Rushdie becomes the focal point of critical enterprise of Linda Hutcheon’s another treatise, A Poetic of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction (1988). K.J. Phillips’s essay “Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children: Models for Storytelling, East and West” (1989), Dieter Riemenschneider’s article “History and the Individual in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children and Anita Desai’s Clear Light of Day (1984), Kelly Hewson’s essay “Opening up the Universe a little more: Salman Rushdie and the Migrant as Story-teller” (1989) and Chelva Kanaganayakam’s article “Myth and Fabulosity in Midnight’s Children” (1987) emphasise the cross cultural contexts of his novels by showing Rushdie’s fusion of myth, history and narratives, belonging to several traditions.

During the 1990s a fresh impetus in cultural studies was imparted by the publication of Homi Bhabha's Nation and Narration (1990). Bhabha's pathbreaking comments on the "liminal image of the nation" which "haunts the idea of the nation", as well as "the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live in it" created ripples in the domain of postcolonial studies (Bhabha, 1990, 1). The idea of the nation as a monolith and circumscribed cultural entity was challenged. But here we have to admit that it was Rushdie's multicultural approach to nation and community that gave post-colonial literature its appeal and popularity. Bhabha's theoretical standpoint confirmed Rushdie's ideas on transnationality and migration. Bhabha's fresh insight into the "system of cultural signification" which made possible the nation's "coming into being" and which emphasised the consequent "instability of knowledge" formulated anew the notion of "national space" as an arena of conflicting and competing discourse (1990, 2). According to Bhabha, the emergence of the political 'rationality' of the nation as

a form of narrative — textual strategies, metaphoric displacements, sub-texts and figurative stratagems — has its own history (1990, 2).

Bhabha's famous comments challenge the unified and unitary idea of national culture, which exists in antagonism to the "other" that is outside or beyond its boundaries. The question of national borders becomes imaginary and the issue of external/internal becomes in itself a

subject and process of hybridity. Hybridity itself becomes a complex site of meaningful activity, where conflicting cultures interpenetrate and thereby generate new areas of meaning (Bhabha, 1990, 4). Rushdie himself elaborates this state of in-between(ness) in culture and politics as well as literature in his extended collection of essays from 1981 to 1991, specifically from his position as a migrant artist, hovering between nations, cultural entities and ethnic communities. From Grimus to Fury, Rushdie has celebrated this ambivalent space in and between nations, situating his protagonists at the cross roads of a new transnational culture. Such themes have been discussed from textual angles in G.R. Taneja and R.K. Dhawan's edition of a conglomeration of essays entitled The Novels of Salman Rushdie (1992). The appeal of Rushdie's Midnight's Children has crossed all frontiers of nations and Klaus Borner's essay "The Reception of Midnight's Children in West Germany" once again affirms the popularity of Rushdie in transnational contexts. Rushdie's blending of fact and fiction has been brought out in Ron Shepherd's article "The Metaphor of Shame: Rushdie's Fact-Fiction". The relation between history and politics has been the focal point of critical essays by Tariq Rahman ("Politics in the Novels of Salman Rushdie"), R.S. Pathak ("History and the Individual in the Novels of Rushdie"), Satya Brat Singh ("Rudy Wiebe, Paul Scott and Salman Rushdie: Historians Distanced from History") and R.K. Dhawan ("History and the Novel: Some Significant Statements in Imaginary Homelands").

Aijaz Ahmad has projected his detailed considerations of the work of Frederic Jameson, Edward Said and Salman Rushdie and of migrant intellectuals in In Theory (1992). In effect, he has amplified the critical standpoint of Homi Bhabha in his essay on Salman Rushdie's "Shame", where he speaks of the

great prolixity and heterogeneity of cultural productions in our spaces, both of archival and non-archival kinds which simply exceed the theoretical terms of "Third World Literature" (Ahmad, 1992, 125).

From 1990 onwards critical commentary on Rushdie's works are directed towards locating and explaining his position in the realm of "Third World Literature" or "Commonwealth Literature", both of which are pejorative terms and which are modified in a critical overview, which positions Rushdie in the counter-canon of "Third World Literature" (Ahmad, 1992, 125). Indeed, as Aijaz Ahmad explains, Rushdie's position as a novelist becomes ambiguous in terms of his non-Western forms of narrativisation in his texts, that is, his Indianness as against his lines of descent from European modernism and postmodernism. Rushdie belongs both to the East as well as to the West. It is here that Rushdie's idea of migrancy (which has been later explained in his collection of essays entitled Imaginary Homelands) may be explained in fictional as well as real terms. The cross cultural contexts of the migrant artist may, therefore, be located both in terms of history and ontology. Such is the

ideological standpoint of Ahmad, who places Rushdie between two poles of “ideological construction” — the individual’s absolute and mythic freedom and his anchorage in history and politics (Ahmad, 1992, 126-27).

Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak, in her brilliant treatise “Reading the Satanic Verses” in the Postmodern Arts (1995) edited by Nigel Wheale has spoken of The Satanic Verses as a transnational document, since it can never be restricted to nation, religion or a particular cultural divide. She finds it difficult to locate it historically or politically in postcolonial terms. According to her

the general mode for the post-colonial is citation, re-inscription, re-routing the historical. The Satanic Verses cannot be placed within the European avant-garde, but the successes and failures of the European avant-garde are available to it (Wheale, 1995, 221).

She insists that the praxis and politics of life can never be consonant with the aesthetic dimension of a work of art. On that, there can be no specific context of history, biography, psychology, politics and religion, in which the writer may be foregrounded. No system of cultural signification can solely legitimise a text in this manner or may be said to possess it. In this context she analyses The Satanic Verses from a postmodern angle and judges it to be a hybrid text, sandwiched between two identities: migrant and national. She has analysed The Satanic Verses as many complex, fragmented national representations mixing the tragic

and the comic genres. It is unique because it illustrates the ambivalence of the “postcolonial” who may “keep himself completely separated from the metropolis in the metropolis as the fanatic exile” (Wheale, 1995: 224). Throughout her study she has undertaken to highlight the several roles of the migrant as exile, as social reformer, as metropolitan, as a transgression, as a representative and critique of Islam, as an instance of male bonding and unbonding, and has encapsulated the status of the migrant as paradigm.

In Colonialism/Postcolonialism (1998) Ania Loomba has argued that nationalist struggles as well as pan-nationalist movements can never be understood within the parameters of current theories of hybridity. But it is also true that identity can never be explained in terms of roots, history and ethnicity but also has reference to theories of hybridisation, pluralism and tolerance. Loomba cautions us against facile notions of hybridity, migrancy and exile, which position themselves against ideologies of nation and ethnicity. We should rather attempt to

locate and evaluate their ideological, political and emotional valencies, as well as their intersections in the multiple histories of colonialism and post-coloniality (Loomba, 1995, 183).

In this context, Loomba’s criticism on Rushdie’s The Moor’s Last Sigh occupies a hybrid status; between a celebration and a critique of competing versions of the Indian nation. Indeed, the lineage of Rushdie’s

Moor “invokes the intricate histories of such a hybridity” (Loomba, 1995, 208).

Satish C. Aikant in his essay “Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children: The Middle Ground of Diaspora in Post-Colonialism” claims that one of the defining and sustaining coordinates of post-coloniality in the domain of Third World Literature is migrancy. Just as earlier postcolonial critics, Aikant insists by way of qualification that migrancy is both a geographical and an ontological condition. He locates Rushdie in a multiplicity of subject positions. A diasporan writer used his exile/ self-exile to amalgamate the universal and the national strands to create an art that would embody his real as well as imagined experience. A migrant writer, at any rate, carries a baggage of memories that must find some transmutation into a proper narrative framework (1996, 213).

The 1990s have witnessed a heavy emphasis on the theme of hybridity and cross cultural contexts in the domain of critical works on Rushdie. He has been re-read and re-interpreted by scholars like Fletcher who has edited Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie (1994), Michael Gorra (After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie, 1997), Luisa Juarez Hervas (“An irreverent chronicle: History and Fiction in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children”, 1995), Jean M. Kane (“The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History in Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children”, 1996), Fritz-Wilhelm Neumann (“The Moor’s Lash Sigh: Rushdie’s Intercultural Family Saga”, 1999), Tim Parvell (“Salman

Rushdie: from colonial politics to postmodern poetics”, 1996) and Aruna Srivastava (“The Empire Writes Back”: Language and History in Shame and Midnight’s Children, 1990).

The close of the twentieth century also witnessed the publication of a collection of essays on Midnight’s Children (1999) with Meenakshi Mukherjee as its editor. The collection contains diverse essays bearing on the novel’s cultural and historical aspects like Harish Trivedi’s “Salman the Funtoosh: magic Bilingualism in Midnight’s Children”, Neil Ten Kortenaar’s “Midnight’s Children and the Allegory of History”, Richard Cronin’s “The Indian English Novel: Kim and Midnight’s Children”, Josna E. Rege’s “Victim into Protagonist? Midnight’s Children and the Post-Rushdie National Narratives of the Eighties”, and Rukshini Bhaya Nair’s “History as Gossip in Midnight’s Children”, among others. In her brilliant introduction, Meenakshi Mukherjee has outlined Rushdie’s cross cultural contexts:

Salman Rushdie’s biography is part of postmodern history today. The circumstances of his spatial dislocation and consequent cultural hybridity are shared by other diasporic writers of the world, but when in 1989 his life became the site for a clash of civilisational forces — between orthodox Islamic and liberal humanist world views — Rushdie became the focal point of a major public debate.... For the next few years, everybody — regardless of whether one

had read his book or not — felt compelled to take positions on what had come to be known as ‘the Rushdie affair’ (1999, 13).

Researches on the cross cultural contexts of Rushdie’s fiction continue even today. David Punter’s treatise entitled Postcolonial Imaginings (2000), highlights Rushdie’s essential hybridity by associating it with the production of monsters in art and literature. With the instance of Frankenstein before him, he positions Rushdie within the discourse of power, illustrating how he has been instrumental in creating such violent fictions bordering on irrationality and which are essentially hybrid in origin. With regard to such monstrosity of hybrid “forms” he makes the following comment:

Rather we might say they represent those genuinely ‘hybrid’ forms that stand, as it were, at the boundary of what is and what is not acceptable, what is to be allowed to come to the warm hearth of society and what is to be consigned to the outer wilderness (Punter, 2000, 111).

According to Punter, it is these endless waves of political corruption and nepotism that had transformed women like Sufiya Zenobia into a monster.

Ismail S. Talib in his penetrating research on The Language of Post-colonial Literatures (2000) has located in Rushdie the characteristics of a hybrid author by comparing him favourably with James Joyce, who,

like him, represents for many postcolonial writers the central figure of the writer, standing outside the English tradition and yet successfully blending the English language to accommodate his Irish subject matter and language. Rushdie, like Joyce, is a hybrid author since he uses the machinery of English language to embody his cultural difference. Like Joyce, Rushdie writes back at the empire, using its very medium to undercut its ideological supremacy (Talib, 2002, 28-29).

Rajeshwar Mittapalli and Joel Kuortti has recently edited a series of new critical insights entitled Salman Rushdie: New Critical Insights (2003) in two volumes which contain exhaustive analyses on Rushdie's cross cultural contexts. There are illuminating essays on Grimus by Peterson and Joel Kuortti, on Midnight's Children by John Clement Ball and Paolo Piciucco, on Shame by Mujeebuddin and Neluka Silva and on Rushdie's later novels like The Moor's Last Sigh and the Ground Beneath Her Feet by J.C. Ball, Balaswamy, Celia M. Wallhead, Michael Hensen and Mike Petry among others.

In spite of such rich heritage of critical opinion bearing on Rushdie's hybridity, much remains unexplored. At best, most critics have stressed on an isolated aspect of his hybrid vision. They have yet to extend their analysis to a consistent exploration of Rushdie's major novels and critical essays. Moreover, the issue of hybridity has not been explained from all possible angles by such critics. This thesis seeks to locate and explain the status of the migrant artist in relation to his own

birthplace and that of his adopted country. The migrant artist inhabits an arena where conflicting cultures intersect, cancel each other or produce their own symbiosis, which is never permanent but subjected to change as always. Cultural constructs are forever subject to mutation and qualification. Rushdie is the epitome of the migrant artist, who is always at the centre of conflicting claims of disparate cultures. He has become the site of cultural contests. Ideologically, he belongs to no particular culture or nation. It is the aim of this dissertation to explore this externally shifting, chameleon-like character of Rushdie in his critical essays and in his novels. His works are full of cultural cross currents because of his encyclopaedic nature. No other author in recent times has written in so familiar terms about India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Britain, South America and the United States. Rushdie seems at home in all of these nations. It is his unique stamp of hybridity that has given postcolonial literature its multi-cultural dimension. It is also the objective of this thesis to show how Rushdie brings together different national cultures, races and ideologies into a rich cultural symbiosis.

This dissertation takes off from previous cultural studies on Rushdie and raises some fundamental questions ignored earlier by critics. This study raises and answers the questions as to how far Rushdie's characters are able to identify a specific country and culture as their own homeland. It investigates whether at all it is possible for the migrant to fix his roots in an adopted country and to what extent does he become



alienated from his mother country. It also delineates the subject of identity in relation to considerations of home in cross cultural contexts. It attempts to show how the search for identity transcends geographical boundaries and the demarcations of time. It also explores the migrant artist's creation of imaginary homelands instead of real ones in fictions. An important aspect of this study is its adumbration of the basis of the migrant's personality as being acentric and ahistorical since Rushdie likes to quarrel with history. Rushdie's fictions pose themselves as alternatives to history, because the very environment in which characters find themselves in Grimus, The Satanic Verses and Midnight's Children belie the very basis of reality.

Chapter II

Theoretical Basis of Cultural Pluralism in Salman Rushdie: the Postcolonial Scenario

I

Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' has drawn our attention to Western criticism which is primarily interested in conserving the subject to the West, or the West as subject in various forms of 'epistemic violence' directed towards the constitution of the colonial subject as the Other. In her penchant analysis of the colonial project, she explains that:

it is no more than to ask that the subtext of the palimpsest narrative of imperialism be recognised as 'subjected knowledge', a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate.... This is not to describe 'the way things really were'... or to privilege the narrative of history as imperialism as the best version of history. It is rather, to offer an account of how an explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one... (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, 25).

In her analysis Spivak raises several important issues. Firstly, she positions us within the angular field of 'representation' of 'responsibility'. Secondly that the 'complex notion of subalternity is pertinent to any academic enterprise which concerns itself with historically determined relationships of dominance and subordination (Gandhi, 1999, 2). Gandhi has taken pains in pointing that today postcolonial studies has emerged as both a battleground as well as a meeting point for a medley of critical theories. Thus, postcolonial studies become a theoretical attempt to emerge with reference to particular historical conditions. This attempt to conceptualise the complex situation following the aftermath of colonial occupation may be understood as a 'disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering and crucially interrogating the colonial past (1999, 4). In other words a return to the colonial scene envisages a 'relationship of reciprocal antagonism and desire between coloniser and colonised. And it is the enfolding of this troubled and troubling relationship that we might start to discern the ambivalent prehistory of the postcolonial condition (1999, 4).

Homi Bhabha has attempted to produce and establish an autonomous position for the colonial within the domains of hegemonic discourse, and this entails an enunciation of different politics. His sustained effort lies in considering the notion implicit in Said's Orientalism, that the power of discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser. The main aim of colonial discourse is to conserve the colonised

as a racially degenerate population in order to justify the conquest of rule. Maintaining that relations of power and knowledge function ambivalently, he believes that a discursive system, split in enunciation, constituted a variously positioned native who by appropriating the terms of the dominant ideology, is able to intercede against or resist this mode of construction.

Benita Parry in 'Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse' has pointed out that:

In dissenting from analysis ascribing an intentionality and unidirectionality to colonial power which, in Said's words, enabled Europe to advance metaphorically upon the Orient, Bhabha insists that this not only ignores representation as a concept articulating both the historical and the fantasmatic, but unifies the subject of colonial enunciation in a fixed position as the passive object of discursive domination (...) and by showing the wide range of stereotypes and the shifting subject positions of assigned to the colonised in the colonialist text, he sets out to liberate the colonial from its debased, inscription as Europe's monolithic and shackled Other, and into an autonomous native 'difference'.... For Bhabha, the subaltern has spoken (...)

In his later work Culture and Imperialism, Edward Said has changed his position and confessed that

neither culture nor imperialism is inert, and so the connections between them as historical experiences are dynamic and complex. My principal aim is not to separate but to connect and I am interested in this for the main (...) ontological reason that cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with actuality.' (Said, 1994, p. 15)

Later, in chapter three of the same book he enunciates the problems in his study of the relationship of the West with its 'dominated cultural Other' and which is not to be dismissed simply as an 'unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors', but is to be viewed as a way of comprehending and assessing the formation of meaning of Western cultural practices in themselves (Said, 1994, p. 230). And that the glaring disparity in power between the West and non-West should be considered if we are to understand a cultural focus like the novel where ethnographic and historical discourse combine with certain kinds of poetry and opera and where allusions to structures are based on this disparity.

One of the problems of post-colonial theory lies in formulating, or in the strategies, to be adopted by reading the post-colonial intellectual in history and fiction. Does he at all possess a voice which needs to be made articulate? Again, does his voice ring with the authenticity and power to

'make' itself heard on both the national as well as the global scene. Benita Parry has noted Spivak's deliberate refusal to grant the native voice its sovereignty of authority which is quite against her strategy in recognising the voice of the unsaid, the marginalised in modes of Western feminist discourse, criticism which reproduce and foreclose colonialist structures and imperialist axioms –

Demanding of disciplinary standards that 'equal rights of historical, geographical, linguistic specificity' be granted to the 'thoroughly stratified larger theatre of the Third World' (...) Spivak in her own writings severely restricts (eliminates?) the space in which the colonised can be written back into history, even when 'interventionist possibilities' are exploited through the deconstructive strategies devised by the post-colonial intellectual (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, p. 40).

Homi Bhabha, however, through recovering how the waste discourse was interrogated by the natives in their own accounts, produces an autonomous position for the colonial within the confines of the hegemonic discourse. Bhabha's effort lies in de-constituting the structure of the colonial and bringing the colonised on to the centre-stage. Thus he opposes Said's ideology in Orientalism which invests the coloniser with primacy over the discourses of the colonised. Bhabha's approach open-up the problematics of representation as a concept involving both the

historic and the fantastic, thus negating the classic colonialist ideology of the discursive domination of the subject as a passive entity.

Bhabha in his 'Signs Taken for Wonders' questions the ambivalence of authority in colonial articulation:

Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of the 'content' of an other culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power — hierarchy, normalisation, marginalisation, and so forth. For domination is achieved through a process of disavowal that denies the *difference* of colonialist power... (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, 33)'.

Without the production of differentiating individuations through which discriminatory practices that can map out the colonised, the exercise of colonialist authority can never be achieved. In fact, as Bhabha takes pains to explain that any form of colonial, authority requires modes of discrimination, be they cultural racial, racial or administrative, in order to negate a stable unitary assumption of collectivity. The colonialist foreign body representative of the *conquered country* usurps the rights of

the colonised and projects itself as the 'whole', but actually the right of representation is based on its radical difference from the subjugated country. Such a double strategy can only be made possible through the strategy of dismantling the colonial project and which entails a theory of the 'hybridisation' of discourse and power.

The notion of a monolithic power or the idea of a dialectical power struggle between self and the Other or a discrimination between mother culture and alien cultures does not necessarily relate to the discriminatory effects of the discourse of cultural colonialism.

Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the *reference* of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different — a mutation, a hybrid (...). To be authoritative, its rules of recognition must reflect consensual knowledge or opinion, to be powerful, these rules of recognition must be breached, in order to represent the exorbitant objects of discrimination that be beyond its purview (Ashcroft, *et al.*, 1997, 34).

Bhabha locates the notion of hybridity in the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its changing forces and fixities. He also signifies the strategic reversal of the process of domination through

disavowal Hybridity may also be understood as the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It illustrates an ironic and necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. Hybridity does away with the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but re-implicates its identities in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. This is so because “the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory — or (...) a negative transparency” (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, p. 35). Thus, if the discriminatory effects enable the authorities to keep an eye on them, their proliferating difference evades that eye, escapes that surveillance. In this sense those discriminated can alternatively force a recognition of the immediacy and articulacy of authority. Actually, what has happened is that the “colonial discourse has reached that point when, faced with the hybridity of its objects, the presence of power is revealed as something other than what its rules of recognition assert” (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, p. 35).

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridisation rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent regression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional

discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion, founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention (...). The recognition of authority, however, requires a validation of its source that must be immediately, even intuitively apparent (...) and held in common (...). What is left unacknowledged is the paradox of such a demand for proof and the resulting ambivalence for positions of authority (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, 35).

Abdennebi Ben Baya in "Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity" has noted Bhabha's illustration of hybridity as a subversion of the narratives of colonial power and dominant cultures. In alliance with Tom Nairn, Bhabha thinks that resistance can produce confusion in the minds of imperialist authors like Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling and E.M. Forster. Whereas Nairn shows their colonialist rhetoric to be disproportionate to the real decadent economic and political situation of late Victorian England, Bhabha investigates this imperial delirium for curing the gaps within the English text, gaps which may be grasped as the sign of a discontinuous history,

an establishment of the English book. They mark the disturbance of its authorities representating the uncanny forces of race, sexuality, violence, cultural and even climatic differences which emerge in the colonial

discourse as the mixed and split texts of hybridity. If the English book is read as a production of hybridity, then, it no longer simply commands authority (Ben Baya, 2000, p. 2).

Aimé Césaire has urged that the indeterminate form of postcolonial ethics brings on the recognition that oppressors are themselves the victims of their own modes of oppression. Césaire is of the opinion that

colonisation works to *decivilise* the coloniser, to *brutalise* him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism (Césaire, 1972, 13).

More often than not Césaire highlights the manner in which all imperfect societies exploit their own human agents of oppression. Such emphasis on the victimization of the victor is not an effecting eliding of the suffering of the oppressed. Rather, one of main thrusts of postcolonial ideology is to engender a complex system of cross-identification - of ethical hybridity — connecting former political antagonists. L. Gandhi points out that we should always balance our perception of the 'contaminated' victory with the notion of the victim as a 'sometimes collaborator, sometimes competitor, with the oppressive system' (Gandhi, 1994, 138).

Any postnational and postcolonial utopia, configures within itself the close and ambiguous contiguity between masters and slaves. Against the rhetoric of anti-colonial cultural essentialism and the theoretical impasse of anti-colonial nationalisms, Nandy foregrounds the hybrid and unstable identities of both coloniser, and colonised. Thus

...a violent and oppressive society produces its own special brands of victimhood and privilege and ensures a certain continuity between the victor and the defeated, the instrument and the target ... As a result none of these categories remain pure. So, even when such a culture collapses, the psychology of victimhood and privilege continues and produces a second culture (...) (Nandy, 1986, 356).

In her discussion of postcolonial theory, L. Gandhi also includes her concern for the broader relevance of the postcolonial/postnational ethic:

does it pertain only to the exigencies of the colonial encounter and its aftermath, or does it have anything to say to ethics itself about the constitution of the ethical individual? (Gandhi, 1999, 139).

Gandhi opts for Sandel's view point in Liberalism and the Limits of Justice (1982) where the latter suggests that the cognitively human ethical agent is a constitutively hybrid entity. Thus ethically speaking, an

appropriate conception of the self would involve its “inter subjective” obligations (Sandel, 1982, 62). In other words the “intrasubjective” complexity of any self contains in itself an assortment of selves within a single, individual being. Such a reading argues for a re-reading of the colonial past through an emphasis on the mutual, transformations of the coloniser and the colonised. It remains to be seen, however, whether the post colonial drift to the rhetoric of postnationalism is vitiated or pure.

II

Alba Ambert in Flight from Certainty: The Dilemma of Identity and Exile (2003) ed. by Luyat *et al.* speaks about “*The Eighth Continent*” which has been defined as an “in-between space” inhabited by a writer in exile. Alba, a Puerto Rican writer living currently in London explains that the “Eighth Continent” is a state that results by being expelled from the familiar, the loved, and from having been separated from one’s own primordial language and congenial environment. The pain of such loss becomes evident in the writer who is condemned to live in the ultimate exile of writing in a language that is not his own. Gillian Bourras is an Australian author who was born and brought up in Greece and who feels that she is forever *living-in-between, forever re-entering atmospheres, forever adjusting and readjusting*. Similarly as Nilufer Bharucha (“Flight

from Certainty”) shows that Rushdie’s fiction may be seen as an expansive discourse, which both locates and relocates its own space within the context of shifting borders, in the sense of cultural relocations and translations. And it will be well to remember here that the difference between the early writers of the *Indian diaspora* and the later ones is to be understood in the sense that the former writers were forced to live in exile, whereas for the later ones, exile became a matter of choice. In more senses than one, therefore, the experience of exile/dislocation/displacement, whether real or imaginary, according to Rushdie has become an integral part of our lives.

Despite the trials Rushdie has had to undergo, he maintains that there are distinct advantages to being a migrant for both the writer and the person as a whole. According to Rushdie to migrate is to experience deep changes and wrenches in the soul, but the migrant is not simply transformed by his act, he also transforms the new world. Migrants might well become mutants, but it is out of such hybridisation that newness can emerge. He explains in “Imaginary Homelands” that migrant writers have a “double perspective” (I.H., 19): they are both insiders and outsiders in the worlds they describe. He believes that relocation and redescription is the prerogative of the migrant narrator. Migration is a painful but emancipating process: “To be reborn, first you have to die” (The Satanic Verses, 6). Finally, Rushdie explains that the literary migrant is able to

“choose his parents.” Rushdie’s own literary parents include Cervantes, Kafka, and Melville along with some Muslim and Hindu poets and Eastern oral myths (I.H., 21).

Rushdie admits that after leaving one’s homeland for a long time, one has a tendency to romanticise, over-emphasise, or even forget certain details completely. However, Rushdie also maintains that there is an advantage in this filtering of experience. In Midnight’s Children, Rushdie uses the metaphor of a movie screen to explain the perception of a migrant:

Suppose yourself in a large cinema, and gradually moving up...until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars’ faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions...it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality (M.C., 394).

Although migrants may not be able to determine the precise historical truth of the past, they are able to ferret out what is important in the shaping of their lives.

This selective filtration of memory is made most apparent in *Midnight’s Children*. Critics have severely castigated the unreliable narration of the protagonist, Saleem, in this novel. Saleem gets numerous historical events and dates muddled up as he tries desperately to convince his readers that he is at the centre of India’s history (I.H., 24). In an essay

subsequent to the book, Rushdie reveals that these mistakes were inserted on purpose. He claims to have chosen to insert 'remembered truth' rather than literal truth' (I.H., 24). The theme of blurred remembrances builds upon that of the 'perforated sheet' in the same novel (M.C., 15). At the beginning of the story, Saleem's grandfather, Adam, falls in love with his future wife only by seeing her piece by piece through a perforated sheet. This theme of the fragmentation of vision recurs throughout the novel. Although his perception is somewhat unreliable in apprehending literal fact, the migrant is able to gain truth from this illusion. Thus migrants can find meaning in existence by situating themselves in history.

Indeed, it is quite clear in Rushdie's novels that migrants gain insight from their plight. Unfortunately, however, such insight is often silenced and devalued. By successfully blending English and Indian voices, Rushdie manages to empower the migrant. In Imaginary Homelands Rushdie writes; "We can't simply use the language the way the British did; it needs remaking for our own purpose.... To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free" (I.H., 17). In Rushdie's fictionalised immigration office a woman becomes a water buffalo, "businessmen from Nigeria grown sturdy tails, a group of holidaymakers from Senegal...have been turned into slippery snakes..." (Satanic Verses, 168). When asked how this can be, Saladin answers, "They describe us...That's all. They have the power of description and

we succumb to the pictures they construct” (S.V., 167-168). In his novels, Rushdie attempts to give voice to the voiceless. The theme of multitudinous voices is pervasive in many of Rushdie’s novels. In The Satanic Verses Saladin becomes a radio celebrity and is known as the “Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice” (60). The psychic conferences of Midnight’s Children contain one thousand children with a plurality of different languages, cultures and beliefs.

Rushdie’s most powerful tool for redescription, and hence, recreation, is his magnificent prose. With his brilliant word plays and supreme command of language, he fuses his Indian childhood with his Cambridge education. Rushdie recreated the English language by combining it with Indian colloquialisms and Urdu and Hindi words. One of his techniques is to insert Indian vernacular terms in perfect English sentences (Dhawan, 1985, 191). An excellent example of this occurs in Shame: “Barbs were flung through the same lattice: ‘Ohe, madam! Where do you think he gets your grand clothes? From handicraft emporia?’” (67) Another technique is the literal translation of Indian vernacular idiom (Dhawan, 1985 192): “May your grandsons *urinate upon your pauper’s grave*” (Shame, 17). Rushdie displays his erudition with the use of numerous literary allusions in his novels. By way of parody, Midnight’s Children contains the line: “Telepathy set me apart: telecommunications dropped me down” (M.C., 118). This parodies the

lines of T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland (Dhawan, 1985, 187): "Highbury born me, Richmond and Kew/ Undid me" (III: 292-293). By combining the oral and literary traditions of East and West, Rushdie legitimises the migrant experience and allows the migrant the opportunity to "make use, eclectically, of whatever elements from whatever sources he chooses (I.H., 16).

The duality, and eventual fusion in Rushdie's prose is mirrored in his migrant protagonists. The identity of the migrant is such that he is torn between two opposing directions. In all of Rushdie's novels the protagonists have alter-egos, or what some psychologists might refer to as the Shadow figure.

In The Satanic Verses Gibreel believes he is a prophet and is blessed with foreknowledge of future events. In Shame, although Omar complains bitterly that he is a "peripheral man", he is able to connect many different characters and becomes a matrix of different voices. Indeed, Rushdie himself embarks on a journey of self-discovery when he writes and the talent that propels him toward self-knowledge is his brilliant creativity and vibrant language.

Shame, Midnight's Children, and The Satanic Verses all deal with the death the migrant dies, the agony of mutation, and the emancipation and self-knowledge of rebirth. One can understand this unifying theme in Rushdie's works by examining his life, his deliberately chosen style of

prose, the theme of “double identity” in his novels and in his personality, and the multiple benefits that many characters reap from being migrants. In order to appreciate the work of Salman Rushdie, one must look beyond the politics surrounding his novels and study Rushdie the artist. Only then can the reader develop an appreciation of his brilliance and examine his universal insights into the domain of human experience.

The notion of conflicting powers in the idea of a dialectical power struggle between *Self* and *Other* or to a discrimination between mother culture and alien cultures does not necessarily relate to the discriminatory effects of the discourse of cultural colonialism.

Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the reference of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different — a mutation, a hybrid To be authoritative, its rules of recognition must reflect consensual knowledge or opinion, to be powerful, these rules of recognition must be breached in order to represent the exorbitant objects of discrimination that lie beyond its purview (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, 34).

Bhabha locates the notion of hybridity in the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its changing forces and fixities. He also

signifies the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal. Hybridity may also be understood as the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It illustrates an ironic and necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. Hybridity does away with the mimetic or narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identities in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power. This is so because as has already been seen, 'the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire, making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory — or ...a negative transparency (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, 35).

Bhabha admits that colonial power carefully establishes and entrenches itself by strategies of control and dominance and that, while being aware of its transient quality, it is also anxious to create the means that guarantee its economic, political and cultural endurance, through the conception, in Macaulay's words in his 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835) "of a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" — that is through the reformation of that category of people referred to by Franz Fanon in the phrase "black skin/white masks", or as 'mimic men' by V.S. Naipaul (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, 88).

On the other hand, Bhabha is immediately seen to divert his pertinent analysis by shifting the superlative certainty of the coloniser and the strategic effectiveness of his political intentions into an alarming uncertainty. Macaulay's Indian interpreters along with Naipaul's mimic men, Bhabha emphasises by the very fact that they are authorised versions of otherness, "part-objects of a metonymy of colonial desire", end up emerging as inappropriate colonial subjects (who), by now producing a partial vision of the coloniser's presence destabilise the colonial subjectivity and unsettle its authoritative centrality, and thereby corrupt its discursive purity (Ashcroft *et al.*, 1997, 88). In essence mimicry can be said to repeat rather than represent (author's emphasis), and in that very act of repetition, originality is lost, and centrality de-centered. What is left, according to Bhabha, is the trace, the impure, the artificial, the second-hand. Thus,

The series of inclusions and exclusions on which a dominant culture is premised are deconstructed by the very entry of the formerly-excluded subjects into the mainstream discourse. The dominant culture is contaminated by the linguistic and racial differences of the native self. Hybridity can thus be seen, in Bhabha's interpretation, as a counter-narrative, a critique of the canon and its exclusion of other narratives. In other words, the hybridity-acclaimers want to suggest. first, that the

colonialist discourse's ambivalence is a conspicuous illustration of its uncertainty; and second that the migration of yesterday's "savages" from their peripheral spaces to the homes of their "masters" underlies a blessing invasion that, by "Third-Worlding" the center, creates "fissures" within the very structures that sustain it (Baya, 2000, pp. 2-3).

In a similar vein, Ashis Nandy's reading of this colonial archive touches upon the implications involving a considerations of a 'postcolonial ethic' which commences by

recognising the oppressed or marginalised selves of the First and the Second world as civilisational allies in the battle against institutionalised suffering.

(Nandy, 1986, p. 348)

Nandy insists that the demarcations between colonial victors and colonised victims be replaced by a recognition of the continuity and interface, between these old antagonists. This entails a modification and challenge to the separate and *pure* identities of both victor and victim.

As the most potent instrument of culture control, the language of colonial power played an essential role in the process of colonisation. Postcolonial writers have attempted to negotiate the power dynamics regarding such tensions between the colonised and coloniser and between the indigenous and alien. Postcolonial literature itself is a battle ground in

which the active pursuit of decolonisation continues to be played out. Armed with their pens, the said authors address the dominance of imperial language as it relates to educational systems, to economic structures, and perhaps more importantly to the medium through which anti-imperial ideas are cast. The postcolonial voice can decide to resist imperial linguistic domination in two ways — by rejecting the language of the coloniser or by subverting the empire by writing back in a European language.

The object of this thesis is to show whether Rushdie is able to subvert the codified by using the language of the empire. How can we define and redefine our culture without becoming ossified? In fact, Rushdie believes that our refusal to make concessions to western ideas and practices would lead to our cultural and intellectual isolation. Rather we should critically embrace these ideas or practices which have been culturally imposed by the West upon us and work towards a better understanding of our position in the millennium. Do we then turn away from our cultural heritage? Again, how are we to live in the world? In Rushdie's response — an empire writing back — we recognise an agonising and honest effort of the migrant intellectual trying to come to terms with his rootlessness, oscillating between a national and international culture.

In Imaginary Homelands Rushdie admits the problems of the culturally displaced migrant writer, who assumes an ambiguous position where his identity and his language is concerned.

In fact Rushdie admits that as a migrant and as a postcolonial he engages himself in a culturally subversive act when he appropriates the use of English for his own purposes.

It is true that when we use English we are reminded of our own ambiguity towards it. At the same time, all postcolonial writers find in the linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place, struggle between those cultures located both within and outside ourselves. To master and conquer the English language continues and completes the process of making ourselves free from colonial domination; the domination of race and class as well as the domination of nation and ideology.

Debates over the concept of 'nationalism' in postcolonial studies involve the limitations of the term in conceptualising the overlapping, migratory movements of cultural formations across a global division of labour. In what sense can we determine the exilic predicaments of Salman Rushdie in terms of "national" identity? Homi K. Bhabha in The Location of Culture (1994) has tried to explain the "liminal" negotiations of cultural identity across difference of race, class, gender, and cultural traditions. He finds that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationality, community interest and cultural value are being negotiated in the very overlap and displacement of domains of cultural difference. How can subjects be formed "in-between" the difference of race, class, gender and so on. In the words of Bhabha:

How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the corrupting claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and diabolical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable? (1994, 2).

Bhabha's proposal critiques the stable notion of cultural identities based on given, irreducible, scripted, ahistorical traits. On the other hand the negotiation of cultural identity involves the continual interface and exchange of cultural performances that produce mental and mutable recognition of cultural difference. Thus both the coloniser and the colonised cannot be considered to have separate entities that exist independently:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively...the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation (Bhabha, 1994, 2).

In fact cultural movement becomes similar to the ambivalent, ambivalent articulation wherein people perform a to and fro movement across a bridge.

Bhabha's way of thought delimitises the notion of a boundary. His liminal model encourages the production of culture beyond the temporal dimension and connotations of the prefix "post" in postcolonialism, post-modernism and so on. Benjamin Graves in his article on "Homi K. Bhabha: The Liminal Negotiation of Cultural Difference" speaks of "Liminality" as pertaining not only to "the space between cultural collectives but also between historical periods, between politics and aesthetics, between theory and application" (1998, 2). In Location of Culture Bhabha has chosen a museum installation by African-American artist Renee Green to describe the exhibit's postmodern stairwell (which, apparently, connected the exhibit's upper and lower halves) as a liminal space, in-between the designations of identity (that) becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white (Bhabha, 1994, 2).

In fact, Bhabha's discourses broach the important and sensitive issue of hybridisation. What is hybridization? Bakhtin answers that

It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter within the area of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor (1981, 358).'

It is this aspect or the myth of India as a collective fiction that has been highlighted in Rushdie's Midnight's Children. Symbolically such hybridity has been suggested in the multiple heritage of Saleem, who has many fathers (Methwold, Wee Willie Winkie, Ahmed Sinai) and mothers (Amina, Mary and other). But the supreme irony of it all is that William Methwold is the actual father of Saleem and not Ahmed Sinai, thus suggesting the composite and bastard legacy of India, both Western and Indian. The chutneyfication of history leads to the pickling of national identity and a continuous journey towards fragmentation, from the centre to the margin in Saleem's story. ("I am falling apart", M.C. 37). The basic reason for telling his story lies in Saleem's desire to shape his material in such a way that the reader will be forced to concede his central role, but in the process he is guilty of slicing and dismembering history to suit himself. Being a sort of textualised foetus growing from a full stop, he cannot help participating and equally producing a medley of cultures. This very pickling of history and culture are (despite everything) "acts of love" (M.C., 549).

Commenting on his changed status as an American citizen since August 31, 1975 when he started living in America as a permanent resident (holder of the coveted "Green Card") and finally as a naturalised citizen, Rushdie states that he never had any doubt about the immigrant identity, at least in a political and legal sense. According to Rushdie

My self-description as an American is a spatial identity; constructed from the external territory, it has nothing to do with my *Whatness*, my essence or being as a person, until the larger dominant culture readjusts itself to accommodate my presence. For the time it is a contractual domicile arrangement in exchange for my willingness to accept the subjecthood of the sovereign nation called The United States of America, I am “subjectified” Yet the territorial persona, as a mask of my identity, cannot fully represent the subject/object of my person, the material body and the psychic being. As I begin to illustrate this defunct home/abroad or here/there binary both to understand and to explain the complicity of diasporic experience, I will draw from my personal experience of a quarter century and that Trishanku, the character from the Indian epic Ramayana who went embodied to heaven but had to settle at a place midway between the earth and the paradise, serves as a metaphor for the modern expatriate/immigrant inhabiting the congested global/local space, and I will explore the “global geography the surface and depth of the individual as an intersection of the global (cultural) and local (material)” (Rath, 2000, 1-2).

Another way of looking at Rushdie is to say that to keep the momentum of the identity dynamics going we used to maintain the cultural exchange or even the conflicts of the “in-between” space of our communities, because precisely in this region that “the negotiation of cultural identity involves the continued interchange and exchange of cultural performances that in turn produce a mutual and mutable recognition (or representation) of cultural difference. Bhabha identifies “terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative to be produced performatively. It is significant that the representation of difference “must not be hastily read as the reflection of a pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the tablet of tradition”. “In this sense the social articulation of difference becomes a complex ‘on-going negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation” (Bhabha, 1994, 2).

Sura P. Rath in the article “Home (s) Abroad: Diasporic Identities in Third Spaces” has quoted Lawrence Phillips as finding fault with a dialectic conception of history since it privileges the process of production rather than guarantee a product. Similarly, history in Bhabha’s terminology becomes not a temporal process but subject to the fluctuation of meaning and can never signify any absolute meaning (Rath, 2000, 1-2).

The fluctuation of meaning and history acquires new implication in Rushdie’s positioning of the postcolonial subject in his novels. The colonial power had aimed at subjugating the colonised in a radical

usurpation of his sovereignty, land and economy. This entailed an attempt at pre-empting the colonised's role in history. The coloniser has usurped the colonised's story and deprived him of his political position in the history. But Rushdie brings a revisionist attitude to history in re-positioning the postcolonial subject in the arena of the world. Rushdie is unique in freeing the colonial subject from the colonised's possession and domination of history and politics. He explains that hybridity is a two-way process. If hybridity contains the notion of the Bakhtinian encounter between two different ethos and linguistic consciousness within the sphere of utterance and language, then Rushdie may be seen to turn the tables on the colonised. Thus he uses the metaphor of the palimpsest in two of his novels like The Satanic Verses and The Moor's Last Sigh.

The Satanic Verses for example, recalls the metaphor of palimpsest not only in South Asia, but in Britain as well. The architecture, the cuisine and the people are all British and yet began as something else. The most obvious example of this unconscious layering are the policemen who refuse to believe that Saladin Chamcha is a Briton, whose questions to him "what kind of name is that for an Englishman" are themselves descended respectively from Slavs, Italians, Germans as their surnames Novak, Bruno, Stein reveal (S.V., 168). Just as the idea of the palimpsest in Indian culture manifests itself in the several layering of different cultures like the Aryan, Mughal, British. Similarly British culture may likewise signal the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit.

In his earlier novel, Grimus, the character Grimus is portrayed as a semi-semitic Middle European and Flapping Eagle as an Amerindian. An unique property shared by both Rushdie and the central character Joe-Sue as Flapping Eagle is their ability to host and change several different identities. Later in Midnight's Children Saleem is also portrayed as a chameleon-like personality, who can situate himself both within and outside other fictional selves through the medium of telepathy and magical powers.

Tradition, religion and culture, according to Rushdie can only survive in palimpsests because it is only by artistic rejuvenation and rewriting as well as resuscitating that they can be revived. At its best, the later fiction of Rushdie illustrates this issue of hybridity and cultural plurality in several palimpsests.

Thus in The Ground Beneath Her Feet both the main characters move to transcend the notion of identity in trans-national terms. Like Rushdie and very much like Saladin Chamcha, Vina Apsara becomes a prismatic protection of the author's own alter ego. Even in his recent fiction like The Moor's Last Sigh we find the theme of the palimpsest in the act of Aoi, who is forced with the task of removing the top-most layer of The Moor's Last Sigh and who himself realises that in removing one layer of culture he exposes another and which forms the thematic strain of Arora's art of painting. Thus, in the same novel India is seen as constituted by layers of alien empires and Bombay is seen as the bastard

progeny of a Portuguese-English wedding. Rushdie's most recent novel Fury may also be seen to present the interface of his ideal vision of India, as a palimpsest of multiple cultures and identities in his portrait of corporate America.

Rushdie, then, is able to question the content of colonial power and ideology by accepting an international medium and code, through which he can subvert the very identities of the coloniser. He, in fact, turns the table right back on the colonial power by accepting the fluidity of cultures and identity in his very person as well as in his multiple fictional selves. History becomes a process, a fluctuation of meaning where the cultural signified, though not lost is made and remade on the transnational scene. If the colonial powers have tried to reshape history (exemplified well in Conrad's Heart of Darkness), Rushdie again succeeds in rewriting history and politics by positioning and freeing the colonial subject from racial domination and imperialism. Rushdie's texts, therefore, engage themselves with the particular historical realities presented by the postcolonial scene in offering to explain how and why the postcolonial writer might be able to defy historically determined relationships of racial dominance as well as cultural subordination.

Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children forcefully negotiates the contradictions springing from the historical belatedness of post-colonialism, its political and chronological derivation from colonialism as well as its cultural obligation to create a new and revolutionary ethos. The

heavy historical burden of expectation is expressed in Nehru's optimistic declaration:

At the stroke of the midnight hour, while the world sleeps, India awakens to life and freedom.... A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new; when an age ends; and when the soul of a nation long suppressed find utterance... (M.C., 134).

In characteristic style Rushdie parodies the emergence of the Indian nation with a similar optimistic declaration of Saleem's birth through Dr. Narlikar: "On the stroke of midnight, Sinai brother, your Begam Sahiba gave birth to a large, healthy child: a son" Just as Nehru heralded the end of a 'period of ill-fortune' and as conch-shells blared out the news of freedom, Saleem's father cried out also because overwhelmed as he was with the birth of his son, he had inadvertently allowed a falling chair to shatter his toe (I.H., 135).

Saleem's birth, however, is synchronised by the coming of Shiva, Vanita's son. By a quirk of fate Amina Sinai's child and that of Vanita have been exchanged by Mary Pereira, so that Saleem Sinai is actually Vanita's son and Shiva is the son of Amina Sinai. The implication behind this exchange can be grasped if we remember that Vanita's issue is really the unhappy result of her affair with an Englishman, William Methwold, who confesses direct descent from a particularly imperialistic East India

Company officer. As a consequence Saleem Sinai, who is hailed by Nehru as the free child of independent India is actually a son of a departing coloniser and this accident actually becomes an allegory of the post-colonial condition. The celebrated birth of Saleem may be then said to be symbolic of the tentacles of a colonial past out of which the new nation must break out if it is to gain its real independence. The allegorical state is inherited by all new born Indians as an inevitably legacy of the colonial past.

In fact, all over the new India, the dream we all shared, children were being born who were only partially the offsprings of their parents — the children of midnight were also children of the time: fathered, you understand, by history. It can happen, especially in a country which is itself a sort of dream (I.H., 137).

The difficulty about dismembering or disremembering the colonial past surfaces with the realisation that even when the crime of Mary Pereira was discovered, it was found to make no difference at all. Saleem still remained the child of the Sinais. 'In a kind of collective failure of imagination, we learned that we simply could not think our way out of our pasts' (I.H., 136-37). According to Albert Memmi in his The Coloniser and the Colonised (1965) the Tunisian anti-colonial revolutionary, the colonial aftermath does not automatically entail the birth of a new nation

from colonial domination. Often the tenacious grip of the colonial past on the post-colonial present has been underestimated. In his view the emergence of the new, liberated man is not immediately possible the day colonial oppression is only consequent after a long process of cumulative changes in the national psyche. The transition from the colonised imagination to a liberated one is full of agony. Often the decolonising process remains at best only a dream, a fiction powerless to be born (Memmi, 1965, 88).

The harsh realities of the decolonising process have been well delineated by Rushdie when he points out that the birth of the Indian nation was something of 'a new myth to celebrate, because a nation which had never previously existed was about to win its freedom, catapulting us into world which, although it had five thousand years of history...was nevertheless quire imaginary' (M.C., 130). Such a nation which lacked political maturity could only exist by the

efforts of a phenomenal collective will - except in a dream we all agreed to dream; it was a mass fantasy shared in varying degrees by Bengali and Punjabi, Madrasi and Jat, and would periodically need the sanctification and renewal which can only be provided by rituals of blood, the new myth — a collective fiction in which anything was

possible, a fable rivaled only by the two mother mighty fantasies: money and God (M.C., 129-30)

Through Saleem we gradually enter into a visionary world, where the stability of historical events have been thoroughly disrupted by the narration's self-intrusion and self-dramatisation, punctuated by self-irony. Saleem concedes:

Because the feeling had come upon me that I was somehow creating a world; that the thoughts I jumped inside were mine, that the bodies I occupied acted at my command; that, as current affairs, arts, sports, the whole rich variety of a first-class radio station poured into me. I was somehow making them happen which is to say, I had entered into the illusion of the artist, and thought of the multitudinous realities of the land as the raw unshaped material of my gift'. "I can find out any damn thing! "I triumphed", there isn't a thing I cannot know!" (M.C., 207)

Saleem's power of modification of history is an offshoot of his attempt to create for himself a new identity in a traumatic post-colonial world and such an effort can only be established through an ecstatic destructivism of a prevalent political condition. It is through the creation of illusionary images and the establishment of a fantastic utopia that

Saleem could give vent to his intense psychic and creative energies which could, in fictional terms, disturb the profound stability of historical moments and processes.

The problem of history is here resolved by Rushdie in a totally different manner. He gives reality as aesthetic dimension by mixing fantasy and history. In the vast panorama of individual life patterns in India, he burlesques the truth of history by breaking it down into individual, grotesque units. Saleem admits that in order to get his hold on to other colleagues it is imperative that he advances beyond the verbal level and enter into the realm of symbolic language and gestures which enable Saleem to go even further than his general narrative self-consciousness and cautions himself against the acceptance of a single authoritative version of history. According to him

Thought is as often pictorial or purely emblematic as verbal, and anyway, in order to communicate with and understand, my colleagues in the Midnight's Children Conference, it was necessary for me quickly to advance beyond the verbal stage. Arriving in their infinitely various minds, I was obliged to get beneath the surface veneer of front of mind thoughts in incomprehensible tongues, with the obvious effect that they became aware of my presence (M.C., 262).

As Bhabha argues in the passages below, this “liminal” space is a “hybrid” site that witnesses the production — rather than just the reflection — of cultural meaning:

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorise cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation (1994, 2).

It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing in a movement not dissimilar to the ambivalent articulation of the beyond that I have drawn out: “Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks....The bridge gathers as a passage that crosses” (1994, 5).

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, then, Bhabha’s liminality model engages culture productively in that enables a way of thinking “the realm of the beyond” that until now has been understood only in terms of the ambiguous prefix “post”: postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism” (1994, 1). Liminality not only pertains to

the space between cultural collective but between historical periods, between politics and aesthetics, between theory and application. In a discussion of a museum installment by African-American artist Renee Green, for instance, Bhabha describes the exhibit's postmodern stairwell (which, apparently, connected the exhibit's upper and lower halves) as a "liminal space, in-between the designations of identity [that] becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper-lower, black and white" (1994, 4).

III

Discussions of cross cultural concepts especially the notion of hybridity and cultural plurality in Rushdie's works will be the focal point of this dissertation. It is the objective of this thesis to illustrate the idea that if we begin our analysis of Rushdie from such a critical premise then we would be in a position to overhaul and rethink such fundamental issues like nationhood, identity and post-coloniality, thereby locating the novelist's reputation as a serious interlocutor in the realm of cultural studies. Rushdie was born in Bombay but later migrated to Pakistan and England. We can never pin him down either geographically or culturally. His first two novels highlight the subcontinent but his later novels like The Ground Beneath Her Feet and Fury extend the geographical boundaries, enveloping the world. Indeed, Rushdie always thought of

political demarcations between nations as (he terms his book) Imaginary Homelands (1991) and he has an incredible wanderlust for stepping across this line (Step Across This Line, 2002) of national boundaries. He even boasts of his secularism in flamboyance in The Satanic Verses. In spite of being a Muslim, he parodies his religion. Rushdie in Britain might eat pork but he has never recanted his religion. Basking in the comforts of England, he somehow nourishes a nostalgia for his birth place, Bombay. Again, he speaks of his peregrinations in other countries and places. But there remains in his bosom a fond yearning for things of and about the subcontinent.

Critically then, he always steps across political boundaries. Like a Colossus he studies across religions, ethnicity, caste and creed, as well as class and race. He pertains to all of us, he belongs to all. This ambiguity at the heart of his personality and literary enterprise is to be recovered and rediscovered through this thesis.

In Shame Rushdie has written against rootlessness, migration and on his state of being in-between diverse cultures in the following manner:

I, too, know something of this immigrant business. X am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England, where X live, and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will). And I have a theory that the resentments we mohajirs engender have something to do with our conquest of the force of the gravity, we have

performed the act of which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown.... We have floated upwards from history from memory, from Time (Shame, 90-91).

Rushdie is the quintessential migrant and has gained a unique perspective by being born in India, schooled in England, forced by his parents to move to Pakistan, and finally exiled back to Britain. Branded as an exotic and foreigner at Rugby of Cambridge, ridiculed for his British accent in India and called an infidel or blasphemer in Pakistan Rushdie still maintains that there are distinct advantages to being migrant for both the writer and the person as a whole.

Three of Rushdie's most important works, Midnight's Children, Shame and The Satanic Verses, including his latest collection of essays (Step Across This Line, 2002) draw heavily on the theme of migration. By examining the life of the migrant, Rushdie explores the universal mystery of identity, that of being and the puzzle of who one is.

In Imaginary Homelands Rushdie admits the problems of the culturally displaced migrant writer, who assumes an ambiguous position where his identity language is concerned. He confesses that

the British Indian writer simply does not have the option of reflecting English, anyway, his children, her children will grow up speaking probably as a first language; and in the forging of a British Indian identity the English language is of central importance, (The word "translation" comes

etymologically, from the Latin for “bearing across”). Having been born across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained (I. H., 17).

In fact Rushdie admits that as a migrant and as a postcolonial he engages himself in a culturally subversive act when he appropriates the use of English for his own purpose

And I hope all of us share the view that we can't simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes (I.H., 17).

It is true that when we use English we are reminded of our own ambiguity towards it. At the same time, all postcolonial writers find in the linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place, struggles between the cultures located both within and outside ourselves. To master and conquer the English language continues and completes the process of making ourselves free from colonial domination; domination of race and class as well as domination of nations and ideologies.

Rushdie's first novel, Grimus focuses on this idea of identity as being once plural and partial. In this sense the identities of both Grimus and the Flapping Eagle are characterised by their hybridity. To start with, Grimus is a semi-Semitic Middle European, and Flapping Eagle is an Amerindian, Grimus is a sort of odyssey depicting Flapping Eagle's quest

for Grimus. Joe-Sue takes the name of Flapping Eagle because the later is but an empty man, a shell without a form or an empty envelop that can host many different identities (G., 192). In a unique manner, this specific property enables him to function as a link between the different worlds, within the fiction (G., 167). Later on, such merging or usurpation of identities become the chameleon-like personality of Saleem in Midnight's Children. Saleem can situate himself both within and outside other fictional selves through telepathy and magical powers.

In The Satanic Verses migration becomes a painful but emancipating process. The postcolonial writer fictionalises history, changes historical narratives into his story. By sucking out of time and place; history and motherland; he is able to choose his parents, his imaginary homeland. Gradually to the postcolonial writer, fact becomes fiction, reality changes into illusion. Hence, we witness the chutneyfication of history in Midnight's Children and Rushdie's journey into the world of fiction in Haroun and The Sea-Stories. Categories mix. Thus Rushdie uses the metaphor of a movie screen to explain the perception of the migrant.

Suppose yourself in a huge cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up ...until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing graph tiny details assume

grotesque proportions... it becomes dear that the illusion itself is reality (I.H., 13).

Such changes of identity become the focal point of Satanic Verses, where Mahound, the Prophet, as well as other characters like Saladin of Gibreel face the question — ‘What kind of idea are you? Thus Mahound the man is transformed into Mahound the religion. On the other hand, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel, both change physically and mentally once their jet explodes in mid-air and they land in London, these two men are reminiscent of God and Satan coming to earth. Finally, the recovery of self-identity enables one to answer the question, “What kind of idea are you?”

Rushdie’s work challenges the ossified concept of identity in association with nationality in the postcolonial scene. The question “How does newness come into the world?” asked repeatedly in The Satanic Verses, is answered only implicitly in his fiction in this novel of migrants whether immigrants or exiles, adaptation and translating, “bearing across” of cultural practices in new contexts, is acknowledged as an innovating force. Does this perspective make Rushdie an advocate of hybridism? According to Dutheil de la Rochere, Rushdie is guilty of presenting a “sentimentalised portrait of the migrants” (Rochere, 92). In his later novel, The Ground Beneath Her Feet the notion of authenticity; particularly within an Indian context is summarily discredited as in his

earlier novels (Rochere, 123, 291, 338). In this novel, "community" is more forcefully rejected as a fiction,

But let's just suppose, what if the whole deal - orientation, knowing when you are and so on - what if it's all a scam? What if all of it - home, kinship, the whole enchilada - is just biggest, most truly global and centuries - oldest piece of brainwashing (T.G.B.H.F. 177).

But again, the themes of rootlessness, alienation, as well as Rushdie's conflict with censorship comes to be discussed through the allegory used by him in Haroun and The Sea of Stories (1990). In more ways than one it may be seen that this novel is Rushdie's answer to the fatwa proclaimed by the Ayatollah in response to the publication of The Satanic Verses (1988), silenced by the fatwa, Rushdie has fictionally realised himself in the characters of Haroun and Princess Batcheat, thus keeping himself in the background. In the figure of Haroun, Rushdie has shown his characteristic ambivalence to take both sides of the question, where censorship and violation of human rights are concerned. In fact, his positioning himself through several personalities in the novel illustrates his polymorphous identity and becomes fictionalised account of the cross-cultural contexts within him. Orthodox Muslim authority in this sense can well secure the ban on the publication of The Satanic Verses, but can never stop Rushdie from his silent manipulation of Muslim scriptures in the portraiture of the Old Zone. In the novel tradition, religion and culture,

according to Rushdie can only survive in palimpsests because it is only by artistic rejuvenation and rewriting as well as the act of resuscitating that they can be revived. At its best, art expresses the spirit of cultural plurality and hybridity, crossing imaginary homelands and stepping across various lines and demarcations, Rushdie's texts, therefore, engage themselves with the particular historical realities offered by the postcolonial scene by offering to explain in how and why the postcolonial writer can defy historically determined relationships of racial dominance and cultural subordination. In his hands art becomes a weapon to cut across lines of culture, religion, ideology and nation.

In The Ground Beneath Her Feet both the main characters are products of dysfunctional families, in the case of Vina Apsara, a series of such families. As such, "breaking family ties" appears as a recurrent theme, Vina, a pop star whose persona in many respects resembles Madonna, provides a fascinating study of identity (T.G.B.H.F., 270). The American-born daughter of a South Asian and a Greek American, after a troubled childhood in the States, arrives in Bombay at twelve. Before moving back to America, the base for her successful globe-spanning career, she, intends to spend some time in Britain. Her career provides an illustration of how she transcends identity in cross cultural terms by her transnational biography. In fact, she is, like Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses prismatic projections of the author's own alter ego.

In Rushdie's recent fiction such as in The Moor's Last Sigh and The Fury, the issue of hybridity and cultural plurality has been given special prominence. In The Moor's Last Sigh India is seen as constituted from "layers of alien empires" and Bombay as "the bastard child of a Portuguese-English wedding and yet the most Indian of Indian cities" (MLS, 299, 350). Even the identity of the Moor has been problematised. Aoi, Moor's fellow prisoner in Vasco Miranda's "Little Alhambra", forced with the task of removing the top layer of the Moor's cultural veneer in The Moor's Last Sigh recognises that in removing one layer, you annihilated the other and to compound this, in freeing up the hidden picture of Arora, she sentences herself to death (a fate which parallels that of Scheherazade). Rushdie proposed that the only way to deal with these contradictions is to internalise them, to accept multiplicity. Here culture, becomes multilayered and indeterminate and in association with identity has been projected through the idea of the palimpsest, which remains, however, the central characteristic of Arora's art of painting.

The interface of Rushdie's idealistic vision of India as the consequence of multiple cultures and identities is his portrait of America with its utopian inclination. Yet, America, as she is portrayed by Rushdie before the September attacks of World Trade Centre (Fury, 7), is still perceived as a magnet attracting exiles who migrate to create a congenial and complex environment. Indeed, Rushdie builds his own utopian vision

of a hybrid world on genuine maxims of fairytales in Fury. In consonance with Oscar Wilde he believes that a map of the world which does not include utopia is not even worth consideration. Thus Rushdie's open-ended utopian worlds not only testify to the impossibility of history coming to an end but also that fantasy can create its own logic and structure its own existence. It is this privileging of the real and the unreal within cultural palimpsests that runs through all of Rushdie's fiction, starting from Grimus to Fury, as well as the discursive presentation of the theme in his literary essays. The migrant especially in the Imaginary Homelands (1992), therefore, is not only culturally unstable but has several identities.

The primary object of this thesis is to investigate the nature of Rushdie's dilemma in his inhabiting both worlds, belonging wholly to neither one, nor the other. It is to be seen that he is a product of two cultures but apparently unwanted by both since he represents neither. His "mongrel" self, which falls outside the regular classifications, calls us to think about his own position. The ideas of race, class, gender have no defining category because they occupy an "in-between" space.

It is to be seen that as an immigrant Rushdie challenges the existing cultural and religious dogma, He can do so because according to him the practice of literature involves no rules or commandments. The

process of writing creates its own rules. In essence Rushdie, therefore, creates the existing world order through his art and is alternately threatened by reactionary forces. The Satanic Verses formulates that

A poet's work (...) To name the unnamable, to point at frauds,
to take sides, start arguments, shape the world and stop it
from going to sleep'.... And if rivers of blood flow from the cuts
his verses inflict, they will nourish him (S.V., 97)

Rushdie, therefore, proves to be a prime illustration of the empire's cultural, ideological and racial victim who in turn, writes back to the empire in a hybrid language encoding mongrel self.

Chapter III

Imaginary Homelands

Rushdie as a migrant intellectual, striding across continents, has made the most of his ambivalent status by looking both, before and after. After refers to his new position in his recently adopted country, 'after' 'before' refers to his abandoned status in his deserted country. Rushdie's migrant status encapsulates a paradox, in his own queries in his essay Commonwealth Literature does not exist in his collection "Imaginary Homelands" (1991/1992).

"In my own case, I have constantly been asked whether I am British or Indian. The formulation "India-born British writer" has been invented to explain me. But, as I said last night, my new book deals with Pakistan. So what now?" "British resident Indo-Pakistani writer"? You see the folly of trying to contain writers inside passports (I.H., 67).

In his essay, Rushdie consistently opposes any effort to restrain as well as enchain any ambitious author within any "Literary Ghetto" like the term "Commonwealth Literature" (I.H., 68). Any rules which

tend to confine any author within the parameters of tradition are basically conservative in character. Literature, according to Rushdie, transcends national boundaries and can, therefore, never occupy such “phantom” categories as English Literature or Commonwealth Literatures in isolation. Such boundaries are primarily designated by political or linguistic concerns. Yet, in his own way, Rushdie emphasises the imaginative content of literature which obscures such narrow demarcations.

It is possible, I think, to begin to theorise common factors between writes from these societies – poor countries, or deprived minorities in powerful countries – and to say that much of what is new in world literature comes from his group. This seems to be a ‘real’ theory, bounded by frontiers which are neither political nor linguistic but imaginative. And it is developments of this kind, which the chimera of “Commonwealth literature” obscures.

This transcendental, cross-lingual process of pollination is not new. The works of Rabindranth Tagore, for example, have long been widely available in Spanish – speaking America, thanks to his close friendship with the Argentinean intellectual Victoria Ocampo. Thus an entire generation, or even two of South American writers

have read Gitanjali, The Horne and The World and other works, and some, like Mario Vargas Llosa, say that they found them very exciting and stimulating (I.H., 69).

Rushdie's objective is to explain and illustrate the proliferation of cultures across national boundaries and this may be made plausible through the use of English as a world language. Primarily, the globalisation of English was made possible by the "physical colonisation of a quarter of the globe by the British", and it is a fact that the language of official communication in British colonies remains to a large extent English (I.H., 64). But "its present day pre-eminence is not solely" due to "British legacy" (I.H., 64). Rushdie emphasises that the pre-eminence of English is also due to the primacy of the United States of America in the affairs of the world. This impetus and predominance of English in world affairs may be either interpreted as a "kind of linguistic neo-colonialism", or "just plain promulgation" on the part of ambitious authors as well as governments (I.H., 64).

Rushdie's argument here is a complex one. On one hand he is actively in favour of a "transnational, cross-lingual process" of cultural "pollution", on the other, he never denies that to a large extent "literature is an expression of nationality".

What commonwealth literature finds interesting in Patrick White is his Australianness; in Dons Lessing, her

Africanness; in V.S. Naipaul, his West Indianness.... Books are almost always praised for using motifs and symbols out of the author's own national tradition or when their form echoes some traditional influences at work upon the writer can be seen to be wholly internal to the "culture" from which he "springs" (I.H., 66)."

But just because a writer is embedded in a tradition it does not imply and lead to his being confined to a "literary ghetto". A writer, according to Rushdie's expansive definition, is transnational and if he writes in English at all, it does not mean that he demeans his native, mother tongue. In fact, today no author can escape the fact of his writing in English because of its worldly status and cross-cultural referentiality.

In this context, the migrant writer lives an ambiguous existence. He can neither forget his roots and tradition, nor can he return back to his past except in a sort of imaginary manner. At the same time, he is actively involved in a recreation of his destiny in a wholly new country which has its own tradition, language and culture. In this quest, for redefinition and reformation of his existence, the migrant writer becomes unique in history since his work contains and reflects the inseparable tensions between various cultures at several points of history. Living in a state of cultural symbiosis, the migrant writer can only create "imaginary homelands", fictions of the mind, which is actually neither here nor there. Rushdie explains that:

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge — which gives rise to profound uncertainties — that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions and actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indian of the mind (I.H., 10).

The position of the migrant is indeed a complex one. Not merely does he have a hybrid character which means that he is at the cross-roads of different cultures but also that he is always plagued with a sense of inevitable loss — a loss of homeland. Hence, his intellectual activity involves a creation of alternate homelands. Nowhere except in Imaginary Homelands does Rushdie forcefully state the psychology of the migrant artist. In a certain sense, the migrant writer, according to Rushdie, has been forced “by cultural displacement to accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties” so that he has imbibed what may be termed as a fragmentary vision of life (I.H., 12). But Rushdie opines that it is precisely in their fragmentation and “partial” or “provisional” nature experience that such writers have become typically

modern phenomena, where there is nothing like a totality of experience or vision of life since, everything today has been subjected to the focus of change and uncertain. In this state of instability and incomplete character of truth we have to accept that

human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. Meaning is a shaky edifice, we build out of scraps, dogmas, childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks, old films, small victories, people hated, people lived, perhaps it is because our sense of what is the case is constructed from such inadequate materials that we defend it so fiercely, even to the death (I.H., 12).

On the other hand, a positive outlook can emerge out of such fragmentation of life, meaning and vision of the misplaced artist. If Rushdie is correct and his statement of course, bears upon an evaluation of his works, it is precisely the fragmented character of the migrant's memories that can make them so compelling and mysterious. A comparison with the study of archaeology may be relevant here. Rushdie states that

The shards of memory acquire greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains; fragmentation

made trivial things seen like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities (I.H., 12).

However, it might be argued that the physical and emotional distance from the country of origin acquires significance from it being dissociated with the sense of time. Thus, physical loss may be equated with a loss of past. And it is true that even a writer who ventures out of his country and who even changes his language for another from this newly adopted land, is liable to experience, this loss is an intensified form. The very physical fact of his “discontinuity” and “of his present being in a different place from his past, of his being ‘elsewhere’” places the migrant artist in an ambivalent position (I.H., 12). He thus develops both a mature and impersonal attitude to his lost country as well as a sense of nostalgia with respect to his own past. In this way past and present intermingle to make his experience and life-vision a very complex one.

Referring to the migrations of the 50s and the 60s in England, Rushdie speaks on behalf of the Indian writers in the following manner.

We are, we are here. And we are not willing to be excluded from any part of our heritage; when heritage includes both a Bradford-born Indian kid’s right to be treated as a full member of British society, and also the right of any member of this post-diaspora community to

draw on its roots for its art, just as all the world's community of displaced writers has always done (I.H., 15).

In this connection, Rushdie refers to such displaced writers like Gunter Grass, James Joyce, Issac Bashevis Singer and Milan Kundera. In question of heritage, belonging, tradition has therefore, been subjected to re-valuation because at the present a writer may be said to belong nowhere in particular. Thus, the term "Indian" denoting nationality becomes a scattered concept when applied to an Indian writer who has migrated to England. Today, such Indian writers in England include political exiles, first-generation migrants, affluent expatriates whose residence is frequently temporary, naturalised Britons and people born in England and who may never have been on the subcontinent. And Rushdie explains how in the domain of Indo-British relation, nationality is no more relevant since in future fiction is likely to be produced in any of the following countries like London, Birmingham, Yorkshire, even Delhi and Mumbai.

Rushdie also detects in the migrant writer a struggle taking place in the use of his language. The conflict between cultures become inevitable, once we see the tensions rising from a linguistic struggle in the writer. Rushdie states that

One of the changes has to do with attitudes towards the use of English. Many have referred to the argument about

the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the view that we can't simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes. 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 other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free (I.H., 17).

In Rushdie's terminology English does not imply British English, but also Indian English, African English, the English of Far East, Caribbean as well as Australian English. But whatever may be the comprehensiveness of the present English language, it is largely an arena where different authors from other countries speak about themselves, contradict themselves, express their own ideologies and come together to interact within a common medium and a common forum. In this way the British Indian writer cannot simply ignore and reject English. It is natural that in the postcolonial scenario English has emerged as a first language with incredible importance as a world language. Especially, the English language acquires a central importance in the "forging of a British Indian identity" (I.H., 17). Post-colonial

identity is always a hybrid identity, taking under its umbrella the disparateness of cultures, ideologies as well as that of languages. In view of this Rushdie raises an important question “what does it mean to be “Indian” outside India”? (I.H., 17). Herein lies the notion of cultural cross currents. Indianness is not merely an ossified identity, held captive in space and time. But that it can be carried across continents and nations. Identity here becomes transnational as well as international. Elsewhere, especially in The Moor’s Last Sigh, Rushdie has used the idea of cultural palimpsest in the Moor and the lady, his mother. In Satanic Verses Rushdie has shown how an Asian Indian falls into the cultural atmosphere of England. Throughout his novels he has attempted to answer the question “How can culture be preserved in that without becoming ossified”? (I.H., 17). And especially in Midnight’s Children Rushdie has attempted to transcend the narrow racial question by giving expression to cultural cross currents within the post-independence psyche of both Saleem and Shiva. He has thus answered his question which he put forward in Imaginary Homelands; “How should we discuss the need for change within ourselves and our community without seeming to play into the hands of our racial enemies”? (I.H., 18).

In his prefatory essay in Imaginary Homelands Rushdie has broached the question of cultural interpretation in his discussion on acculturation on the part of the diasporic writer:

What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical, of refusing to make any concessions to Western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and practices and turning away from the ones that came with us? (I.H., 18).

Rushdie himself answers such a complex question in several ways. For one thing, he has himself confessed that the question of denial of tradition has no clear-cut answer since the very notion of denial is itself ambiguous. He accepts the very idea that

Whatever technical solutions we may find Indian writers in these islands, like other who have migrated into the north from the south, are capable of writing from a double perspective, because they, we, are at one and the same time insiders and outsiders in this society. This stereoscopic vision is, perhaps, what we can offer in place of "whole sight" (I.H., 19).

According to Rushdie, it is not worthwhile to imprison any writer within the domains of one particular society and culture since in today's world, the question of boundaries between nations and cultures are apt to get blurred and indistinct. And of all tendencies, "the urgent and most dangerous pitfall would be the adoption of a ghetto mentality" (I.H., 19). The diasporic writer must not forget that there is an universe for away and beyond the community in which we live. Hence to confine

themselves within specified cultural demarcations would lead to the imposition upon themselves of that kind of internal exile which in South Africa is often called the "homeland" (19).

The diasporic writer, therefore, crosses cultural divides and both appeals to the indigenous readers from which the author springs from, as well to the community of international readers who are scattered across several cultures and nations. In this Rushdie seems at one with the black novelist in America like Richard Wright, who has defined his search for a wider audience in the following manner:

I was taken very early...with a passion to link together all
I loved within the Negro community and all those things I
felt in the world which lay beyond (I.H., 20).

In fact, Rushdie himself says that it would indeed denote a failure on his part if he did not reach out to both kinds of audience; the readers of the subcontinent as well as to the readers of the West. Such an idea goes hand in hand with the occupation of the Western writer who have similarly explored not only their own traditional culture but also crosses cultural divides and studied the "visual storehouses of Africa, Asia, the Philippines" and such a conception is found to be "eclectic" in nature (I.H., 20).

The phenomenon of diasporic writer in England demands special attention, as argued by Rushdie:

Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the culture and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacements, life in a minority group. We can quite legitimately claim as our ancestors the Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews; the past to which we belong is an English past, the history of immigrant Britain, Swift, Conrad, Marx are as much our literary forebears as Tagore or Ram Mohan Roy. America, a nation of immigrants, has created great literature out of the phenomenon of cultural transformation, out of examining the ways in which people cope with a new world; it may be that by discovering what we have in common with those who preceded us into this country, we can begin to do the same (I.H., 20).

The task of the diasporic writer is, therefore, a difficult one. On the one hand, he has to remember that his past is something he cannot reject just because he has migrated to a foreign country. On the other hand, he has to probe deep into the history of his newly adopted country so as to culturally position himself in a new community in order to get a sense of belonging to a pattern of cultures which was erstwhile totally alien to him. The diasporic writer becomes a product of cultural

transplantation and it remains to be seen, what he makes of his own hybridity. It is the ultimate test of such a writer to find his own bearings in a community of international writers at a time "when the novel has never been a more international form" and it is "perhaps one of the more pleasant freedoms of the literary migrant to be able to choose his parents" (I.H., 21). And Rushdie humourously and wisely adds that his own "half consciously" and half unconsciously chosen parents include Gogol, Cervantes, Kafka, Melville, Machado de Assis, and which is actually a "polyglot family tree" against which he measures himself and to which he belongs (I.H., 21). But at the same time it would be worthwhile to remember that Rushdie never forgets his rich inheritance of Indian narrative style and which he brilliantly uses in conjunction with Western literary tradition.

Thus the question of going back to an unreclaimable past does not occur in the hybrid psychology of the migrant writer. Rather, the venture into tradition of the distant homeland is always imaginary and never real in nature. Throughout his novels and especially in Midnight's Children Rushdie never tires in pointing out that his portraits of India have always been his own creation. Rushdie explains that in

Writing my book in North London, looking out through my window on to city scene totally unlike the ones I was, imagining on to paper, I was constantly plagued by this problem, until I felt obliged to face it in the text, to make

clear that...what I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory, so that my India was just that: 'my' India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible visions. I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, but imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect, and I knew that my India may only have been one to which I...was, let us say, willing to admit I belonged (I.H., 10).

In Rushdie's concept, the hybrid artist ideologically opposes a mimetic idea of art. He denies the notions of objectivity and in his hands the novel becomes one way of denying the official version of truth (I.H., 14). The migrant artist is physically separated from his home, and yet at the same time he re-lives in that world of his past only in his imagination. Rushdie's altitude is comparable to that of James Joyce. Just as Joyce traces the reality of Dublin in his novels, similarly, Rushdie colours his lost world of Bombay in his novels. In the pen of the diasporic artist "illusion itself is reality" (I.H., 13). In this way, the narrator's account of events defies the idea of verisimilitude because they have been sketched from the "outside". By being situated "elsewhere" in a foreign country, he is enabled to reach his past through his imagination. And as the migrant writer's vision is of a fragmentary nature due to his cultural displacement, his portrayal of life may be

understood in terms of the genre of “magic realism”, where the definitely real merges with the indefinably unreal. Such merging of fiction and the concrete stems from an understanding of the plural nature of the migrant artist, whose identity is “at once plural and partial” since he straddles “two cultures” (I.H., 15). This indefinable territory which he inhabits becomes difficult to locate and define in precise historical as well as geographical terms.

In his essays on “Gunter Grass” Rushdie has amply explained the dislocation of a migrant artist and his cultural rebirth in a foreign land. Here again, Rushdie elaborates his sense of loss and balances it with sense of replacement. The migrant artist’s home, language, culture and identity becomes a site of renewed artistic activity.

A full migrant suffers, traditionally, a triple disruption; he loses his place, he enters into an alien language and he finds himself surrounded by beings whose social, behaviour and codes are very unlike, and sometimes even offensive to, his own. And this is what makes migrants such important figures, because roots, language and social norms have been three of the most important parts of the definition of what it is to be a human being. The migrant denied all three, is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human (I.H., 277).

According to Rushdie, crossing national boundaries does not imply the only form of migration. And with the rapid advance of globalisation culture across continents have tended to become more homogeneous than anything else. Thus, “the journey from, for example, rural America to New York City is a more extreme act of migration than a move from, say, Bombay” (I.H., 278). Migration, therefore, is a two way process. One always leaves behind some-thing and reaches out towards another situation. The very idea of migrancy contains the sense of crossing frontiers; geographical, national, cultural and so on.

The very word metaphor, with its roots in the Greek words for bearing across, describes a sort migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants — borne-across humans — are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples (I.H., 278-79).

Cultural cross-pollution is the essence of migration. Again, reconstruction of reality and ethos are parts of the migrant’s experience. The process of transmutation from an old self into a new one; the journey from one’s past to one’s present; the abandonment of one culture in favour of another; the transformation of the real into fantasy and illusion — all these become part and parcel of the migrant’s journey from his old roots into a new existence. Rushdie locates this

metamorphosis of experience in Gunter Grass, who embodies in himself “the triple dislocation classically suffered by migrants” and may be revered as a man who has “migrated across history” (I.H., 279).

A migrant is a person who not only crosses frontiers and migrants from his old culture but also crosses segments of historical time. In Rushdie’s terminology, a migrant is remade in terms of time and place. Thus, he sees Grass as a

double migrant; a traveller across borders in the self and in time. And the vision underlying his writing, both fiction and non-fiction, is in many ways a migrant’s vision.

This is what the triple disruption of reality teaches migrants; that reality is an artefact, that it does not exist until it is made, and that, like any of other artefact, it can be made well or badly, and that it can also, of course, be unmade (I.H., 280).

The migrant’s task is to make and unmake reality. Reality, again, is a product of his imagination, and becomes, therefore, an emanation of doubt and uncertainty. The migrant continually subjects experience to re-evaluation and change. To him everything is subjected to a process of flux and in his hands the process of creation becomes largely a subjective one. Because, he has burnt his bridges and lost his roots and his medium of communication as well, the migrant artist is in a habit of

distrusting all “absolute forms of knowledge” or concepts which claim completeness. In this way the migrant bears the lesson of tolerance and the process of subjecting everything to his own scrutiny. Hence, Grass might be said to be “quintessentially the artist of uncertainty” (I.H., 280).

Rushdie is in the habit of saying that:

A writer who understands the artificial nature of reality is more or less obliged to enter the process of making it. This is perhaps why Grass has so determinedly sought a public role, why he has used his great fame as a novelist, as a platform from which to speak on the many issues — the bomb, the invasion of our privacy by data banks, the relationship between the nations of the rich North and the poor South — which concern him. And since to argue about reality is to be at once creative and political, it is not surprising that when Grass writes about literature he finds himself writing about politics, and when he discusses political issues, the quirky perspectives of literature have a habit of creeping (I.H., 281).

Rushdie often, is full of praise for the United States and its American culture which, he describes as a sort of migrant culture. The tendency of such culture is directed towards image rather than substance. This becomes the consequence of the migrant intellect, which

“roots itself in itself” and especially “in its own capacity for imagining and re-imagining the world” (I.H., 280). And as the world “is seen through ideas, through metaphors, it becomes a richer place” (I.H., 281). In essence, the migrant’s experience contains rich material for the genre of “magic realism” where categories of perception often tend to be blurred. Tracing the theoretical basis of “magic realism”, Rushdie locates two aspects related to this notion of destruction of reality through an extreme imaginative perception and revision of world view. The ethos of the migrant is part and parcel of a process of the metamorphosis of experience. Here, the migrant has been seen to be remaking his world in terms of time and place. But equally strong is his notion of hybrid culture, which crosses national and ideological boundaries. At the same time, this reconstruction of reality, and ethos of the migrant or the postcolonial writer envisions a political dimension as well. As he discusses the lineaments of “magic realism” in his essays on the doyen of this particular genre, Rushdie has the following comment to offer on “Gabriel Garcia Marquez”:

The damage to reality in South America is at least as much political as cultural. In Marquez’s experience, truth has been controlled to the point at which it has ceased to be possible to find out what it is. The only truth is that you are being lied to all the time. Marquez has always been intensely political; but his books are only obliquely

to do with politics, dealing with public affairs only in terms of grand metaphors like Colonel Aureliano Buendia's military career or the colossally overblown, figure of the Patriarch, who has one of his rivals served up as the main course at a banquet, and who, having overslept one day, decides that the afternoon is really the morning, so that people have to stand outside his windows at night holding up cardboard cut-outs of the sun (I.H., 301).

According to Rushdie, "magical realism" may be understood as "a development out of Surrealism that expresses a genuinely 'Third World' consciousness "since it deals" with what Naipaul has called 'half-made' societies, in which the impossibly old struggles against the appallingly new" (I.H., 302). Such a post-colonial situation becomes in Rushdie's writing, a part of the migrant's ethos in which the partial or disjointed view of reality overcomes the mundane and the prosaic. In Rushdie's later novel, Fury, the hyper-real becomes the real but for different reasons there, fiction becomes fact and the vivid, colourful world of advertisement controls the movement and minds of the populace. The central paradox of existence has been expressed by the secret enshrined by Malik Solanka's art. The power of his magical art has so enlivened his little puppets that it became his nature to think of them as real people. Thus

When he was bringing them into being, they were as real to him as anyone else he knew. Once he had created them, however, once he knew their stories, he was happy to let them go their own way: other hands could manipulate them for the television camera, other craftsmen could cast and replicate them (Fury, 95).

Solanka, as artist, illustrates, like God, the paradox of human life, "its creator was fictional, but life itself was a fact (Fury, 95)." Solanka, as a person, was real but what he created was fictional. Yet, in his hands, the very fictions created by him attained flesh and blood. Hence the demarcations between fantasy and fact become blurred.

Rushdie is a unique artist because he has expressed and illustrated the multi-dimensional nature of reality from the point of the psychology of the migrant artist. Because of his habitual presence at the cross cultural contexts of culture, history and politics, it becomes almost impossible to encapsulate the exact lineaments of his shifting status and personality. As pointed out by Aijaz Ahmad in his brilliant treatise In Theory, Salman Rushdie has been praised by such critics like Homi Bhaba because he has situated the utopian configurations of the migrants and the postcolonial writer between the clash of heterogeneity, historical changes and transition of nations in between political transformations. It was possible for Rushdie to adopt such a viewpoint because of his status as an "uprooted kind of intellectual" who could "debunk both the idea of

'progress' and the sense of a 'long past'" (Ahmad, 68). If it is taken as axiomatic that Rushdie as a migrant artist, debunks both history and tradition, then we would be greatly mistaken. Although, in most of his novels, especially in the Midnight's Children, Rushdie is fond of creating imaginative histories, and his position may be said to be ahistorical, he is always in the habit of creating pastiches, or montages of a historical situation he has already inherited. Rather, he always likes to place his protagonist as well as himself in such a complex, cultural situation as in Satanic Verses, where the leading protagonist, Saladin Chamcha has been transplanted into a foreign culture and society.

Bhabha in his Nation and Narration has outlined Rushdie's power and promise of "magic realism" in the Third World in the following manner:

America leads to Africa, the nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia; the margin of the nation displace the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to write the history and fiction of the metropolis. The island story is told from the eye of the aeroplane which becomes that 'ornament that holds the public and the private in suspense'. The bastion of Englishness crumbles at the sight of immigrants and factory workers. The great whitmanesque sensorium of America is exchanged for a Warhol blow up, a Kruger installation, or Mapplethorpe's

naked bodies. 'Magical Realism', after the Latin American form, becomes the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world (Bhabha, 1990, 6-7).

However, unlike William Faulkner, who produced his own country called Yoknapatawapha and Marquez, who created his own Garcialand, Rushdie is not able to fix upon a particular stereotype of a country, which he can call his own fictional country. Indeed, the potentially Rushdie protagonist travels all over continents and he usually terms his quest as a search for "imaginary homelands", which he has in his own mind but something and someplace, not to be achieved in fact. He has himself designed his quest in his essay on "Gunter Grass" in the following manner:

Aim for the stars. Keep grinning. Be bloody-minded. Argue with the world. And never forget that writing is as close as we get to keeping a hold on the thousand and one things — childhood, certainties, cities, doubts, dreams, instants, phrases, parent, loves — that go on slipping, like sand, through our fingers. I have tried to learn the lessons of the midget drummer. And one more, which I got from that other, immense work, *Dog Years*: when you've done it once, start all over again and do it better (I.H. 277).

Rushdie is of firm belief that migrants must, by sheer necessity, be born out of circumstance, make a new imaginative relationship with

the world, since they have been deprived of their familiar surroundings. But at the same time, they have lost their sense of history; their sense of time and place; their only alternative is to locate it in the world of their imagination. And yet, as Rushdie explains clearly in his essay "The Location of Brazil", it is difficult to locate such a world. He cites an imaginary trial in N.F. Simpson's play One Way Pendulum where the clerk comments on the hero's whereabouts by stating that it is a difficult task to incriminate him since the defendant on the hero "was not in this world" (I.H., 118). And when the judge enquires about his whereabouts, the clerk explains: "It seems he has one of his own" (I.H. 118). Thus, even the legal system confesses its unawareness of the hero's location. But if the problem is one of location, it becomes a difficult critical enterprise to pin down the migrant author to a particular homeland. More often, Rushdie considers the "flight" of the migrant from the homeland at par with the artist's ever with the real world, "the world in which things inevitably get worse and in which centres cannot hold" (I.H. 122). Referring to his essay on "The Location of Brazil" Rushdie comments on his legitimisation of the world of imagination created by the artist. He explains how such a world contains in itself the "power of dream-worlds to oppose this dark reality" of the factual world (I.H. 122). It is the tendency of the modern age to create "Dystopias the way earlier ages made Utopias" and which shows that "we appear to have lost confidence in our ability to improve the world" (I.H., 122). To this

extent the migrant artist becomes a unique artist since his world of imagination cannot be destroyed by fact and also cannot be reached by law (I.H. 122).

Rushdie is of the opinion that

This idea — the opposition of imagination to reality, which is also of course the opposition of art to politics — is of great importance, because it reminds us that we are not helpless; that to dream is to have power. And I suggest that the true location of Brazil is the other great tradition in art, the one in which techniques of comedy, metaphor, heightened imagery, fantasy and so on are used to break down our conventional, habit-dulled certainties about what the world is and has to be. Unreality is the only weapon with which reality can be smashed, so that, it may subsequently be reconstructed (I.H., 122).

The psychology of the migrant artist, then, is somewhat different from the conventional artist since, as has already been discussed, his imaginative world partakes of the vision of a displaced person. He is then, eminently suitable to question the status of the present world of fact. The essential nature of the migrant has been defined by others and in relation to strange surroundings, far away from their homelands. Hence they live to a great extent in their world of memories as much as in their material environments. Since they experience strange

amalgamations of experience as well as of historical situations, they might be said to have their roots in ideas and images rather than places. And because the migrant artist has imbibed a fragmented vision of reality, he suspects reality and perceives their transitory nature. Again, as he has crossed frontiers, he becomes a person eminently capable of understanding and commenting on history, politics and culture of a nation or several nations. This particular idea has reference not only to Rushdie's relations with India, Pakistan, England and America but also to Grass's relation with Germany, Terry Gilliam's relation with America/Brazil and so on.

In his essay "The Location of Brazil", Rushdie explains that

The effect of mass migration has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people 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, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. 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 (I.H., 124-25).

Chapter IV

Grimus

Grimus was Rushdie's first debut in the literary world. However, it was received coldly by critics and scholars found it difficult to digest due to its chaotic fantasy and mimetic multiplicity. It is indeed a critical challenge to find a discernible pattern within such a complexity of narratives. Margarita Peterson in her essay "Grimus and the Alchemical Tradition" in Mittapalli and Kuortti's collection of articles on Salman Rushdie, has stated that

The novel contains a patchwork of myths collected from different parts of the world. Several scholars suggest that the myths lack inner coherence. I, on the contrary, see them as subordinated to one myth or one symbolic language, the language of alchemy, which also plays a part in Rushdie's later works. The alchemical tradition is essential in the interpretation of Rushdie's works because it contests the accusation against him for taking part in western orientalism. It also shows his universal ambitions over and above his more local political and satirical ambitions (2003, I.1).

Indeed, in Grimus, alchemy becomes Rushdie's metaphor for hybridity. In this novel, alchemy, which implies the art of transmutation, has been used to illustrate and explain the complex cultural cross currents, and therefore, it may be said to set the trend of Rushdie's narrative experiments in later novels like Midnight's Children and The Satanic Verses, which brilliantly explore his notions of hybridity in terms of narrative, history, politics, religion and society. Alchemy is actually one of the ancient eclectic traditions. The proliferation of alchemy has been noted in Europe, Egypt, the Arabian countries, in China and India. But the importance of alchemy lies in the fact that its practice became the site of interaction of various cultures like that of Greek, Egyptian, Jewish, Persian, Syrian and Christian, among others. It was out of the cosmopolitan environment of ancient Alexandria that the immigrants forged a hybrid culture of syncretistic rites, cults and a conception of the synthetic character of nature or matter. Through this art of transformation

The adepts tried to force substances to transmute into each other in the alchemical laboratories. Above all, they wanted to transform lead into gold. The basis for the idea of transformation was the monistic conception that everything that existed consisted ultimately of the same substances — everything corresponded. The idea has a parallel in early Greek philosophy, where it was assumed that all things, even metals, consisted of different

combinations of the four elements, earth, water, fire and oil. This concept became a philosophical basis for the idea of transmutation of alchemy... (Paterson, 3).

According to the ancient practices of alchemy, the art of transformation contains all oppositions or polarities, for example, male and female. At its most basic philosophical level, alchemy embodies the union of opposites. Prima materia must be crushed to produce something new to emerge. This idea has been explained by DiBernard in Alchemy and Finnegans Wake (1980). The cyclical nature of the process is manifested in the actions of blending, coagulation, dissolving and reunion. Such blending of opposites and the multifarious become Rushdie's manner of illustrating on the one hand, the multicultural society as well as the complex intertextual pattern in the novel. For one thing, the entire novel may be read as an allegory of the artistic process whereby the myth of Simurg, which is actually a myth about religious insight, has been fused into an aesthetic unity in order to underline the theme of cultural multiplicity.

In most of his novels, Rushdie has attempted to explain and embody the multiple aspects of polycultural activity. This may be seen on the inter-textual level in Grimus. In his later novels, Rushdie has often given expression to the theme of cultural encounter through the motif of exile. Most of Rushdie's scholars have above all concentrated on this

motif in their analyses of Grimus as well. Timothy Brennan in his brilliant book, Salman Rushdie and the Third World has noted that

Grimus prefigures with unusual clarity, Rushdie's major interests. Even in the area that seems most different, he provides evidence of his eventual practice: namely, an underlying attachment to Indian culture and the multiple overlapping of various national myths. For example, Calf Mountain (Persian, Quranic, Dantean) is described in passing at one point as being "rather like a giant lingam weltering in the yoni that is the sea" (Grimus, 66). The lingam and yoni are respectively phallus and vulva, the customary iconography of the Hindu god Shiva. Rushdie's allusion to this iconography is appropriate at this point given Flapping Eagle's hermaphroditic past and the sterility of the immortals on Calf. Rushdie invokes Shiva...once again when he explains Flapping Eagle's name.... Thus, either the Indian expatriate fertilises the barren cultural landscape of England or threatens to destroy its former supremacy (Brennan, 76-77).

Brennan's analysis throws light on the manner in which Rushdie has expressed his art of mythical transposition by turning his exiled hero an American 'Indian', denoting "a people bound to the Indians of the East

by the geographical ignorance of their European colonisers" (Brennan, 77). Flapping Eagle has been born in the milieu of "Phoenix" and as such illustrates the reincarnation of the nonconformist in an intolerant land. And as Brennan reminds us that:

The Amerindians and the Indians are bound together in Rushdie's mind negatively: the religion of Axona mirrors the strict rituals and hypocrisy of Islam, Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism: women are chattel; those open to foreign influences are repudiated by a community of bigots (Brennan, 77).

Viewed in this manner, *Grimus* incarnates this quest, which is a transcendental vision of heterogeneity or heterogeneity made beneficial. The context of such heterogeneity, however, involves an inverted or mixed order with supreme creative abilities, which are only talked about and not demonstrated narratively. At this point it is important to note that Rushdie has brilliantly explored this crystallised "otherness" primarily in terms of his fictional craft and intertextual play in his imaging of (this Otherness) in a language game. He has concentrated on the palindrome and the anagram, of which the most important is "Grimus" itself, which is again the anagrammatic embodiment of "Simurg":

The Divine Game of Order, the Game extends far beyond mere letter-puzzling. The vast mental powers of the Gorfis (large god-like 'frogs') make it possible for them

anagrammatically to alter their very environment and indeed their own physical make up (Grimus, 77).

Catherine Cundy in her essay entitled “‘Rehearsing Voices’: Salman Rushdie’s Grimus” has highlighted the novelist’s presentation of the theme of exile. Cundy has seen in Grimus the novelist’s first tentative investigation of post-coloniality. And the obvious motif is the Eagle, who is both White and an Indian. By selecting such a motif, Rushdie has invariably stressed the in-between or hybrid status of the migrant artist, who belongs to many places and continents at the same time. This hybridity becomes one of the principal reasons for the expelling of Eagle from his birthplace among the Axona Indians, who, then becomes a chameleon turncoat and who is later shadowed in Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses. In her essay Margareta Paterson explains that

In K, he tried to find a home. ‘The way of K’ is the name of the philosophy of life — a way of living which preserves the men in the cocoon of the past and in the minutiae of the present.... ‘It is the natural condition of the exile putting down roots in memories’ (Paterson, 22).

Syed Amanuddin in his essay on “The Novels of Salman Rushdie: Mediated Reality as Fantasy” has stated that in Grimus Rushdie has initiated the exploration of the heritage of colonialism. He has seen Grimus as a European, “discovering” the native Eagle and exploiting him

for his own purposes (Amanuddin, 1989, 143). Again both Cundy and Johansen in his essay on Grimus have emphasised the oppression by the Whites. Johansen has drawn parallels from the Tempest and shown similarities between Grimus and Prospero and also between Eagle and Caliban (Johansen, 1985, 22). Indeed, in Grimus Rushdie has repeatedly illustrated the condition of the migrant. The literary image which is used to explain such a situation is that of gravity and lightness. Gravity becomes a metaphor for a settled condition and lightness has been likened to migration. Like the narrator in Shame, the migrant has learnt how to overcome the law of gravity and practice the art of flying. It is to be noted that such difference is to be found in Grimus also. This distinction has been actualised, as has already been noted, in the life of gorfs and birds. The gorfs represent gravity, immobility, sterility and intellect. They are contrasts to those men who are related to birds, Eagle and Grimus, who are both migrants.

The men in K seem to be created in analogy with the gorfs because the first person who Eagle encounters in K is Stone, a man who is engaged in an act of worship. He is on all fours and crawls the length of the city. He does so because the street is said to be his microcosm (Grimus, 130). Margarita has noted that in Grimus

Everybody in K gradually appears petrified — in striking contrast to the birds. Migrants, who in a similar way

petrify in reiteration of the manners and customs of their native place, recur in Rushdie's later novels.

We can find still other interpretative possibilities. The word 'gorf' is an anagram of frog. The name of their master is Dota, which could be another anagram, toad. They live on thera, which could be an anagram of earth. Making and deciphering anagrams is one of the most important occupations of the gorfs (Paterson, 23).

In this way alchemy has been used in Grimus as an ambiguous literary trope to highlight the charged symbols for death and rebirth, and the transformation and encounter between opposite poles in the situation of the migrant artist and which Rushdie forcefully explores in his later novels. Thus

...an alchemical context does not exclude other ways of understanding the novel. On the contrary, one could argue that migration is a basic experience of many characters in Rushdie's texts, and migration is seen as a wholly revolutionary process. It leads cultures to mix and change, and for humans to be transformed. Migration means that old certainties are questioned, which in turn leads to doubt and the necessity of compromise — this is one of the themes of The Satanic Verses. All these themes are comprehensible without reference to alchemy. However,

this tradition elucidates the themes and clothes them in a powerful symbolic language while at the same time also dressing them in existential and political dimensions (Mittapalli & Kuortti, 2003, 24-25).

Indeed, the multiple themes of migration, change, transnationality and hybridity find expression in the multiplicity of voices in Grimus. Of course, allied with a recognition of such related questions, one of the principle issues in the novel is Flapping Eagle's search for himself: "I am looking for a suitable voice to speak in" (Grimus: 32).

Actually, the diversity of choices emerges in, for example, the varying narrative points of view of the world. In spite of the fact that the novel is mainly narrated from the omniscient point of view, there are occasional first-person narrations, as in the cases of Flapping Eagle (Grimus, 46), Dolores (Grimus, 57-58), Virgil (Grimus, 95-96) and Tina (Grimus, 179). According to Joel Kuortti, "this functions as a gesture allowing multiple points of view in the narrative. It is part of the democratic quality which the novel form is claimed to contain. In the novel, especially the Endimions stand of this kind of diversity when this feature of reality is misused, it endangers the whole community, the whole universe" (Mittapalli & Kuortti, 2003, 1.56). At this point it is interesting to note that Colin Smith in "The Unbearable Lightness of Salman Rushdie" has shown how Grimus

dances allusively through the worlds of Persian, Nordic and Indian mythology (...). Rushdie's fictional model, which aims to expose the human causes of re-emergent historical patterns, deliberately sets itself in the broadest possible tradition, in which Eastern and Western myth-making merge (Smith, 105).

In bringing together different and opposing traditions through a world of allusions, Rushdie's narrative liberates in a certain sense, the limitations of language, circumscribed by nation and race. We have already witnessed this in his brilliant play of symbols and motifs like the anagram. However, in this multi-cultural fabric, Rushdie also shows how time and again the powerful fictions created by the religious, patriarchal and colonial authorities become the reality people live by and within. And when we see how the Gorfs, alien immobile stone frogs exercise their power of control by their employment of monograms, we also become aware of the secret behind the Gorfic notion of conceptualisation which empowers one to make things happen: "I think, therefore, it exists". Grimus initiates Flapping Eagle to this secret in the following passage from Grimus.

In a sense, Flapping Eagle, I created you, conceptualising you as you are. Just as I created the island and its dwellers with all the selectivity of the artist.

— We existed before you found us, said Flapping Eagle
(Grimus, 233).

We note here that Flapping Eagle is never content with Grimus's view. As has been noted by Joel Kuortti, "The descriptive power of the colonialist cannot be claimed as the originating point of the existence of the colonised. Against these dominating fictions, other counter-fictions are offered and claimed to be no less true. This feature is later developed more maturely in Rushdie's work, but it is there already in Grimus (Mittapalli & Kuortti, 2003, I.57).

In fact, the coloniser has always been considered as an usurper in a foreign land. He tries to impose his version of history on the inhabitants of the occupied country. Actually, then he attempts to translate his status of an usurper into one of legitimacy by falsifying history. Read in this manner, much of Rushdie's narratives not only expose such attempts by illegitimate colonialists but also create parallel narratives which militate against such efforts. Thus, most of his novels of the middle period like The Satanic Verses and Midnight's Children as well as his later novels like The Moor's Last Sigh or Fury dealt with the hybrid character of multiple narratives, which not only transcend demarcations of nation but obviate any simple linearity of racial superimposition on other nationalities. This may be seen in Grimus, where the Gorfs are projected as "illegitimate colonialists", albeit in a postcolonial environment where they become so disillusioned and indifferent that they finally allow

Grimus to appropriate the Stone Rose, the instrument of their power. It remains true that the catastrophe following Grimus's inability to control the effect through the use of the Stone Rose testifies to this indifference.

Joel Kuortti has remarked in this context that

The above would not suffice to prove that the Gorfs to stand for the French. As a further support for the present interpretation, it can be noted that they do not, after all, live on some faraway planet, but on palimpsest Earth, 'Thera', in the palimpsest Universe, 'Nirveesu' (Grimus, 64). What is even more suggestive of it is that the Gorfic idea of the simultaneously existing Endimions or Dimensions could well denote the democratic ideals so forcefully put forward by the French Revolution: especially equality, but liberty and fraternity as well. As such, there seems to be at least a shadow of these ideals in the Utopian (Grimus, 85&149), Communist (Grimus, 116 & 148-49), or, indeed, religious (Grimus, 100). Paradises, as conceptualised in the reversed, epic 'underwater Underworld' of Calf Island (with echoes of Atlantis, Robinson Crusoe's island, the Odyssey's Ithaca, More's Utopia, and the classical Ultima Thule among others) and particularly in the town of K. And as with the Gorfic planet, Virgil explains the existence of Calf Island in terms

of Endimions, than 'an infinity of dimensions might exist, as palimpsest, upon and within and around our town' (Mittapalli & Kuortti, 2003, I.47).

As the Gorf Koax becomes the titular head of the other Gorfs, called Magister Anagrammari, he moved toward heresy (Grimus, 66). It is remarkable that the Gorf Koax's heresy here corresponds well with the irreverence, associated with Sufi mystics like Attar and Al-Halay, or the novel form as such, since France was among the most important sources of its initiation. But it is precisely this acquiescence and willingness on Gorf Koax's part to patronise features of a foreign colonised culture, which leads to his own expulsion. This very similar to the fate of the Flapping Eagle, who was expelled by his own people for his (impure) espousing of a foreign culture like that of the Unaxona. This hybrid character of both the Gorf Koax and the Flapping Eagle shows that they are not monolithic, but rather eclectic in temper, since the Gorf Koax wants to measure their civilization with that of the others. This is actually the nature of the migrant artist and which later finds comprehensive expression in The Satanic Verses and Midnight's Children (Mittapalli & Kuortti, 2003, 1.48-49). Once again, the irony with which the colonial Gorfs are presented are never lost on the reader since these Gorfs may be highly self-ironic portraits of the author-figure later appearing in many other novels. Thus, in The Satanic Verses Gibreel witnesses the apparition

of the Supreme Being in person, sitting across on the bed, facing him. This Supreme Being is actually Salman Rushdie in person.

He saw, sitting on the bed, a man of about the same age as himself, of medium height, fairly heavily built, with salt and pepper beard cropped closed to the line of the jaw. What struck him most was that the apparition was balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and more glasses. This was not the Almighty he has expected (S.V., 318).

In this manner both the Gorf Koax and the Flapping Eagle may be said to prefigure the hybridity of the postcolonial writer which ranges throughout Rushdie's fiction and critical writings. This "multiform, plural, representing the union-by-hybridisation of such opposites as Oopar and Neechay" in the artist in The Satanic Verses (S.V., 319) form the basis of such mosaic of motifs, images and cultures in Grimus.

Apart from alchemy and monomyth, opposites and their union become cultural motif in the novel and which very well explain and illustrate Rushdie's interest in plurality and "union-by-hybridisation". Campbell has referred to Joyce's words in Finnegans Wake "equals of opposites (...) polarised for reunion" (Campbell, 1973, 108; Joyce, 1947, 92). Such phrases like "equal and opposite" are interrelated and illustrate their mutual need for each other and explain why such theories of purity and originality as well as something good are always questioned by Rushdie. In Grimus the fusion of opposites have been incarnated in image

of sexual intercourse in alchemical tracts and images, because the masculine and the feminine contain the polarities of human existence. Intercourse has been incarnated in various forms of incest in the novel. Margareta has explained how incest between sister and brother is a common motif in alchemy, an image of the merging of the central ingredient of sulphur and mercury or for the restoration of a divided hermaphrodite (Paterson, 13).

The figure of Mercury which is found in Grimus has been explained as a personification and materialisation of the Collective Unconscious by Jung in Mysterium (1989). Margareta has also shown how the mandala in Jung becomes a symbol for the union of opposites, that is, a union of conscious and unconscious. Such a mandala contains a centre, "the psychological centre of personality and can be combined with a circle" (Paterson, 13). The idea of the mandala has been incarnated in a Stone Rose which plays a decisive role since it has the ability to make the whole supernatural world possible. According to Jung, the movement of the slabs, the rotation around the centre of the Stone Rose, suggests concentration on the most important, the Self. The novel has many rotations and circling movements at crucial moments, explicitly implying dissolution and union. In Grimus such movements become symbolic, heavily burdened with psychological overtones. In this way such rotational and dance-like movements symbolically illustrate the opposition between static atoms and dynamic ions in man:

At the level of plot, Eagle searches for 'stasis' in K but is forced to 'kinesis' (Grimus, 235). In K, the revolutionary shares a house with the count. Eagle is drawn between two plate witches he says, identified twins, "opposite" and the same (Mittapalli & Kuortti, 2003, 12).

In this manner Grimus may be seen as Rushdie's play with a symbolic world, a puzzle, where some pieces seem to have been lost and where the ultimate end eludes us. Rushdie has actually created several fictional levels and built up complicated worlds. The reader, like the Eagle, soon becomes conscious of the existence of several levels and several perspectives. Grimus anticipates Rushdie's later novels where reality has been presented in more ways than one both in terms of substance as well as in terms of technique. This novel also experiments with Rushdie's favourite themes of cultural multiplicity and complexity on various planes like that of the allegorical, symbolical, linguistic and aesthetic. It has been Rushdie's intention to highlight the multiple resonances of narratives, whereby the reader escapes his fixity within a monolithic pattern. This flexibility and fluidity of the migrant artist, who cannot be imprisoned within the boundaries of nation, culture or race, has been given allegorical and symbolic expression in Grimus, through which Rushdie has made his debut in the literary world.

Chapter V

Midnight's Children

In her edition of a collection of essays on Rushdie's Midnight's Children Meenakshi Mukherjee lauds the publication of the novel as a supreme instance of a post-colonial text, which weaves several discourses about nation, history and society, thus affirming its hybrid character in global terms.

Initially seen as merely a comic, irrelevant and high-spirited novel about a fantastic protagonist whose birth coincided with the independence of India, Midnight's Children was gradually appropriated into a theoretical discourse about nation, history and their narrativity. The novel has been claimed as the paradigmatic postcolonial text subverting the notions of received historiography and indigenising both the language and the narrative mode of colonising culture. It has also been seen as the quintessential fictional embodiment of the post-modern celebration of de-centring and hybridity. The novel's insistence that realism was no longer an adequate mode for describing today's world in which there was no broad

consensus about the nature of reality, also fits in with post-modernist impulses. While the first reading makes it a major Third World text of our time, the second confers on it a central status globally (1999, 9).

The hybrid nature of Rushdie's novel ought to be assessed in the changing scenario of fiction writing in India, following 1947. Earlier, the novel in English in India was removed dynamic from the myriad and vibrant discourses of nationality, race and religion, which formed the staple of other novels in Indian languages. Compared to such novels, the English novel gained its sustenance in the strictly academic and formal but diastrophic atmosphere of the English departments, thus echoing its derivative diameter. Rushdie's novel experiments with the hybrid nature of Indian English language was its creativity to the amorphous mixing of the discourses of popular culture like that of the film, the media, the young generation of the college campuses, coffee houses, the lowest strata of society like the ghettos and so on. Indeed, the essence of Rushdie's hybrid novel lies in its effective liquidity of the erstwhile and serious imagined polarity between "an essentialised East and a similarly constructed West (Mukherjee, 11). Midnight's Children chooses to anchor itself to the mosaic of Indian culture, thus obviating the changes of elitism and estrangement, leveled against other Indian English novels.

Just like Goethe's Sorrows of Young Werther in late eighteenth century Europe and Bankim Chandra's Anandamath in late nineteenth century India, it would not be too much to claim that Midnight's Children occupies such a position in the domain of English fiction in India. This book reflects the circumstances of Rushdie's spatial dislocation and consequent cultural hybridity which are shared by other diasporic writers of the world.

Most of the events of the book are centred around the circumstances surrounding Rushdie's spatial dislocation in the post-independence era, when he left India for good and was stationed in England for seventeen years, after which his parents moved to Karachi in 1964. Having been born in Bombay, he inevitably yearns for his lost childhood in India and it is this loss of homeland, which gives to his fiction a sense of nostalgia. As a migrant artist he feels displaced in a foreign land and hence he fondly recollects and fictionally recreates the events between 1915 and 1977. The very process of recollection is stamped with a fragmentary character and the history of the subcontinent has been recreated through a technique of montage, piecing together past events from random shards of memory. In one sense, therefore, Saleem's mnemonic enterprise lacks the profession historian's claim of objectivity because he knows his fallibility and the fragmentary nature of his vision. Like his grandfather Aadam Aziz, he is condemned to look at the work

through perforated sheet. This is not only harmonious with the hybrid character of Indian culture but it also reaches out to the fragmentary nature of the migrant artist's vision. It is of importance to bear in mind that in this novel, important historical events cannot be known in any case, far less recorded. Both national as well as family history have been preserved in Saleem's memory. At the same time they have been subjected to distortion. The pickle metaphor and the pickling process metaphorically illustrates the act of preservation and its consequent distortion in the inevitable alterations during the pickling process. Saleem's chutneyfication of history mingles the disparate entities of the chronicle and stories. For example, the history of Bombay is made alive as much through the fact of the city being part of the dowry when Charles II of England married Catherine of Portugal in 1660, as through the "sthala-purana" of Mumbadevi and a galloping statue of Shivaji, because often legends create a realistic effect and become more useful than facts.

Remembering is not a simple act because there is an ample choice of alternatives. According to Neil Ten Kortenaar, Midnight's Children, has exposed the fictionality, the constructedness of all metaphors and narrative conventions implied in national history by opening out a range of possibilities. In his essay "Midnight's Children and The Allegory of History", Kortenaar has argued that one of Rushdie's most effective devices is to turn metaphor into literal truth and thereby make visible its

figurative status. Examples may be found in such central metaphors like the "birth" of a nation, where the screams, forceps and midwives have been brought in to emphasise the process of partition. Again, the "body" of the nation has been presented as something which may crack or be mutilated, along with other minor tropes like "freezing" of assets, sweeping something "below the carpet". From example, the entire fourth chapter actually takes place under the drawing room carpet. Kortenaar has very astutely observed that

The novel does expose the fictionality of the nation and of its history, but the denial of the possibility of literal truth does not deny the nation. Where there is no literal truth we must put our faith in fictions. All we have are fictions, but some fictions deserve our assent and others do not. This is Linda Hutcheon's point about postmodern representation: it affirms only in order to subvert, but subverts in order to affirm. Rushdie's novel explodes the notion of the nation having a stable identity and a single history, then invites a sceptical, provisional faith in the nation that it has exploded (1999, 28-29).

Rushdie's sense of history does not include the sense of a past recoverable by radical historians looking for the traces and the empty spaces left in the archives by classes other than the middle classes and by

groups (other than intellectuals). It remains a project by subaltern studies historians. Rushdie's novel is a commentary on the textuality of history and especially of that official history which constitutes the nation. In effect, Rushdie's enterprise is to consider and accept the nation as already mediated by the "pretext" of national history, and which may be found in its canonical form in encyclopedias and textbooks. Kortenaar points out that David Lipscomb has already shown that Rushdie had Stanley Wolpert's A New History of India beside him when he came to write Midnight's Children (1999, 29).

The organic metaphor of the body that contains the members of the nation is the site of hybridity in Midnight's Children. Rushdie's novel is an extended comment on the conventional notion that India was born on August 15, 1947. But there are more births in Wolpert's standard history of India than any multigenerational saga. In his A New History of India Wolpert writes "(t)he cultural revival had given birth to violent revolutionary offspring" (1989, 261), that British India was "severed as though by caesarian section to permit two nations to be born" (348), that the Republic of India was born on January 26, 1950 (356), and that out of the ashes of the Bangladesh War, "the world's eight largest nation had been born" (390). Rushdie has taken Wolpert's metaphors literally to add the pangs and screams; the forceps and midwives that Wolpert implies but forgets. When India was declared independent, Saleem and Shiva, along

with other midnight's children were born. National and private affairs/births coincide. Similarly, a son is born to Parvati at the same instant when Indira Gandhi declares a national emergency. Saleem virtually relates the two events.

...while Parvati pushed in the ghetto, J.P. Narayan and Morarji Desai were also goading Indira Gandhi; while triplets yelled push push push the leaders of the Janata Morcha urged the police and Army to disobey the illegal orders of the disqualified Prime Minister, so in a sense they were forcing Mrs. Gandhi to push, and as the night darkened towards the midnight hour, because nothing ever happens at any other time, triplets began to screech it's coming coming coming, and elsewhere the Prime Minister was giving birth to a child of her own (M.C. 499).

The metaphor of birth, therefore, is part of the larger metaphor of the nation and is inextricably connected with the figure of the body, as has already been seen. But along with the trope of the nation as a body comes the question of dismemberment.

In other words, the person has a body which must needs be mutilated in order to become liberated as a person/nation. Generally, historians speak of growth and maturity, as if the nation were a human child, of direction and progress and dangers, as if the nation were on a

journey, of wounds and memory, desire and dear, as if the nation had a psychology. Rushdie's novel presents the inversion of history and the dismemberment of the nation as a human child. Rushdie is of the view that the essential nature of the Indian subcontinent comprises the notion of hybridity. The partition of 1947 and the second partition leading to the creation of Bangladesh is a mockery of the principle of hybridity because he has attempted to illustrate both in Midnight's Children and in Shame that the myriad discourses of religion, race and culture form the basis of subcontinent. No religious or racial fanaticism can destroy the heterogeneous composition of Indian culture. Therefore, Rushdie's portrayal of the dismemberment of the subcontinent is a satiric commentary on the political hierarchy of both India and Pakistan. Wolpert in his book has quoted Nehru saying that he hoped that by "cutting of the head we will get rid of the headache" (347). Gandhi, on the other hand, continued to object to what he saw as the "vivisection of his motherland" (Wolpert, 347). Later he quotes Yahya Khan (of Pakistan), who had insisted that "no power on earth" could separate East and West Pakistan, since they were "two limbs of the same body" (Wolpert, 385). This literalisation of the nation as metaphor through the misshapened persona of Saleem and Shiva lies at the centre of the novel.

In the novel another image of hybridity is that of blood. Blood has been variously depicted as "mercurochrome", and blood having the

connotations of sacrifice. The violence of racial conflict results in bloodshed which might be revengeful in nature. It can also be interpreted as a sign of baptism, marking the coming of age. All these meanings of blood presume that blood is shared, so that the blood spilled by some is the same as that flowing through the veins of others who have not suffered direct violence. The dual implications of blood — blood is spilled in sacrifice and blood is shared by people who are genetically related — are invoked by the early nationalist Aurobinda for whom the soil of India was “sacred land to be loved and defended, if need be, with the blood of her children” (Wolpert, 262). Rushdie actually makes these metaphors of blood literal, in this sense, his novel raises the question of identity, which is given by the blood that is carried within one's veins and that gushes forth when the skin is broken when he injures the tip of his finger, Saleem requires an emergency transfusion and an analysis of his blood performed on that occasion, in a chapter called “Alpha and Omega”, reveals that he is not the genetic son of Ahmed and Amina Sinai and not the brother of his sister.

This incident may give rise to the following interpretations. One of them may be that the nation is imagined of a family sharing a common blood. Thus both Nehru or Jinnah might be referred to as the Father of the Nation. In both India and Pakistan the metaphor of national bloodlines has been dangerously misappropriated and the history of the nation confused

with the history of a single family. The metaphor of national bloodlines contains the essence of hybridity because different races and cultures have been subsumed under it. Therefore, such hybridity can never be confined within a single family. Moreover, both Aadam Aziz and Nehru signify hybridity in a different sense. They are from Kashmiri families; both have been educated in Europe, have lost their fathers and uphold a secular ideal and both were present at Amritsar at the time of the massacre. Containing in themselves the disparate nature of foreign and indigenous cultures as well as the ideals of secularity, Aadam and Nehru illustrate in themselves the cross currents of history and culture.

An investigation into the origins of Saleem and Shiva reveals the complex and hybrid nature of personality and state. Both in terms of national and personal history, Rushdie is inclined to present before us an alternate genealogy which signals his rejection of genealogy and the issue of pure unalloyed birth where national history is concerned. We come to know that Saleem's genetic father was a profligate English hypocrite who had taken advantage of a poor Hindu's wife and who left right at the moment when Indian independence had been declared. This is actually a literalisation of the metaphor used by Tariq Ali when writes that "(t)he new state was.... Indian in its colour, composition and make-up, but its pedigree was unmistakably British" (Ali, 1985, 78). Rushdie's alternative genealogy of Indian history therefore shows his rejection of both the

established version of national history as well as a rejection of the Indian nation-state as the bastard product of England's violation of the subcontinent in political and sexual terms. It is to be noted that such historians like Partha Chatterjee and critics like Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak constantly resist the nation-state as a bourgeois invention having no meaning for the mass of people, living within India. Kortenaar has commented on Rushdie's portrayal of an alternative genealogy in the following manner:

However, Rushdie's alternative genealogy, a debunking of the standard narrative of Indian history, draws attention to its own fictionality as well. When Mary Pereira confesses to Saleem's family the switch she perpetrated when Saleem was newly born, she exclaims that Saleem was the natural child of Vanita and her husband, the ministered Wee Willie Winkie. Mary could not have known about Vanita's adultery with the Englishman Methwold. Saleem has invented this parentage. The account of the baby switch does not give us a final true version of events, but is itself another fiction (1999, 38).

Rushdie's presentation of alternative genealogy is, in many ways, a confirmation of hybridity. Thus Saleem's legal grandfather, Dr. Aziz, is named after the main Indian character in Forster's A Passage to India;

Wee Willie Winkie the legal father in Saleem's alternate genealogy, bears the name of the English boy-hero in a story by Kipling. In this way, both parentage and identity is subjected to a rewriting of other fictions and becomes a fiction itself. Kortenaar remarks that

Even the rejection of genealogical succession and of history involves a choice of narratives. The radical stance that sees Indian history as a rape is itself dependent on a metaphor (1999, 38-39).

The subject of history in Midnight's Children becomes a competing account of different texts. This mongrelisation of history gives to the novel much of its hybrid status. We have seen the elaborate constructions of interlocking metaphors in this novel have been based upon the provision of an alternative view of history, which combines both the metaphorical and the literal. In this connection Rukmini Bhaya Nair in her essay "History as Gossip in Midnight's Children" has shown how Rushdie has created a satire, history and religious discourse and which largely conflict with each other, resulting in a fragmented ethos. She has the following comment to offer on Rushdie's employment of speculative gossip, which uses history as both a pre-text and a pretext.

In selecting satire as a formal technique of fictional representation, the writer may be committed, by the very terms of his craft, to the appropriation of a reality that is

reified in other powerful modes of discourse such as the historical or the religious. By analysing the manner in which history is retold as satirical gossip in Rushdie's Midnight's Children, this essay attempts to demonstrate how Rushdie created therein a unique narrative such an appropriation.... It is my contention that the perspectives adopted by Rushdie's characters in Midnight's Children on the events, personal and eventualities of history are typically those of voyeurs, secret sharers. An eavesdropper hears a different story from one that is publicly mooted and the narrative that s/he consequently produces has the flavour of lip-smacking gossip rather than bland documentation.... (Thus the) telling of the untellable is the voyeur's vocation (My parenthesis) (1999, 50-51).

On the other hand we find in society the grand narratives of history, economics and ethics. On the other hand, there is speculative gossip, through which the grand narratives have been effectively subverted. Such sub-versions/subversions of history and religion have been enacted through the creation of doubt about established version of facts. Gossip actually consists of a fragmentary telling of parts of story. It also involves the bystander into making moral comments. Gossip gives rise to interest in the trivias and such secondary details run counters to

main narratives. It also functions as exposed by revealing the lapses of people. In this way the discourse of gossip legitimises blasphemies, obscurities, and scatological details. Finally, gossip functions as an undermining discourse; as something which takes place behind the scenes, where the trust between teller and listener becomes implicit (1999, 53). Functioning as a form of “apostasy text”, it acts as a critique of any form of authoritarianism in politics, religion and society. In this way the hybrid nature of historical discourse may be understood as the official grand narrative of the nation-state and the apostasy text of the gossip, which runs counter to it. History, then may be said to enact its own subversion/sub-version in such secondary narratives. It can either reject it or engage itself in conflict. The complicated status of historical narratives has been questioned in Midnight's Children by gossip, which operates, as Rukmini says, as a form of “interventionist discourse” (Mukherjee, 1999, 54). In Midnight's Children the boatman Tai, Padma, Durga among others turn gossip, into secondary narratives and stories. In Shame Rushdie compares gossip to water, which characteristically oozes to find all sorts of work places. In any case, history is manifested through the dialectical oscillation between the languages of sacralisation and blasphemy.

This mongrelisation of history takes place at several sections in the novel. Initially, the fragmentation of history may be located in the metaphor of the “perforated sheet” through which Saleem’s grandfather

Dr. Aadam Aziz originally glimpses parts of a patient, who later became his wife. In this way, the shifting, changing mirage-like dreams constantly defamiliarise the contours of history as we know it in our making moment. We come to know history by acquainting ourselves with its myriad portions, imaginatively restructuring the missing links.

So gradually Doctor Aziz came to have a picture of Naseem in his mind, a badly-fitting collage of her severally-inspected parts. This phantasm of a portioned woman began to haunt him, and not only in his dreams. Glued together by his imagination, she accompanied him on all his rounds, she moved into the front room of his mind, so that waking and sleeping he could feel in his fingertips the softness of her ticklish skin on the perfect tiny wrists on the beauty of the ankles; he could smell her scent of lavender and chambeli; he could hear her voice and her helpless laughter of a young girl; but she was headless, because he had never seen her face (M.C., 23).

We have already noted how the grand narratives of history and religion produce their own sub-version/subversions. However, it is important to understand Rushdie's stance behind such critique of established versions of history. In all what he has said and written, it remains a fact that Rushdie exemplifies the type and characteristics of the

migrant artist, who crosses continents, nations and cultures. He has often said that he had abruptly lost his faith in his fifteenth year, when he was at school in England (I.H., 377). In his essay "In God We Trust" in the collection of essays, Imaginary Homelands (1991), he has explained how he has rejected religion in favour of art with reference to the subtle co-existence and mingling of the fantastic and the real in all forms of life.

As for religion, my work, much of which has been concerned with India and Pakistan, has made it essential for to confront the issue of religious faith. Even the form of my writing was affected. If one is to attempt honestly to describe reality as it is experienced by religious fact, then the conventions of what is called realism are quite inadequate. The rationalism of that form comes to seem like a judgement upon, an invalidation of, the religious faith of the characters being described. A form must be created which allows the miraculous and mundane to co-exist at the same level — as the order of event. I found this to be essential even though I am not, myself, a religious man (I.H., 376).

Midnight's Children embodies Rushdie's supreme attempt to embody the miraculous and the mundane through the medium of hybrid language. He has opened a Pandora's box of infinite possibilities by

inventing a magic language which uses the medium of English but incorporates many ideas and terms from Indian languages. Rushdie's unique and gargantuan enterprise has been explained by Professor Harish Trivedi in his essay "Salman the Funtoosh: Magic Bilingualism in Midnight's Children" in Mukherjee's collection of critical essays on the novel.

Trivedi has indicated that the Kenyan novelist Ngugiwa Thiong'o wanted to write back at the Empire in his own Gikuyu, instead of English. But he has shown how Rushdie has attempted to strike back at the Empire through his use of English. Apparently, his use of English, might be interpreted as a concession to the multinational language with its implications of liberalisation and globalisation of the subcontinent. Rushdie's brilliant hybridisation of English language has enabled him to conquer English by using it as a medium. Trivedi writes:

However, Rushdie's claim to "conquer English" had a more strictly textual and stylistic dimension as well. It is reported that when Martin Amis was once asked what it was that Rushdie had and he did not, he had pointedly answered: 'India'. It was this India represented by its major language Hindi-Urdu which Rushdie seemed to want to interpolate into his English as a strategy for conquering it, rather as a Trojan horse.... Rushdie's solution in

Midnight's Children was to bring in India, not only as the grand theme but also as part of the medium. It could be argued that the single most remarkable novum that Rushdie introduced in his use of English here was his incorporation of some Indian, *i.e.*, Hindi-Urdu/Hindustani words, phrases and collocations. He did not subvert English from within, in the trendy radical catch-phrase of his youth; rather, he changed it from without (1999, 73).

Rushdie's hybridisation of English was successful since it came just after the wave of the Raj nostalgia, the BBC TV series on the Empire, the novels by Paul Scott and M.M. Kaye; Attenborough's Gandhi and David Lean's picturisation of A Passage to India. In his essay "Outside the Whale" in Imaginary Homelands Rushdie has forcefully denounced them all at some length (87-106). However, the cultural context was just ripe for Rushdie's experiment. He locates his fictional experiment in the wake of "Raj revisionism" and "the rise of conservative ideologies in modern Britain" (I.H., 92).

In his novel Rushdie often uses a Hindi word, which is bracketed together with an English translation placed immediately before or after it, for instant intelligibility. Sometimes, a Hindi and an English word are juxtaposed to form a phrase or, more visibly, a name, for example, Picture Singh. "In another variation, traditional names such as Padma and Ganesh

are evoked, and allusions made to their etymological or mythical aspects, so that the bilingualism of the novel is set in the wider control of biculturalism" (Mukherjee, 1999, 74). Trivedi explains how the introduction of Hindi words and phrases, to which the Western reader would not have had access on his own, outlines the cultural difference between him/her and the author and which no other device can. Such instances lead to what is known as hybridity, where on the one hand cultural difference is pronounced and on the other, the foreign reader is also insisted to acquaint himself with the temper of Indian cultural currents through his enrichment of vocabulary, permitted by the author. In other words, Indian culture may be foreign to outsiders but at the same time, those readers from outside the subcontinent may also claim to acquire authentic knowledge of India, hitherto denied to them. Trivedi has drawn our attention to the use of foreign words as a badge of authenticity in Indian English writing prior to Rushdie, especially in R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and more categorically in G.V. Desani's novel All About H. Hatterr (1948). But it remains indubitable that Rushdie's "bilingualism made a greater impact than that of any previous Indian writer, on his Western readers certainly" (Mukherjee, 1999, 75).

The self-sustaining academic activity of compiling a grand gloss of all the Indian words, phrases and allusions in the novel has been undertaken by the Canadian critic Neil Ten Kortenaar. His list collated by

Harish Trivedi includes place names (144 items, including Amul Diaries, Bandung, Chhamb, Dadar and the Vindhyas), historical figures (178 items, including A.V. Alexander, Catherine of Braganza, Rajiv, Sanjay and Maneka Gandhi, Iltutmish, Indra and Isa), a list of words from the Indian languages (33 items, including baap-re-baap, bhang, bhangis, charas and falooda), words to do with religion (112 items), literary and cultural allusions (139 items, including the Arjuna Indiabike, Coconut Day, Golden Bengal), and names of characters which are "Rushdie's rather than Saleem's allusions" (94 items) (Mukherjee, 1999, 75-76).

Rushdie's chutneyfication of history and of narrative is, therefore, part of his hybrid art and literary world. Trivedi remarks that Rushdie's bilingualism and biculturalism does indeed form a peculiar crux when his works are translated into any Indian language and especially into Hindi (Mukherjee 1999, 78). Although the Hindi translation of Midnight's Children had nearly sold out within a year of its publication, it has been noted by Trivedi that Rushdie has not made any great waves in Hindi; the entire appeal of Midnight's Children may be located in the Western World rather than the Orient. Thus, according to Trivedi,

The whole orientation of his narrative seems to suggest that it is addressed not to an Indian insider but to a Western outsider. The shocking novelty and the precious rarity of the novel which arose from the 'Indianness' of the text as

well as the author, and which helped make it such a huge sensation in the West, can hardly be experienced as such in India, whether by someone reading him in English or in translation.... Perhaps no man is a prophet in his own land and language, especially when he has turned his back upon them, and certainly not for the same reasons for which he has become a prophet in a foreign land and language (1999, 81).

What Rushdie has actually done is to encourage a whole new generation of Indians to start writing in English, and each one of them is marked by his hybrid character since they write in a bilingual medium. Rukun Advani, in his essay "Novelists in Rushdie" has blasphemed by saying that "as everyone knows in the beginning there was Rushdie, and the word was with Rushdie" (Advani 1991, 15-16). In this way, Rushdie may be said to have let loose Indian Anglophone tongues. He has launched a plethora of "Indo-Anglian novels" and he has imparted confidence to all his successors the confidence to spice their English at least nominally with elements which are distinctly not English. Rushdie has inspired a generation of hybrid writing which may aptly be termed, after Trivedi, as "Rushdification" and which actually means the decolonisation of English language or its subsequent "Indianisation" (Mukherjee, 1999, 88). Through its bilingual character, Rushdie's fictions

as well as that of his followers illustrate the sub-version/ subversion of the English language. Ironically, it is seen that the use of English gives rise to the need for a bilingual/multilingual language, which may suggest, however subliminally, or paradoxically that English is not the only language in the world. The process of colonisation through the imperial language has been turned upside down by Rushdie. He has made this possible by creating an ideological space inhabited by both the coloniser and the colonised, and where both can touch each other and interact. Hybridity becomes a site of writing where multi-cultural forces operate but are never reducible to one single language. This "interstitial indeterminacy" of the in-betweenness of the author reflects the ideology of the migrant artist, who experiences the fact of being "translated" or being "force across" nations and continents (Mukherjee, 1999, 86).

In most of his fictions as well as critical writings, Rushdie shows that the migrant artist's nature betrays a kind of ambiguity or doubleness.

Bhabha writes,

This liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a transnational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of the migrant life.... The subject of cultural difference becomes a problem that Walter Benjamin has described as the

irresolution, or liminality, of 'transition', the element of resistance in the process of transformation 'that element in a translation which does not lead itself to translation' (1994, 224).

Trivedi has pointed out that while the literally 'transitional' aspect of a character like Saladin Chamcha and the extraneous dimension of 'hybridity' as religious 'heresy' may make the Satanic Verses a textually illustrative of "the trials of cultural translation" in Bhaba's interpretation, it is not evident that anything even half as a problematic begins to happen in Midnight's Children. Trivedi's judgement may be taken as a passing comment, not to be taken too seriously because throughout his essay on "Salman the Funtoosh" he has not only emphasised Rushdie's hybridisation of the English language but he has stated in no certain terms that some of the images in Midnight's Children do actually depict the very condition and idea of hybridity. He writes in the same essay that

Of all the images of multi-cultural hybridity that Rushdie's work contains, perhaps none is more representative than one he borrows from the Hindi film Shree 420, which he uses at the beginning of The Satanic Verses and which, as he has elsewhere suggested, 'could almost be Saleem's theme song (1999, 89).

However, Trivedi in his analysis of the novel indicates another aspect of Rushdie's fiction. He states that Rushdie's hybridity often inclines to the comic, playful, dramatic, rather than serious. Such performative quality about his prose has also elicited the following comment from Catherine Cundy:

Rushdie in Midnight's Children asks us to admire the display of literary fireworks, conjuring tricks and fantastic items pulled from the artist's hat (Cundy, 1999, 43).

According to Merivale, in "Midnight's Children and Tristram Shandy" (1986) in Mukherjee's collection of essays on the novel, this colourful and dramatic character of Rushdie's hybridity may be explained by his continuation of the real and the fantastic. Rushdie has perpetuated the genre of magic realism (in his novel Midnight's Children), which he has inherited from Gunter Grass and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Patricia explains that

With the help of Rushdie's recent critical collection, Imaginary Homelands, we can now piece together the views that underlie his magic realism, expressive as it is not only of a specifically 'third-world consciousness' but also of the more generally 'international' and 'migrant' status that he claims to share with, among many others, Gunter Grass. Such a writer is free to choose his

parents... (from) a polygot family tree (I.H., 20-21); in this way, I suggest, Saleem's terertextual relationship to Oscar is a genealogical allegory of Rushdie's 'choosing' of Grass. And for the 'migrant' writer, magic realism is the appropriate mode, for it provides the 'stereoscopic vision' with which he can 'see things plainly' enough to 'invent the earth beneath his feet' (I.H., 19, 20, 149). Thus, Rushdie finds the marvellous in what, like Macondo, is magic precisely because it is real (302), 'imbuing the... world (and the world of the text) with... radiance and meaning (251) by means of his "translation" of Grass (1996, 130).

And here it may be noted that according to Rushdie the act of translation does not imply Bhabha's idea of "the element of resistance in the process of transformation" or "that element in a translation which does not lead itself to translation" (1999, 224). In his collection of essays, Imaginary Homelands Rushdie locates the etymological meaning of translation in the Latin equivalent for the word, which carries the connotations of "bearing across". Thus he opines that

"Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; in clinging, obstinately to the notions that something can also be gained

(I.H., 1992, 17).” Rushdie reminds us that we are not simply Indians, but Indians, who have been the recipient of a hybrid culture. And that, after the British had left India, we are preoccupied with the task of a linguistic struggle, which is actually a reflection of other struggles taking place in ourselves as well as in our society. Herein lies the crux of the mystery surrounding the novel. Midnight's Children has been written from a kind of “double perspective” where the author is a migrant and an outsider as well as an insider both by virtue of his umbilical chord and his emotional attachment to his birth-place and which he is never likely to forget. This has been well illustrated in his recent collection of articles, entitled Steps Across This Line.

This hybrid nature of Rushdie's art has been explained variously in terms of intertextual strategies and the astonishing density of allusions to both Tin Drum and other Indian, Eastern texts, not to speak of other Western stories. Rushdie's “bricolage” of texts, both Western and Indian, which has been amply illustrated in his “totalising intertextuality” may, in Patriacia's words, be either an act of “inverting the processes of ‘colonial’ domination” or the act of “displacing the ‘overt cosmopolitanism’ of which Brennan, more judgementally speaks” (1999, 130). In all this Rushdie may seem to be echoing Gunter Grass's assertion that his status belongs to those people who had entered the conditions of metaphor.

They may be said to be always writing at the frontier between different cultures of other nations (1999, 130).

In this context, Patricia in her essay "Midnight Children and Tristan Shandy" thoughtfully outlines the act of translation by Rushdie in Midnight's Children, which is as flamboyant as it is skillful, and is a "bricolage" of themes, topic, events, characters, images, fictions — of which Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967) and Grass's The Tin Drum (1959) are two most significant instances of 'Magic Realism' (1999, 116). In her brilliant analysis Patricia has traced the hybrid appeal of Rushdie's novel to the strategies of Marquez and Grass. She explains that

In its multiplied fantasies, its introductions to the supernatural into the everyday, its hauntings and its 'traffic of the dead' (Marquez, 378), its characters fatally crushed by their obsessions, and above all in its apocalyptic vision of the extinction of a family from the earth, standing synecdochilly, at its conclusion, for a more general apocalypse, it is indeed a most 'Marquezan' book, and its magic is largely a 'Marquezan' magic. But insofar as 'its mimetic quotient' can be seen for the most part as an imitation of history, its 'realism', in the sense of its literary

strategies for imitating history, owes more to The Tin Drum. In books where ambiguous paternity forms a large part of the search for origins (and in a metafiction where 'origins' must also be metatextual ones), the putative father of Rushdie's hero-narrator, Saleem Sinai, must be (by a somewhat subtler genealogical model of intertextuality) Grass's dwarf, Oskar, even though, metaphorically speaking, Saleem thinks of himself as 'fathered by history' (1999, 117).

It is supremely ironic to think that Saleem might be handcuffed to history but Salman is not. Midnight's Children depicts the history of India since independence and this history has been inscribed in the fantastic autobiography of a man who had much of his education in England, who was born in India as a Muslim and whose family now resides in Pakistan. Again, Rushdie is a trespasser because he not only belongs to England but also the United States of America. It is interesting to note that Saleem is born to an Englishman and a low-caste Hindu, but is brought up in a Muslim family who believe that he is their son. In the novel, Saleem is shown to have multiple parents in his uncle and aunt, in a German expert of snake venom, in his mother's first husband, and in the snake charmer, Picture Singh. Saleem's hybrid origin is symbolic because it echoes

Rushdie's multicultural ambience in which he moves, lives and has his being. It is paradoxical to note that because he is an outsider, the whole of India is available to Rushdie. On one level, the novel might be said to be a product of the deranged fantasy of a megalomaniac who believes that he contains within himself a nation. Rushdie puts the entire nation within Saleem. Rushdie's novel is characteristically impudent, and it tries, as both cause and effect of its impudence, to swallow India whole, to vie with Krishna and ingest worlds. It is also characteristically fantastic. For Rushdie, India is an "imaginary country", a "mass fantasy", a "collective fiction", a country that could never have existed "except by the effort of phenomenal collective will — except in a dream we all agreed to dream" (M.C., 111). Rushdie as the migrant artist has therefore been successful in portraying the extraordinary diversity and hybridity of India. This has been encapsulated in the character of Saleem who accommodates the experiences of more than 600 million of his fellow countrymen.

In this sense the important events in modern Indian history occurred because Saleem was their agent. Thus he affirms that "the war happened because I dreamed Kashmir into the fantasies of our rulers; furthermore, I remained impure, and the war was to separate me from my sins" (M.C., 404-405). Saleem, in fact, controls political movements in Pakistan also. In the coup of Ayub Khan, for instance, Saleem assists in

troop formation and directs their movements by shuffling pepperpots around a banquet table in a demonstration for Ayub's generals.

What began, active metaphorically, with pepperpots, ended then; not only did I overthrow a government — I also consigned a president to exile (M.C., 349).

Similarly, in the separation Bangladesh, Saleem confesses,

I remained responsible through the workings of the metaphorical modes of connection, for the belligerent events of 1971 (M.C., 420).

Thus, it is this mingling of history with myth, psychology, satire and fantasy that gives to Midnight's Children much of its hybrid status. In other words, as Homi Bhabha in Nation and Narration has indicated that

The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation....

What emerges as an effort of such 'incomplete

signification' is a turning of boundaries and limits into the in-between spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated. It is from such narrative positions between cultures and nations, theories and texts, the political, the poetic and the painterly, the past and the present, that Nation and Narration seeks to affirm... (1990, 4).

Rushdie as a migrant artist is in a unique position to maneuver through the in-between spaces not only between nations and communities but also among those in-between spaces within a nation itself. Indeed, politics, myth, nationalism, fiction and history become a rich site of cultural interaction, which transcends boundaries of race, creed, religion and nation. Midnight's Children is a supreme testimony to this confluence of cross cultural contexts.

Chapter VI

Shame

Tracing the ideological location of Rushdie within the great prolixity and heterogeneity of cultural production in postcolonial literatures, Aijaz Ahmed in his book entitled In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures (1992) designates Shame as being “of a classic of this counter-canon” of Third World Literature (Ahmad, 1992, 125). Ahmad reminds us that Rushdie has insistently demanded that his three novels, *namely*, Grimus, Shame and Midnight’s Children should be read as “Third World” texts especially due to the following reasons, which Ahmad opines may be regarded as explanatory behind Rushdie’s claim. He states that

Rushdie has underscored whenever he has spoken in his own voice, whether within the novels or in the interviews and conference papers which have inevitably followed:

The colonial determination of our modernity, the conditions and corruptions of post-coloniality, the depiction of the Zia and Bhutto periods in Pakistan as emblematic of Third World candillos and dictators in general, myths of nationhood and independence, the myths and gods of India, Third World migrants in metropolitan cities, the world of Islam and so on (Ahmad, 126).

The uniqueness of Shame lies precisely in an understanding of the implications behind such cross cultural contexts which gives to the novel its peculiar flavour. Ahmad has explained how, for instance,

Rushdie's idea of 'migrancy', for example, which is quite central to his self-representation both in fiction and in life, has come to us in two versions. In the first version, fully present in Shame and in the writings that came at more or less the same time, 'migrancy' is given to us as an ontological condition of all human beings, while the 'migrant' is said to have 'floated upwards from history'. In the second version, articulated more fully in the more recent writings, this myth of ontological unbelonging is replaced by another, larger myth of *excess* of belongings: not what he belongs nowhere, but that he belongs to too many places. This is one kind of thrust in Rushdie's work, which appears to refer to the social condition of the 'Third World' migrant but is replete also with echoes from both the *literary tradition* of High Modernism and the post-structuralist *philosophical positions* (1992, 127).

Without going into too much details over Rushdie's 'philosophical positions' in his later novels, which will be taken up in the later chapters of this thesis, we here note that his fiction, in his early phase has taken up with the individual's loss of freedom in a stifling world of political or

state corruption. Rushdie's fiction delineates the cross cultural contexts within the individual by showing the workings of his freedom, absolute and mythic and which is due to the fact that he belongs "nowhere" since he "belongs everywhere" (1992, 127). But in Shame we find that Rushdie is portraying the "image of the public sphere of politics so replete with violence and corruption that any representation of resistance becomes impossible" (1992, 127). Shame portrays the prevalent political situation in Pakistan today, where the individual has been denied the ambience of freedom. Indeed, as Ahmad points out, that in the Pakistan as portrayed in Shame:

there is no space left for either resistance or its representation; whoever claims to resist is always enmeshed in relations of powers and in the logic of all-embracing violences (1992, 127).

Shame illustrates the tyranny of authoritarian regimes that seek validity in doctrinaire Islam. The narrative centres on the professional rivalry of its two main protagonists Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, the former modeled on the personality of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the later on General Zia Ul Haq, both powerful political leaders in Pakistan until their assassination. Just like the Nehru family in India (Midnight's Children), Shame tells us the story of a small coterie of power-mongers, who create history and control political power. Syed Mujeebuddin in his essay entitled "Centres and Margins" Shame's 'Other' Nation" in Salman

Rushdie: New Critical Insights has drawn our attention to the way in which the centre of power is posited against the marginalised figures of the protagonist Omar Khayyam Shakil and the ladies, especially Sufiya Zinobia, the heroine of the novel, who literally embodies Pakistan itself (2003, 133). However, as Mujeebuddin points out:

there is another figure, the narrator himself, who emphasises his own marginal status and in aligning himself with the other peripheral figures of the novel inaugurates an imaginative coalition between himself and them. In a passage couched in exquisite irony, the narrator conflates himself, his 'hero' Omar Khayyam Shakil and the translatedly popular 'Oriental' figure of Omar Khayyam, who the narrator points out in the text was never very popular in his native Persia but existed in the ... 'in a translation that really is a complete reworking of his verses' (2003, I. 133).

And it is to be noted in this context that Rushdie's narrator steps in to midst of his fiction and declares that just as Khayyam gained recognition in the West in translation, in both terms, that of the letter as well as that of spirit, similarly he has gained fame by being translated in other languages and in other countries. Rushdie states in Shame that

I, too, am a translated man. I *have been borne across*. 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 (Shame, 29).

With respect to the above declaration we perceive the following lessons to be remembered in terms of Rushdie's fiction. Firstly, Rushdie as artist contains within his very persona a symbiotic relationship between various cross cultural currents and which is reflected in his very fictions commencing from Grimus to Fury. Secondly, if an author like Rushdie is translated into several languages, he gains in the process because it opens him to reassessment and interpretation in different cultural contexts.

In this connection Rushdie's later statement in the novel about his younger sister as well as himself acquires significance. He tells his sister that although he has known Pakistan for a long time, he has never lived in the country for more than six months at a stretch. And that his impression about Pakistan has been imbibed by fragments (Shame, 74-75). Here we might question Rushdie's status regarding his adopted country. Rushdie confesses that he had actually gone back to live in Pakistan but had left not because of political difficulty or economic pressure but because he had found the country quite stifling and claustrophobic because of its internal conflicts (Ahmad, 1992, 133). Rushdie's "leave-taking" is not so much fraught with emotion, rather it is central to his public self-representation as well as to the structure of his fictions. It becomes increasingly difficult to locate Rushdie in his fictions. From his position

as an exile from Pakistan, as well as from his birthplace, India, Rushdie becomes the quintessential migrant, to him the frontiers of country and nations become blurred. Reality and fantasy intermix. Magpie realism pervades the landscape created by Rushdie, whether it is India or Pakistan. With reference to Shame, Rushdie writes:

The country in his 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 exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality. I have found this off-centring to be necessary; but its value is, of course, open to debate. My view is that I am not writing only about Pakistan. I have not given the country a name (Shame, 29).

Aijaz Ahmad in his In Theory has compared Rushdie's self-exile with that of James and Conrad, Pound and Eliot, Picasso and Dali, Joyce, Gertrude Stein and so on. All of these artists and authors

experienced the same kind of 'suffocation' in their own spaces of this globe, and were subsequently to leave behind immense resources of genre and vocabulary for delineating that predominant image of the modern artist who lives as a literal stranger in a foreign and impersonal city and who, on the one hand, uses the condition of exile as the basic metaphor for modernity and even for the

human condition itself, while, on the other, writing obviously, copiously, of that very land which had been declared 'suffocating' (Ahmad, 1992, 134).

What is even more interesting to note is that Rushdie has located his temperament and status of exile in cross cultural contexts. If his sense of dislocation in a foreign culture may be powerful, it is equally well balanced by his honeymoon with cultures, other than his. In Rushdie's works, his feeling of loss and angst is always compensated by his belonging to a new culture. In other words, Rushdie himself becomes a site of contesting cultures where nothing is negated but forever assimilated in new forms of permutation and combination. It is in Shame that we find for the first time (and what will be amplified in his later novels),

What is new, and decidedly postmodernist...the emphasis...on the productivity, rather than the pain, of dislocating oneself from one's original community, as well as the idea, made much sharper in Rushdie's more recent writings, of multiple belongings (Ahmad, 1992, 134).

When Rushdie speaks of both Shame and Midnight's Children as novels of "leavetaking", he actually implies a parting not from countries of the East but a separation from the country of his birth (India) as well as from his adopted country (Pakistan). Rushdie, in his act of translation from country to country in and in his bearing himself across cultures does

actually manifest spells of indecisiveness. In other words, Rushdie is actually engaged in forging in the smithy of his soul, what it means to be an exile in a foreign country and what implications it may have on his heart and mind. Shame is a unique novel because in it Rushdie

seems forever to be taking back with one hand what he had given with the other: the will to take leave is poised against the impossibility of leavetaking; he has been coming loose but is still 'joined', he is still joined but only by 'elastic' bonds, and he is not sure that he likes the fact of continued joining...he makes statements, but he does not believe in them; the fictive and the real coexist but do not correspond; not only his text but he, himself, exists 'at a slight angle to reality'; not his text but he is 'translated', 'borne across'; the translation occurs not on the semantic but on the existential level. These ambivalences propel him, then, to write 'a novel of leavetaking', about a country which is 'not quite Pakistan' and 'not only Pakistan' but is, in the most obvious ways, Pakistan (Ahmad, 1992, 135).

For one thing, we have to accept Rushdie's monumental ambivalence about the culture of his origins as well as his activist and antagonistic relations with British culture. And the same things may well be said about his relationship with the United States in Fury. It is also

undeniable that Rushdie comes to realise in the course of his fictions that self-exile rarely becomes a full naturalization even when class and culture can be fully shared. For example, British racism forecloses the option for people of colour, no matter from which part of the world they may be from. On another level the fragmentary character of the migrant artist accounts for much of Rushdie's ambivalent attitude towards both his homeland and his adopted country. Here, we have to concede that Rushdie is only partly true to himself when he declares that he has learned to appreciate Pakistan by slices and must therefore reconcile himself to the inevitability of the missing pieces, thus reflecting both the known and the unknown in fragments of cracked mirrors. In Midnight's Children Rushdie duplicates this perception of experience by way of fragments when he narrates how his grandfather came to love his future wife through a perforated bedsheet.

The narrativisation of life in terms of "slices" is very much there in Shame as well as Midnight's Children. This problem has been analysed by Aijaz Ahmad in the context of modernism and post-modernism, which both argue for "views of the world which would serve to validate further the ontological primacy of the fragment" (Ahmad, 1992, 138). According to Ahmad, the issue cannot be regarded as one which begs for a formal resolution because no one can claim that he is in a position to know both India and Pakistan in their entirety. And this is because of the hybrid composition of the subcontinent, where several religions and racial

sentiments intermix to produce a complicated intersection of cultural cross currents.

It is at least arguable that no one ever knows their country whole, regardless of how much of their life is or is not actually lived within his borders; that the imaginative apprehension of totality is always constructed on the basis of those bits and slices of concrete experience which constitute any individual's life, migrant or not; that what eventually matters about any experience, felt or narrated, is not its partiality, because direct experience is always partial, but the quality of the particular 'bits' which constitute it and those others which remain outside the felt experience and therefore outside one's imaginative capacity as well (Ahmad, 1992, 138).

It is because of this hybrid character of the culture of the subcontinent that Rushdie uses the metaphor of the palimpsest to illustrate the superimposition of one racial instinct over and against another and which equally amplifies and qualifies his approach to the fragmentary nature of experience. For example, Rushdie brings together historical and literary motifs in the design of Rami Harappa's shawls in Shame. Shame's metaphors and images, which are sometimes expressed through conceits, function as palimpsests and signify a dynamic hybridity that is brazen and polemic in its politics, as against the "palimpsest" of Pakistan itself that expressly obscure "what lies beneath" (Shame, 87). Syed Mujeebuddin in "Centres and Margins: Shame's 'other' nation" shows

how in the palimpsest of the shawl, “the West as history and the East as literature are pressed into service to severely, indict the corrupt power politics of ruling-class Pakistan (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, I. 143). The most interesting innovation of Rushdie in Shame consists in amplifying the inter-textuality of his conceits through the intricate embroidery of the shawls, especially as it is based on such actual historical events like the history of England — the Bayeux Tapestry depicting William the Conqueror’s conquest of England. Thus, the Rami’s gift of “epitaph of wool” for Iskander recalls the so-called “Tapestry” attributed traditionally to Queen Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror, and her hand-maidens. Mujeebuddin comments that:

However, in the context of Rami’s exile condition and near-abandoned status, more important is the ironic evocation of a devoted Queen’s proud tribute to her ‘Lord and Master’s’ glorious conquest. For what is depicted in Rami’s embodiment testimony is not the grandeur of a majestic personality but the ‘truth’ of Iskander’s lust for power that masquerades as love for his people, and his insatiable pleasure-seeking ways hidden behind his “servant of Duty” (192) façade. Appropriately given the title, “The shamelessness of Iskander the Great” (191), the embroidered shawls stand witness to everything that

Arjumand, blinded by her love for her father, refuses to see — a saga of lust, revenge and terror, replete with blood and gore. Thus, Rami's account of the 'life and times' of Iskander Harappa constitutes unlike the Bayeux Tapestry, an alternative version of official and elite history (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, I. 141).

Mujeebuddin's comment makes us aware that Rushdie plays upon our sense of official history (both in Shame as well as in Midnight's Children) by showing how historical accounts mask the gruesome reality underlying it. Often, Rushdie's version of history actually implies an act of subversion, not of historical facts but actually of our sense of it, in terms of parody, burlesque and sometimes through the metaphor of the palimpsest. Seen in these terms, the Rami's account of Iskander's history may be termed a defiant act of subversion because she is always seen to retrieve her own self from "the mothballs of the past" and "the fine mist of oblivion" that Iskander had consigned her life into (Shame, 191, 194). Again, the motifs on the embroidered shawls may be seen to exemplify their inter-textual debt to Faiz Ahmad Faiz's famous *ghazal*, "Do not Ask of Me, My Love", a poem that Rushdie quotes in The Satanic Verses:

Do not ask of me, my love,
 that love I once had for you....

How lovely you are still, my love,
 but I am helpless too;
 for the world has other sorrows than love,
 and other pleasures too.

Do not ask of me, my love,
 that love I once had for you (S.V., 334-335).

Just as the context of the poem, quoted in The Satanic Verses underlies the terrible irony of loving, similarly within the ambience of Shame, the elitist history woven on the shawls of the Rami, hides the misery which numerous people have suffered from time immemorial. Thus, if Faiz's bringing together of the images of velvety luxuriousness and that of the corruption and decay of human flesh forcefully highlights the limitations of conventional history, similarly Rami Harappa's shawl focus on those aspects of great men's lives conveniently excluded in official versions of history. In this way Rami offers us an alternative view for each projected virtue of Iskander (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, I. 142).

Shame then becomes emblematic of an emotion which runs across nations, societies and histories. Through this motif Rushdie asserts the complex feelings of Shame and guilt in cross cultural contexts. For example, the juxtaposition of the dynamic and the placid, the active and

the passive in Sufiya Zinobia's name also becomes evident in Rushdie's discussion of the other "ghosts" that 'haunt' Sufiya's story:

The British Pakistani girl, who was killed by her father because she had shamed him by making love to an English boy, the unnamed 'Asian' girl, who was beaten up on the underground by a gang of white teenaged boys, and the boy who had, impossibly, 'ignited of his own accord' (117) and burned himself to death. The narrator here delineates the predicament of people caught in situations where they are either the victims of other people's shame, as exemplified by the story of the Pakistani girl, or, are themselves mortified by their situations, as typified by the case of the unnamed girl (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003: I. 145).

Rushdie's images of shame have a refrentiality which not only reach out to other texts of his, but also to other nations, histories and cultures. It is this heterogeneity in a culture branded as hybrid, which leads us to transcend national parameters as well as religions and cultures. Speaking of Pakistan, Rushdie often slips into the neighbouring country as well as to Britain. In this sense the shame suffered by the Pakistani girl is not only individual but universal (Shame: 117). Similarly, the burning boy's case connects the humiliation suffered by coloured people in a metropolitan society with the keen sense of shame inflicted on woman in

traditional societies (Shame, 117). In this manner Rushdie slips in and out of narratives, continents and history to illustrate instances of shame, which is productive of cultural distortions as well as that of racial antagonism. Rushdie, therefore, places his characters in the dialectic of culture, civilisation and contesting historical periods, from where they emerge to underline their individuality as well as universality. Pakistan, then, is a real, historical and political entity but it simultaneously belongs to the realm of the author's imagination, where it transcends the limitations of time and space.

Chapter VII

The Satanic Verses

In Rushdie's novels, the old stable ego of the character as determined by the encircling environment has often been questioned. This is primarily because the migrant as protagonist can never be circumscribed or limited either by the place which might be said to be his original home or by the context in which he lands himself, during the course of his wanderings. In his essay entitled "Old Stable Ego of the Character: The Politics of Identity" in Rushdie's Fiction in Salman Rushdie edited by Mittapalli and Kuortti, Michael Hensen writes how The Satanic Verses offers another point of view when the Indian protagonists Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta migrate to England, go back to India in the end, and in between dream themselves into different times and places (S.V.,168). Actually, most of Rushdie's protagonists are migrants, of their own will and who construct their personal identity in relation to the often entirely different social identity around them. The Satanic Verses very explicitly raises and attempts to answer the question, how far Rushdie's protagonists are able to choose a specific country and culture as their own homes and also question the very possibility of fixing one's roots either in his own birthplace or in an adopted country. Rushdie has brought out this question of identity and home in cross cultural

contexts in his Imaginary Homelands, where he has attempted to show how the idea of home and cultural identity defies all sense of limits and boundaries in space and time. Rushdie very clearly positions the migrants in cross cultural contexts, where he will eternally “create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indian of the mind” (I.H., 10). In The Satanic Verses and Imaginary Homelands Rushdie has emphasised the fragmentary character of the migrant protagonists by quoting the song sung by Gibreel Farishta as he tumbles from the heavens at the inception of former:

O, my shoes are Japanese
 These trousers English, if you please
 On my head, red Russian hat —
 My heart's Indian for all that (S.V., 5).

This notion of hybridity has been developed in The Satanic Verses. On the one hand we see how the Indian Gibreel Farishta tries to consolidate and confirm within himself his idea of selfhood by refraining from adapting to English society. His fellow countryman Saladin Chamcha on the other hand, is all set to accept foreign identity. Rushdie shows how Gibreel is rewarded by his consistency (S.V., 142) and thereby passes his bad breath on to Saladin (S.V., 133) and who is therefore punished for disowning his origins by made to grow horns and hoofs (S.V., 141). The narrator has the following observations to make on the migrant status of Gibreel and Saladin:

Should we even say that these are two fundamentally different types of self? Might we not agree that Gibreel [...] — has wished to remain, to a large degree, continuous — that is, joined to and arising from his past; — [...] — so that his is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as true [...] whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of selected discontinuities, a willing re-invention; his preferred revolt against history being what makes him, in our chosen idiom, 'false'? [...] — While Gibreel, to follow the logic of our established terminology, is to be considered 'good' by virtue of wishing to remain, for all his vicissitudes, at bottom an untranslated man. — But, and again but: this sounds, does it not, dangerously like an intentionalist fallacy? — Such distinctions, resting as they must on an idea of the self as being ideally homogeneous, non-hybrid, 'pure' — an utterly fantastic notion! — cannot, must not, suffice (S.V., 427).

At this juncture some facts regarding identity have been established by Rushdie. Firstly, he confesses to the idea of personality and identity as acentric, subjected to change and instability. Secondly, identity today can only be understood in terms of the shifting categories of time and space; as against historical and geographical limits and evolving towards a new consideration of culture in trans-national terms in the post-

colonial era. Thirdly, the location of identity, according to both Rushdie and Bhabha is to be found at cross cultural currents and contexts. Hensen and Petry have drawn our attention to the fact that the notion of hybridity may be found at the intersection of theories of the postmodern and the post-colonial. Bhabha, the foremost theoretician of hybridity and Rushdie, its most powerful fictional exponent have been quite successful in blending typical issues regarding migrant-identities and cultural diversity with post-structuralist and postmodernist theory. Rushdie in The Satanic Verses and in subsequent novels has similarly argued for a concept beyond the postmodern and its fragmentation of the personal and the social. The migrant in both has been successfully located in a space of in-betweenness — a powerful “third space” between his own culture and that of an other, thus opening up a space which acknowledges a certain incommensurability between cultures (Bhabha, 1994, 2).

In this third or liminal space there is often the danger of the migrant accepting and celebrating his very fragmentation of identity as a sort of pure anarchic liberalism or voluntarism. And this might happen in the case of several Rushdie’s protagonists. But more so than ever, Bhabha would rather analyse and validate this fragmentation of identity as a recognition of the importance of the alienation of the self in the construction of forms of solidarity (Bhabha 1990, 213). Hensen and Petry show how in recent criticism Rushdie has been lauded as portraying a very positive concept of cultural hybridity (Mittapalli *et al.* 2003, II. 129).

This view is largely in consonance with Bhabha's attempt to place himself in that position of liminality, in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness (Bhabha 1990: 209). This idea of "productive difference" may be precisely be located in Rushdie's novels, especially in his The Satanic Verses (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, 129).

Such a view of culture has been illustrated in The Satanic Verses when Gibreel's quarrel with hybridity has been negatively shown with respect to his problem of "sulphurous halitosis", which returns with a vengeance on him, and he loses his girl-friend as well as his job before finally committing suicide (S.V., 546). Saladin, on the other, represents a very positive concept of cultural hybridity, when he is finally reconciled with his father and inherits his wealth and even re-unites with his girl-friend Zeeny Vakil (S.V., 547). This makes Hensen and Petry comment that "in the end, it is Saladin rather than Gibreel who comes up with a successful concept of a person's self-positioning as migrant in both a foreign and familiar culture (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, II. 133).

With respect to the productive space opened up by the notion of culture as difference, especially in the spirit of alterity or otherness, we here take exception to the gross misreading and misrepresentation of this entire issue by Goonetilleke in his treatise on Salman Rushdie (1998). In his book he is at pains to list three reasons to illustrate the failure of the process of hybridity in The Satanic Verses. He cites as proof Saladin's

return to his ancestral home, his resuming his original name and his resumption of his mother tongue Urdu. This argument does not hold sound because Gibreel also returns to India and yet he fails to “survive”. Again, Saladin’s reunion with Zeeny Vakil is due to the fact that she favours

an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest? (S.V., 52).

This passage positions Saladin in a positive culture of hybridity. Again, he does not return to his “one and only former self”, but rather “feels closer to many old rejected selves, many alternative Saladins” (S.V., 523). In this way personal cultures become hybrid constructs and the migrant, who travels in-between two or more cultures will eventually have to develop a sense of a “third-space”, or hybrid identity (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, II. 132-33). The very conclusion of The Satanic Verses might be cited as an illustration of the consequence of such hybrid cultures on the subject of personal identity. Thus the narrator states:

[...] we are here to change things. I concede at once that we shall ourselves be changed; African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than what we would have been if we had not crossed the oceans; if our mothers and fathers had not crossed the skies

[...]. We have been made again: but if I say that we shall also be the ones to remake this society, to shape it from bottom to top (S.V., 413-14).

In this sense the third space, or the space in-between always comes up as a point of reference when migrant-protagonists cross countries and cultures. Thus the aeroplane, as noted by Hensen and Petry, becomes a powerful symbol of Bhabha's third space of in-betweenness (Mittapalli and Kuortti, 2003, 136). In The Satanic Verses, for example, Saladin and Gibreel fall out of an exploding aircraft on England and as they fall, changes in terms of personality occur since not only do the passengers fall out of the plane but it is also indicative of

the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, land, belonging, home (S.V., 4).

As the migrant lands himself in a foreign culture, the dialectics between his self and the other becomes operative (Bhabha, 1994, II. 35). In this way, the migrant as both Saladin and Gibreel find themselves in an irreconcilable contradiction and a difference that can never be solved. At the same time, it is true that in Saladin, the self cannot exist without its Other and it is precisely at this crisis that the self can provide for its own transcendence as well as its own deconstruction. Saladin situates himself

in a unique position and within his incompatibility, he can formulate his own “newness”. Thus the fall of Saladin and Gibreel parallels in a certain sense the fall of Adam from God’s grace as well as the fall of Lucifer from heaven. For Gibreel it becomes really his fall, whereas for Saladin it becomes a fall towards a new “newness” and a unique hybridity of self.

In this context, it is necessary that we try to understand the role and function of the migrant, in all his multidimensionality in The Satanic Verses. The migrant-protagonist has been assigned several roles in the novel. On one level he has been portrayed as the migrant as metropolitan. On another level he is presented as an exile and an alienated figure in a foreign cultural milieu. Then again, he enacts the role of a social reformer. On a very different level he represents the paradigmatic imagination of the migrant. On another plane the migrant has been shown to transgress the demarcations of history and society. The migrant also makes his appearance as a fanatic and as an exponent of Islamic culture in alien lands. If we analyse the text very closely we shall also see that the most important notion is the double subject of migrancy in the figures of Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha. According to Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak in “Reading the Satanic Verses”, published in an important collection of essays The Postmodern Arts edited by Nigel Wheale (1995), the double subject of migrancy has been reflected on the issues of “male bonding and unbonding” (Wheale, 1995, 228). In the text, the contradictory persona of Gibreel and Saladin enact variously the male

narrative patterns, subsuming and underprivileging the voice of the woman (Whele, 1995, 228). Finally, the theme of migrancy has been illustrated not only in terms of religiosity but also in the terms of art. In all this, we detect Rushdie's shifting stance and his desire for appearing in the text in multiple fictive roles. Thus at many points in the novel Rushdie weaves in and out of narratives, broaching time and again the relationship of margin and centre, of individual and the state or religious apparatus which enact the repressive voice of tyranny and so on (Wheale, 1995, 229). In this way the serious issues of identity and plurality become highlighted in the migrant discourse of Gibreel and Saladin.

The novel opens with the two main characters, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, falling on earth since the plane they have been flying in has just been blown up by the terrorists who have hijacked it. We are then informed about their backgrounds, their occupations, their love affairs and about the events which led to their boarding of the plane. The story of the hijacking is then narrated, leading up to the moment of explosion with the novel began. It is important to note that falling is a major motif occurring throughout the novel. Initially, the fall of Gibreel and Saladin has parallels in Defoe's location of Satan's abode in the air in his Book I, Chapter VI of The Political History of the Devil as well Ancient as Modern (1726). Similar to Defoe's novel, the demonic falls from the air in this novel but more significantly it is to be noted that the Devil becomes a wanderer, an image of rootless migrant and which is

central to this novel. The migrant as wanderer also has parallels in Joyce's Ulysses and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, especially in the myth of Daedalus, who tried to escape his island prison with his son Icarus, using wings made of feathers fastened with wax. Another parallel may be located in Ovid's Metamorphoses (1st century B.C.) which was primarily taken up with the many changes undergone by the migrant in foreign cultural milieu. The fundamentals of change involves the question of whether the individual undergoes change in kind or change in form. And this very idea has been developed in the course of the novel, which uses the idea of physical metamorphosis to focus on the changes taking place both physically and psychologically in the migrant. This brings us to the question whether at all there is an essential and abiding centre in our lives or whether there is some sort of a defining thread which runs through all our numerous changes to which we are all subject whenever we cross nations and enter the heterotrophic space inhabited by polycultures.

In his web page on Noted on Salman Rushdie: The Satanic Verses (1997), Paul Brians comments on Rushdie's artistic impulse behind the creation of the novel:

Rushdie says that novels do not lay down rules, but ask questions. In fact he claims that by asking questions, good fiction can help to create a changed world. Novels like The Satanic Verses don't settle debates: they articulate the

terms of debate and ask hard questions of the opposing sides, thereby helping to usher “newness” into the world. One of the unifying themes of The Satanic Verses is newness, or change. It attacks rigid, self-righteous orthodoxies and celebrates doubt, questioning, disruption, innovation.... But Rushdie is focussing on a particular set of issues relating to rigidity and change: those identified relating with what is sometimes called “identity politics”. People who find themselves excluded or suppressed by dominant groups try various means to find an effective voice and tools for action to create power and authority for themselves. It is these struggles that are the basic underlying matter of Rushdie’s novel. The question that is asked throughout this novel is “what kind of idea are you?” In other words, on what ideas, experiences, and relationships do you base your definition of yourself...your identity? (Brians, 1).

And yet the kind of ideas, experiences, relationships, on which one bases his definition of himself lacks any such secure foundation in The Satanic Verses. This is primarily because the novel, as Spivak takes extreme pains to illustrate, in spite of all its plurality, has been woven around an aggressive central theme: “the post-colonial divided between two identities: migrant and national” (Wheale, 223). It is true that

migrants who find themselves identified as “foreigners” or “aliens” often find unwelcome hostile identities imposed upon them. Here Rushdie uses the technique of “demonisation” by turning Saladin, the immigrant who is most determined to identify with the English, literally into a demon. The other immigrants who assume horns later in the novel express the same satirical view of English bigotry. In this context it is worthwhile to remember for a later analysis that the migrant has been bifurcated into two entities within the parameters of the novel. On the one hand, he is shown as subjected to change, striding across nations and races, in other words, his trans-nationality. On the other hand, we should bear in mind that the migrant is not only the exotic, and the marginalised but a usurper, who steadily moves towards the centre of an alien culture.

In this context we note the transition in the status of the migrant, from the migrant as exile to his position as a social reformer. He also moves from his position as an outsider, the migrant who transgresses social or historical limitations to the status of the migrant as paradigm. The valorisation of the migrant in terms of discourse and narrative pattern may be witnessed within the course of The Satanic Verses. In this sense the migrant travels from his nation to other nations and his journey may be understood in transnational terms. He enjoys a hybrid status, comprising within him the discourse of several nations. In this context he becomes a paradigm. But in a very different sense he also shares a nostalgic concern for his deserted country, and being rootless he yearns

for his originary roots, but to which he cannot return and only hope for in his dreams. On the other hand, the migrant is involved in a vibrant manner with new national discourses and his hybrid existence becomes a resulting concern for the inhabitants of a foreign nation because, according to Rushdie, he steps across nations in order to change things.

We are here to change things.... African, Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Cypriot, Chinese, we are other than what we would have been if we had not crossed the oceans.... We have been made again: but I say we shall also be the ones to remake this society, to shape it from the bottom to the top (S.V., 414).

And again, Saladin Encounters a young black woman in England “who gave his (conservative British) attire an amused once-over.... She was wearing a lenticular badge.... At some angles it read, Uhuru for the Simba; at others, Freedom for the Lion. ‘It’s on account of the meaning of his chosen name’, she explained redundantly. ‘In African’, Which language?...She shrugged.... It was African: born, by the sound of her in Lewisham, or Deptford, or New Cross, that was all she needed to know.... As if all causes were the same, all histories interchangeable” (S.V.: 413-415).

Gradually we come to accept the idea that migrant or writers from the Third World may not just seem to be exiles, uprooted and stranded in

alien, often hostile countries or cultures far from home and working in a language that may not have been their own. Rather they may seem to embody a hybrid culture, which looks both forwards and backwards and hence they are in a position to work on some essential elements of culture in a foreign land and subject them to change. Thus cultural fusion leading to acculturation, and finally to cultural dissemination and transformation on the part of the migrant forms his artistic credo, leading to his counter-movement from the periphery towards the centre. In this sense exile is a weak image, and Rushdie rejects it. It may be borne in mind that immigrants were called exiles, whether they had actually been driven from their homeland or...as was much more in common — they had sought increased opportunity by voluntarily moving abroad. Thus the challenge of “marginalised” voices is to find the centre, or shift it to themselves, appropriate the identity of an alien culture and make it their own.

In The Satanic Verses Rushdie reverses the one-sided dialogue of the centre to the margins, and challenges the English/European/White sense of identity. He rejects its claims for radical superiority. London has been transformed into an exotic country where people follow strange customs (wiping themselves with paper only and eating bony fish). People of traditional Anglo-Saxon stock are almost entirely absent from the London of The Satanic Verses. Instead the city swarms with immigrants: Indians, Bengalis, Pakistanis, Jamaicans, German and Jews, etc. He

reminds the English that they too were colonised by the Romans and the Normans. The only exception is Pamela, who has a traditional English heritage but who is shown to be striving to escape from it. She mistakes Saladin for an exotic “alien” who can link her to India, when the main reason behind his attraction to her is that she represents escape from the Indianness he is trying to flee. The other female character, Rosa Diamond, is an Englishwoman yearning to become Latin American or to be conquered by invading Normans. The bigots who beat Chamcha in the police van are all — as he notes — no more English in their heritage than himself, but his colour and identity as a post-colonial immigrant allows them to treat him as a complete alien.

Rushdie in The Satanic Verses has actually turned the tables on Anglo-Americans. He has portrayed minor Anglo-Saxon characters as venal (Hal Valance), or bigoted (the punks who spit on the food in the Shaandar Café), or tyrannical (Margaret Thatcher), or stupid (Eugene Dumsday). European travel writers have for generations dwelt on the failings of benighted natives of far-off lands, making them objects of their contempt and ridicule. It is now Rushdie’s turn to reduce the European and colonial masters to a set of cartoons and to provide the background for the thoughts, feelings and actions of the colonised. However, we have to bear in mind that Rushdie’s caricature of the Europeans and the English does not lead to the privileging of the migrant-artist. He cannot be morally superior to the Westerners. Both the European and the Eastern are morally

flawed. Rushdie is interested in turning the tables of colonised discourse; the dialogue of the coloniser and his Others have been turned inside out. Rather the immigrant exerts his racial characteristics over his erstwhile superiors and tries to impose himself on the European Other. At the same time, the migrant as hybrid bypasses such polar distinction because he contains within himself the voices of opposite and conflicting cultures, which claim him as their own. The migrant is therefore in a much superior position than the Europeans or the English. In all this, however, Rushdie is perfectly aware that by doing so he is disorienting his “mainstream” English and American readers, giving them a taste of what it feels like to be like players in a drama, which undermines their racial superiority. Further, he is not asking how immigrants can become “English”; he is instead asking how immigrants can create an identity for themselves in England which is richer, modern and more arresting than the traditional stereotypes associated with the old centre of empire.

The reader accepts the idea that the marginalised race always attempt to create a sense of identity by emphasising their shared history. Sometimes such communities are inclined to refer to a historical period of suffering, just like Afro-Americans, who are likely to draw on their heritage of slavery. Such an attitude can lead to both positive and negative consequences. In a certain sense, such an approach relies for its efficacy on the hope that members of the group will accept the responsibility for their ancestors’ deeds. Even when majorities acknowledge the injustices

of the past, guilt is not an emotion that can often motivate action to atone for such injustice. The Hindu miners in the Titlipur story who hark back to their suffering under the rule of Muslim emperors exemplify the common practice of historical grievances utilised by one group to justify crimes against another. Again, such an instance may be found in the action of Sikh terrorists who blow up the plane at the inception of the novel. In the novel the white races decorate their homes with references to nineteenth-century wars in South Africa, posing as harassed English South African settlers surrounded by hostile Zulus. Rushdie also wants us to remember that Union Carbide's neglect cost the lives and health of thousands of Indians in the Bhopal disaster, but he does not claim that the very identity and fate of India will be determined only by a chain of misfortunes. In this context Paul Brians' comments on The Satanic Verses in web page hosted by him may be regarded as significant.

The most important aspect of the Indian cultural heritage for him (Rushdie) is its rich, creative variety. Its history is more than a mere list of the crimes committed against it by others; and he is prepared to add the crimes committed by Indians against each other to its portrait as well.

Another approach to identity politics is to hark back to a positive historical heritage instead of to a time of suffering. Thus the black Caribbean immigrants in the novel seek to emphasise an African heritage which is

actually very distant from their lived experience. Chamcha mentally mocks them by singing the “African National Anthem”. The black leader originally named “Sylvester Roberts” has chosen the absurd name “Uhuru Simba” in an attempt to “Africanise” his identity. It seems clear that Rushdie shares at least some of Chamcha’s reservations about Afrocentrism in the scene of the defense rally for the arrested Dr. Simba. Choosing Chamcha as his point of view allows him to critique the limits of such ideas even as he acknowledges the justness of their cause (Brians, 3).

In the novel Rushdie emphasises that Indians are both victims and criminals, both creators and destroyers. He is not adumbrating a sort of bland homogenised theory of original sin according to which all people are equally guilty and none specifically to blame. He is in favour of wrongs be righted and criminals identified and punished. In fact, he rejects both martyrdom and triumphant nationalism as inadequate foundations for a satisfactory self-identity. This may be seen in the very inception of the novel when George Miranda and Bhupen Gandhi match Zeeny’s proud references to Indian accomplishments and her list of crimes against Indians with their own instances of cruelty perpetrated by Indians. The question of self-identity looms large in Bhupen’s enquiries about the modern Indian. Apart from the question of race, identity may also be defined by religion. In the novel, Rushdie underlines that orthodox

religion implies intolerance, representativeness and rigidity. Dumsday represents the rigid Christian right and the Imam, fanatical Muslim extremism. It is true that Rushdie shares the Imam's hatred of the erstwhile Shah of Iran and SAVAK but the alternative is even more hideous. Rushdie imagines a great maw of a hand destroying the people it claims to be saved. Critics have noted one of the devastating ironies of the Rushdie affair. It is that the Khomeini evidently died without ever realising that the novel he had denounced contained a devastating image of him.

In essence Rushdie is against any form of absolute in ethics, religion, identity, nationalism and ideology. This is why he flaunts his hybrid culture and identity. Herein also lies the reason behind Rushdie's challenge to the credibility and the benefits of orthodox Islam. Gibreel's dreams challenge the Quran's claims to infallibility by accusing Islam of the repression of women, and calling into question the probity and honesty of the Prophet himself.

Rushdie is actually attempting to undermine the authority of religion and society, who give birth to endorse slavery, censorship and fanatic religious convictions. Just as in The Satanic Verses he challenges Muslim fanaticism, he critiques Hindu intolerance in The Moor's Last Sigh. The Satanic Verses attempts to break down absolutes, and shows how high ideals can lead people to commit terrible crimes and exposes the traditional and easy distinctions between good and evil. Rushdie also

attempts to destroy the distinction between centre and periphery in postcolonial discourse by making the migrant usurp the totalitarian assumptions of foreign culture in an alien land. Thus demons can behave like angels and vice versa. And that high ideals can lead people to commit terrible crimes. There can, therefore, be no simple answers to the query, "What kind of an idea are we?" In an essay now included in his collection of articles in Imaginary Homelands entitled "In God We Trust", Rushdie vividly portrays his initiation into "Secular radicalism" while he was studying in England:

God, Satan, Paradise and Hell all vanished one day in my fifteenth year, when I quite abruptly lost my faith. I recall it vividly. I was at school in England by then. The moment of awakening happened, in fact, during a Latin lesson, and afterwards, to prove my new-found atheism, I bought myself a rather tasteless ham sandwich, and so partook for the first time of the forbidden flesh of the swine. No thunderbolt arrived to strike me down. I remember feeling that my survival confirmed the correctness of my new position. I did slightly regret the loss of Paradise, though. The Islamic heaven, at least as I had come to conceive it, had seemed very appealing to my adolescent self. I expected to be provided, for my personal pleasure, with four beautiful female spirits, or houris, untouched by man

or djinn. The joys of the perfumed garden; it seemed a shame to have to give them up (I.H., 377).

Rushdie's critique of established traditions and deeply rooted orthodoxy in The Satanic Verses is to be understood along with his scathing criticism of heterogeneous multiculturalism in ultra modern societies as in America in his later novel, Fury. In fact, one of Rushdie's main contention in the book is to enunciate a sort of existential morality. As individuals, we become responsible for the choices we make and the destinies we forge for ourselves. Therefore, absolutes simply do not exist. We can never shift the responsibility for our actions to God or history. Whether we are immigrants or not, we have to define for ourselves our identity. Thus at the very end of the novel Saladin returns to India, finally to reconcile himself with his father. But he can never simply return to his roots. He realizes that his father has changed. Actually Saladin could never have loved his father earlier. He only loved his father on his deathbed, when he had become the enfeebled, benign shadow of his former self. His inheritance does not lie in the home he grew up in. Zeeny, who elsewhere warmly urges his Indian roots on him, has little use of sentimental attachment to Peristan. She says that it should make way for the new. Finally Saladin seems to agree and he is prepared to cast aside the false claims of religion as well as that of his personal history. In the end he opts for newness, for if the old refused to die, how can the new be born in this world.

In his essay entitled "In Good Faith" Rushdie defends The Satanic Verses by emphasising that in spite of the controversy and storm raised by its publication, the novel has a philosophy and is largely the result of his determined effort to create a literary language and literary forms in which the experience of formerly colonised, still-disadvantaged people might find full expression:

If The Satanic Verses is anything, it is a migrant's eye view of the world. It is written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition, and from which, I believe, can be derived a metaphor for all humanity.

Standing at the centre of the novel is a group of characters most of whom are British Muslims, or not particularly religious persons of Muslim background, struggling with just the sort of great problems that have arisen to surround the book, problems of hybridization and ghettoisation, of reconciling the old and the new. Those who oppose the novel most vociferously today are of the opinion that intermingling with a different culture will inevitably weaken and ruin their own. I am of the opposite opinion. The Satanic Verses celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and

unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelisation and fears the absolutism of the Pure. M \acute{e} lange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. The Satanic Verses is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves (I.H., 394).

Rushdie's new religion is changed-by-fusion. Rushdie's new love is changed-by-conjoining. His new politics is reconciling the old with the new. His new identity comprises a mongrel self. In the course of human history apostles of purity have brought havoc on those human beings, who can be called heterogeneous in terms of culture. Rushdie terms himself "a bastard child of history" (I.H., 394), because according to him, we are never products of pure races. We are black and brown and white, always leaking into one another like the flavours emanating during the process of cooking. Human beings usually attempt to understand themselves and shape their futures by arguing and challenging and questioning and saying what should not be said; not by submission either to gods or to men. It would be insult to claim that The Satanic Verses contains "nothing but filth and insults and abuse" that has occasioned such killings, bannings and burnings throughout the world. "That book simply does not exist" (I.H., 395). Rather, it is a profound "work of radical dissent and

questioning and reimagining" (I.H., 395). Rushdie is inclined to dissent from the orthodox religiosity which never encourages man to be independent in mind and spirit. Bereft of sovereignty, man can never question his origins and probe into the roots of his own culture. Rushdie considers the relative value of the sacred and the profane within the parameters of the novel. He finds that we can become whole only through a consciousness of our own hybridity or impurity.

Indeed, Rushdie's brand of hybridity comprises an intellectual cum physical journey from a world, full of imposed or orthodoxies of all types and nationalities, to an ethos where we find the existence and expression of freedom in terms of race, culture and religion, as well as politics. As a post-colonial, Rushdie does not remain confined within its orbits. He transcends the narrow demarcations of postcoloniality by moving away from the struggle between Western freedom and Eastern rigidity and orthodoxy and which may be rightly observed in other writers of the Indian subcontinent who may be located within such an ambience. It is indeed difficult to locate Rushdie in the novel. He is both Western as well as Eastern. Like James Joyce, Rushdie thinks that the artist can only live and breathe in a world, where there is racial, sexual and political freedom. As a migrant-artist, Rushdie challenges

What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist. Without the freedom to challenge, even to satirise all orthodoxies, including

religious orthodoxies, it ceases to exist. Language and the imagination cannot be imprisoned, or art will die, and with it, a little of what makes us human. The Satanic Verses is, in part, a secular man's reckoning with the religious spirit (...). The Satanic Verses is the story of two painfully divided selves. In the case of one, Saladin Chamcha, the division is secular and societal: he is torn, to put it plainly, between Bombay and London, between East and West. For the other, Gibreel Farishta, the division is spiritual, a rift in the soul. He has lost his faith and is strung out between his immense need to believe and his new inability to do so. The novel is 'about' their quest for wholeness (I.H., 396-7).

An important aspect of Rushdie's art of mongrelisation is, therefore, the bringing together of the sacred and the profane. The "brothel sequence" in The Satanic Verses remains a living testimony to this art, when Rushdie describes how the whores of a brothel take the names of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad in order to arouse their customers. Of course, the "real" wives are dearly described as "living chastely" in their harem. Thus, Rushdie has successfully crystallised the opposition between the sacred and the profane by counterpointing the harem and the brothel. Harem and brothel are opposite worlds, and the presence in the harem of the Prophet, the receiver of a sacred text, is

contrasted with the presence in the brothel of the poet Baal, who might be taken as the creator of corrupt and profane texts. In this context, it is important to note that Mahound is actually a medieval European demonisation of the Prophet Muhammad. This may be cited as an instance of de-contextualisation, which has created a complete reversal of meaning. This was the supreme example of the migrant's idea of reclaiming language from that of the host country, which often indulged in vituperation, insults and abuse. The demonisation of the migrant by the host culture has been turned upside down in the sense that the former retaliates by demonising the host country, largely through cultural and linguistic aggression.

The Satanic Verses has been composed as a retaliatory answer to the host country's demonising of the migrant as the other. And after all, Rushdie indicates that the process of hybridisation, which becomes the novel's most crucial dynamic, actually means that its ideas derive from many sources other than Islamic ones. Thus,

When Saladin Chamcha finds himself transformed into a goatish, horned and hoofy demon, in a bizarre sanatorium full of other monstrous beings, he's told that they are all, like him, aliens and migrants, demonized by the host cultures' attitude to them. 'They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct.' If migrant groups are called devils by others,

that does not really make them demonic. And if devils are not necessarily devilish, angels may not necessarily be angelic.... From this premise, the novel's exploration of morality as internal and shifting (rather than external, divinely sanctioned, absolute) may be said to emerge.

The very title, The Satanic Verses, is an aspect of this attempt at reclamation. You call us devils? it seems to ask. Very well, then, here is the devil's version of the world, of "your" world, the version written from the experience of those who have been demonised by virtue of their otherness. Just as the Asian kids in the novel wear toy devil-horns proudly, as an assertion of pride in identity, so the novel proudly wears its demonic title. The purpose is not to suggest that the Quran is written by the devil, it is to attempt the sort of act of affirmation that, in the United States, transformed the word block from the standard term of racial abuse into a 'beautiful' expression of cultural pride (I.H., 402-3).

This then, is the essence of hybridity or plurality, which might be said to be the origin of The Satanic Verses. Just as Jekyll is meaningless without Hyde, or that God cannot be defined without the Devil, so the colonizer/the British racists cannot exist without the other/the migrant within England itself, since it is a consequence of colonial expansion. In

the novel the Otherness of colonial discourse has been turned inside out. Not only the Britishers' attitude to other races has been questioned in England, but also that religious fanaticism has been used to probe the tall and fictive claims of religion. Fantasy, dreams and the bizarre have been used in the novel to question the reality of history. Rushdie has attempted to understand the human event of revelation by employing fiction. Just as we cannot believe in the racial superiority of the whites, so we cannot also accept the supernatural world at its face value. To question is to land ourselves in doubt, uncertainties and errors. And this can only be done by the migrant artist who finds himself in a *mélange* of culture, politics and religion. Because he has been de-contextualised and removed from his parent country, he is truly a secular artist, belonging to no particular nation and imbibing in him a mosaic of cultures.

Chapter VIII

The Moor's Last Sigh

The Moor's Last Sigh incarnates Rushdie's hybrid and philosophic vision of his native India, a panorama condensed within the story of the last surviving member, a Moor called Moraes Zogoiby. The entire novel is a triumphant tribute to the composite culture and the glory of the Moors. The very ending of the novel bears witness to the cross cultural weaving and interweaving of several strains of migrant identities and insulated narratives in a hybrid Mooristan.

And so I sit here in the last light, upon this stone, among these olive-trees, gazing out across a valley towards a distant hill; and there, it stands, the glory of the Moors, their triumphant masterpiece and their last redoubt. The Alhambra, Europe's red fort, sister to Delhi's and Agra's — the palace of interlocking forms and secret wisdom...that monument to a lost possibility that nevertheless has gone on standing, long after its conquerors have fallen; like a testament...to the defeated love that is greater than what defeats it, to that most profound of our needs, to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self (M.L.S., 433).

Moraes Zogoiby narrates the fabulous story of his life within a family who exemplify the glorious plurality of India. His mother is India's greatest artist and is a descendent of the Portuguese, albeit on the wrong side of the sheet from the famous Vasco da Gama. His father is also an illegitimate descendent of Boabdil, the last Moorish Sultan of Grenada, expelled from Spain in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella. Like his ancestor, Boabdil (who belongs to one of the ancient community of Cochin Jews) looks back in retrospect at the penultimate end of his life towards his brilliant, ruined family and on India we knew as a young man — a lost paradise of possibilities. In this novel, Rushdie had employed the device of a "double-quick" life for the Moor, who is destined to progress through his life at double-speed. He is aged about thirty-six but he has the physique of a seventy-two-year-old.

Rushdie has woven a fascinating arabesque of cross cultural contexts within the story of Zogoiby and da Gama families like the Spanish reconquista of Grenada and the expulsion of Moors, the founding of the spice between Europe and India, Portuguese colonial expansion in India as well as political and social events of twentieth century India. In a sense the Portuguese have left India, but the legends of the battling da Gamas of Cochin are still alive since they come down to the Moor, "polished" and "fantasticated by many re-tellings". According to the Moor these are "old ghosts, distant shadows" but it is his self-professed vocation to set them free from Cochin harbour to that of Bombay,

throughout Malabar so that these Spanish, Portuguese and Indian narrative can be re-mixed again in a hybrid entourage of stories.

Indeed the entire legend of Moraes Zogoiby incarnates tales of decadence and a downward drift of morals. Moraes confesses that:

While we're getting down to it, to the root of the whole matter of family rifts and premature deaths and thwarted loves and mad passions and weak chests and power and money and the even more morally dubious seductions and mysteries of art, let's not forget who started the whole thing... and began the dumping me in the pit: Francisco da Gama, Epifania's defunct spouse (M.L.S., 14-15).

In Epifania's terms the "art-short" Francisco was the concourse of conflicting impulses and which the source of his full, gentle humanity (16). On the one hand Francisco was incapable of living of settled life like ordinary folks and on the other, he was a patron of the arts.

Rum-and-whisky-drinking-hamp-chewing persons of low birth and revolting dress sense were important for long periods and filed up the trendy horses with jangling music, poetry, marathons, naked models, reefer-stubs, all night card-schools and other manifestations of their in-all-ways incorrect behaviour (M.L.S., 16).

On the other hand Francisco "was handsome as sin but twice as virtuous", since he was "hero material from the day he was born, destined

for questions and quests, as ill-at-ease, with domesticating as Quixote” (17). Again, at college “he was the most brilliant student physicist of his year”, besides being “an adept of the age-old da Gama art of turning spice and nuts into Gold” (17). He was also noted “philanthropic, funding orphanages, opening free health clinics, building schools” (17).

In 1916 Francisco da Gama joined the Home Rule campaign of Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak confirming his calling as a patriot. As a result he was frequently prisoned during the same year and it was during his spell inside the prison that he enunciated his theory which turned him from an emerging hero into national laughing-stock. His paper, which was published in the leading journals was entitled “Towards a Provisional Theory of Transformational Fields of Conscience” in which he proposed:

The existence, all around us, of invisible dynamic networks of spiritual energy similar to electromagnetic fields, arguing that these ‘fields of conscience were nothing less than the repositories of memory — both practical and moral — of the human species, that they are in fact what Joyce’s Stephen had recently spoken (in the *Egoist* magazine) of wishing to forge in his soul’s smithy; viz., the uncreated conscience of our race’ (20).

Rushdie’s insistence on the forging of conscience within the repositories of Francisco’s memory has a direct and important bearing on

the metaphor of palimpsest in the art-works of Aurora Zogoiby within the novel. The panorama of memory, individual and racial provides an apt setting for one of Rushdie's principal themes and subjects for investigation in the world.

How does the narrator represent, in his own person, India's pluralism and the pluralism of the entire world?

Rushdie unhesitatingly and unceasingly stresses, through his narration the Moor, the beauty and the cultural implications of plurality. Speaking of his family's history, the Moor asks,

Christians, Portuguese and Jews; Chinese tiles promoting godless views, pushy ladies, skirts — not — sorts, Spanish shenanigans, Moorish crowns...can this really be India? (87).

In fact, Rushdie's novel highlights the grandiose figure of the Moor as a hybrid. In Aurora's paintings of the "Moor in exile" series, the cross-cultural sequence of the Moor is easily manifest. She has given expression to the controversial and mysterious "dark Moors, born of a passionate irony" and which has always characterised the intractable character of her paintings.

Almost every piece contained elements of college, and over time these elements became the most dominant features of the series. The unifying narrator/narrated figure of the Moor was usually still present, but was increasingly

characterised as jetsam, and located in an environment of broken and discarded objects, many of which were “found” items, pieces of crates or vanaspati tins that were fixed to the surface of the work and painted over (M.L.S., 301).

What is apparent in Aurora's art-setting has already been noticed in the figure of the hybrid Moor, this that in both cases the cross cultural contexts harmonise with each other, bringing together a very complex-artistic effect. Thus the cultural...in the Moor dovetails with the hybrid culture of twentieth century Indians. Thus

When the Moor did reappear it was in a highly fabulated milieu, a kind of human rag-and-bone-yard that took its inspiration from the jopadpatti shades and lean-to's of the pavement dwellers and the patched-together edifices of the great slums and chawls of Bombay. Here everything was a collage.... But Aurora, for whom reportage had never been enough, had pushed her vision several stages further; in her pieces it was the people themselves who were made of rubbish, who were collages composed of what the metropolis did not value: lost buttons, broken windscreen wipers, torn cloth, burned books, exposed camera film (M.L.S., 302).

What is apparent in this cultural pluralism is the idea of hybridity which finds expression in Aurora's paintings. In the New Critical Sights

on Salman Rushdie, vol. II, John Clement Ball, in his essay on "Acid in the Nation's Bloodstream: Satire, Violence and the Indian Body Politic in Salman Rushdie's The Moor's Last Sigh", has drawn attention to the use of ekphrasis by which Rushdie infuses into or alternately pulls out of her images some of the aesthetic and moral perspectives from which he would have the reader approach his novel.

Full of grotesque figures fusing human and animal parts, with breasts for buttocks or whole bodies made from urban rubbish, Aurora's teeming canvases signify a grand, all-encompassing vision. Her blending of realities is geographic as well as social.... As chief moral touchstone, Aurora's canvases not only seem to be the visual equivalent of Rushdie's encyclopaedic, grotesque, magic-realist novels, but they also help explain a unique feature of this particular novel. Hue blurring of "the dividing line between two world" (M.L.S., 226) is part of a grand merging and palimpsesting of worlds that both she and Rushdie performed to advance their more-or-less mutual idea of contemporary India as the type of Moorish Spain (2003, 41-42).

Actually the fact is that prior to some of the crucial events of the late fifteenth century like the Inquisition, the expulsion of Jews, and the closure of the Moorish regime in Granada, the Iberian peninsula had for

some time harboured a heterodox, pluralist society. It is a fact that at one historical moment, medieval Spain consisted of Western Europe's most multiracial and religiously pluralist populace. Under the reign of tolerant Christian rulers, three monotheistic groups (Christians, Muslims and Jews) had co-existed, inspired by the belief that by under a benign God they could live peacefully in a pluralistic society.

However, from the thirteenth century onwards they became largely separated and hostile, repressing from their belief in a pluralist and synoptic society. Gradually the purist idea of Christian Spain promoted so fiercely by Ferdinand and Isabella identified the interests of the nation-state with those of a single religious group. The idea of purity of blood gathered in the mind of the rulers and such a conception was appreciated by Christians as a weapon against Jewish and Mudjehar (Moor) minorities (Read, 1974, 202-07). J.C. Bell has correctly indicated that such an identification is "anathema to Rushdie in the Indian context. But when he, like Aurora, starts "using Arab Spain to re-imagine India" (M.L.S., 227), the parallel enable a prophetic critique" (Mittapalli and Kuortti, 42).

Coetzee in his article "Palimpsest Ragained" has suggested in The Moor's Last Sigh

The Arab penetration of Iberia, like the later Iberian penetration of India, led to a creative mingling of peoples and cultures; that the victory of Christian intolerance in Spain was a tragic turn in history; and that Hindu

intolerance in India bodes as ill for the world as did the sixteenth century Inquisition in Spain (Coetzee, 1996, 14).

As a return to the metaphor of the palimpsest the year 1992 in India becomes a recalling of the Spanish context of 1492, thereby bringing about an historical process of national "purification" through which Rushdie can mirror and satirise an event still in process in India. Thus, medieval Spain can be likened to the earlier, pluralist nationalisation of Gandhi and Nehru as against the ascendant Christian Spain of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, which may be a precursor of the future course of events, India might adopt under the power of resurgent Hindu nationalism. The artistic montage which dovetails segments of historical time and phases through the career of Moor as well as Aurora's paintings has several functions as it highlights the positive implications of an all-inclusive society as well as the threatening forces which lead towards a disruption of such hybridity and ideal co-existence. In many ways The Moor's Last Sigh like Midnight's Children is a national celebration of a cross-cultural, historical event which acts both as an analysis of a social past and that of the present political realities in India.

Such a state of affairs is reflected in the degeneration of the Moor. Aurora's paintings force into our visibility by the strength of her artistic will. The figure of the Moor, sinking into immorality, isolated by his mother and degraded in

tableaux of debauchery and crime. He appeared to lose, in these last pictures, his previous metaphorical role as a unifier of opposites, a standard-bearer of pluralism ceasing to stand as a symbol...of the new nation, and being transformed, instead, into semi-allegorical figure of decay (M.L.S., 303).

As such the paintings of Aurora grew “steadily, less colourful” until she was working only in black, white and occasional shades of grey. The Moor was working an abstract figure, a pattern of black and white diamonds covering him from head to foot. Indeed, “he was black and white. He was the living proof of the possibility of the union of opposites” (M.L.S., 259). But Ayxa the Black pulled one way, and Chimene the while, the other. They began to break him in half. As the Moor made love to Chimene in cheap hotels, Ayxa, the mother was “always somewhere in these pictures, behind a curtain, stooped at a keyhole, flying up to the window of the lover’s eyeries” (M.L.S., 259). Even though the Moor was attracted to his white love, his black dam was also very much a part of his personality.

Behind, the introduction of the “Chimene” lay the figure of a beautiful young woman — Uma, “Uma fictionalised, Hispanicised, as this “Chimene”, Uma incorporating aspects of Sophia Loren in El Cid, pinched from the story of Rodrigo De Vivar and introduced without explanation into the hybrid universe of the Moor” (M.L.S., 247).

Ayxa, Boabdil's mother and Chimene or Uma comprised the weaving or interweaving of the Moor's world — Mooristan — it was a place “where worlds collide, flow in and out from another, and washofy away. Place where an air an air-man can downs in water, or else grow gills; where a water-creature can get drunk, but also chokeofy, on air. One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumping into another, or being under, or on top of it, call it Palimostine” (226), and yet in Aurora's last paintings the Moor seemed to lose his earlier metaphysical role as a unifier of opposite. In fact, he could not symbolise his previous configuration of opposites and pluralism in view of recent developments in the Indian state:

Aurora has apparently decided that the ideas of impurity cultural admixture and *mélange* which had been, for most of her creative life, the closest things she had found to a notion of the God, were in fact capable of distortion, and contained a potential for darkness as well as for light. This “black Moor” was a new imaging of the idea of the hybrid — a *Bandelairean* flower, it could not be too far-fetched to suggest, of evil... (M.L.S., 303).

Viewed from this angle, the notion of hybridity as portrayed in this novel; in the image of the Moor as seen in Aurora's paintings is a organic component of a historical process both in Spain and in India, and which is the victim of a process of putrefaction, a poisoning of the social and body politic.

What started with perfume ended with a very big stink indeed...there is a thing that bursts out of us at time, a thing that lives in us, eating our food, breathing our air, out through our eyes, and when it comes to play nobody is immense, we turn murderously upon one another (M.L.S., 36).

Interestingly enough, Rushdie never debar his protagonist from the condition he critiques. And "even as he laments the violence of divisive forces Moraes adheres to his vision of himself as part of the crowd" (Mittapalli and Kuortti, 44). The image of the degeneration of the body, leading to a frightening image of parasitic contagious actually refers to the "plague-spores of communal fantacism" (208) and to Uma, whose embodiment of pluralism hides a reality of self-seeking devastation. She grafts "pestilential seeds" to produce a "menu" of "misery", "catastrophe, grief" and division for Moraes's family to consume (M.L.S., 320).

The degeneration within the Moor and the decapitation of the seeds of hybridity, sowed by Gandhi and Nehru in India has been consumed together in a fictionalizing of a historico-political reality in 1992. Following the destruction of the Ayodha mosque in 1992 with the inflammation of fundamental ideologies, Moraes has described the national conditional in an apt, multilayered image.

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...the explosions burst out of our very own bodies. 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.... Excuse, please, the outburst. Got carried away. Old Moor will sigh no more (M.L.S., 372-73).

This account not only bears upon the transhistorical fusions of military and body imagery, but also for its insistence on the collective “we” in acknowledging such obligation and responsibility. This notion of collective responsibility where the narrator Moraes envisions himself as part of society which is in turn split by divisive forces, is a unique standpoint where the idea of hybridity suffers expansion horizontally as well as vertically. J.C. Ball has noted that “Rushdie does not exclude his protagonist from the condition he critiques” (Ball, 44). When the notion of hybridity is explained and illustrated through the ideals of purity and impurity; as unity and disunity; and as synthesis and putrefaction, there is a linear proliferation of the idea as well as a vertical deepening where the protagonist narrator records such expansion within himself.

Harvey in Islamic Spain (1990) has shown that (like his predecessor) Boabdil the unlucky had cemented a secret alliance with the Christians and this held helpful him to end Moorish sovereignty in

Granada (301). Similarly, in the novel Moraes's duplicity is exposed as he spends time as an agent of the intolerant enemy. The fact is, Moraes represents the notions of multiplicity in terms of this hybrid ancestry, his briefs, and his "metaphorical role" in Aurora's paintings as "a unifier of opposites, a standard-bearer of pluralism... a symbol...of the new nations" but when he acts as a thug for a Roman Fielding, or Mainduck, he is chosen as the novel's primary exemplar of the new fundamentalism (303). J.C. Ball has explained that Moraes's change is the effect of his realisation of Uma's duplicity, his ostracism from family, his imprisonment in Bombay Central prison ("the stomach, the intestine of the city", M.L.S. 287), and his rescue by Mainduck. But he is never worried about his betrayal (Ball, 44).

Indeed, Moraes exults in his new capacity of playing a dual role:

Unhesitating, I embraced my fate, without pausing to ask what connection there might be between Fielding's anti-Abrahamic tirade and his alleged intimacy with Mrs. Zogoiby; without let or hindrance; willingly, even joyfully, I leapt, where you have sent me, mother — into the darkness, out of your sight — there I elect to go. The names you have given me — outcast, outflow, untouchable, disgusting, vile — I clasp my hand to bosom and make my own. The curse you have laid upon me will be my blessing and the hatred you have splashed across my

face I will drink down like a potion of love. Disgraced, I will wear my shame and name it pride — will wear it, great Aurora, like scarlet letter blazed on my breast. Now I am plunging downwards from your hill, but I'm not angel, my tumble is not Lucifer's, but Adam's. I fall into my manhood. I am happy so to fall (M.L.S., 295-96).

Henceforth Moraes illustrates the ideal of inductiveness, which can alternately include and then be overcome by powerful forces of exclusiveness. In a certain sense if he can embody the force of opposites, Moraes can provide a supreme instance of self-critique as well as give access to the primary target of Rushdie's satire so that we can gain insight into the deformities of society. On the one hand his hybridity opens our consciousness towards Rushdie's negative grotesque imagery where we witness the physical putrefaction and material distortion, which nauseates (232); on the other hand, we can observe through Moraes, Mainduck's reactionary public policies, which involve the coercive and decadent Mafia, anti-women and pro-sati policies as well as the intolerance of religious fundamentalists which foregrounds representational violence.

Actually the notion of hybridity was an integral part of the Indian psyche. The events happening in today's Indian scenario is a discrediting and destruction of a tradition of cultural *mélange* and purity, which was more than two thousand years old. Such cross cultural currents bolstered the birth of the Indian nation, and which, Rushdie shows through the

figure of Moraes has been forgotten and done away within India today.

Thus,

The mosque of Ayodhya was destroyed. Alphabet-sophists, fanatics', or alternatively, 'devout liberators of the sacred site's...swarmed over the seventeenth-century Babri Masjid and torn it apart with their bare hands, with their teeth, with the elemental power of what Sir. V. Naipaul has approvingly called their 'awakening of history'.... It was...both joyful and tragic, both authentic and spurious.... Nobody could even be sure...that the present-day town of Ayodhya in U.P. stood at the same site as the mythical Ayodhya.... Not was the notion of the existence there of Rama's birthplace, the Ramjanambhoomi, an ancient tradition — it wasn't a hundred years old. It had actually been a Muslim worshipper at the old Babri Mosque, who had first claimed to see a vision of Lord Ram there, and so started the ball rolling; what could be a finer image of religious tolerance and plurality than that (M.L.S., 363).

Such events led to the plunder of cultural monuments discrediting an entire race and civilization. Muslims were branded as invaders and after two thousand years, they still did not belong to the cultural mainstream and ran the risk of being erased from the memory of a nation.

Thus four paintings were stolen from the Zogoiby Bequest at Bombay, but supreme canvas, The Moor's Last Sigh. The expert comment highlighted the fact that "when such alien artifacts disappear from India's holy soil, let no mass mourn.... If the new nation is to be born, there is much invader — history that may have to be erased" (364). This fomented the notion of putrefaction in Indian blood culture, which was erstwhile pure in the sense of positive, enlightened hybridity, a kind of efflorescence of national spirit through a cultural *mélange*. But this cultural integrity was overcome with a fatality and religious fanaticism which led to the stink of impurity within the idea of hybridity itself. Rushdie comments that

There comes a point in the unfurling of communal violence in which it becomes irrelevant to ask, "who started it"? The lethal conjugations of death part company with any possibility of justification, let alone justice. They surge among us, left and right, Hindu and Muslim, knife and pistol, killing, burning, looting and raising into the smoky air their clenched and bloody fists. Both their houses are damned by their deeds; both sides sacrifice the right to any shred of virtue; they are each there's plaques (M.L.S., 365).

Moraes Zogoiby does not exempt himself from such violence because he himself has been a man of violence for too long and on the

night after Raman Belding insulted his mother on T.V., he brutally put an end to his accursed life. And in doing so he cached upon him a terrible curse (365).

From the viewpoint Moraes's hybrid character indicates and illustrates Rushdie's complex analysis of Morrasthan as well as Hindusthan, taken together. He begins his career in the novel and also in Aurora's "Moor" paintings, as an allegorical embodiment of India as pluralistic, hybrid, gentle giant. He develops fast and although he is deformed, he might not be a monster. However, as he comes in context with Mainduck, he betrays his roots and his ideals. As he becomes frustrated during the course of his relationship with Uma, he allows himself to become an agent of the forces that would deny him as individual and as national principle. This ambivalence becomes a characteristic trait in his new role, organising punishments with cool expertise, relieved that he can give up his old confusing complexity for the 'simplicity' and 'straight forwardness' of Mainduck's brutal program (305). His acceptance of an alien cause suggests that Moraes who was the symbolical representation of a 'semi-allegorical figure of decay' (303), now represents a nation increasingly detached from its origins and willing to violate its founding principle of pluralistic secularism. At the most it might be hazarded that the body politic which responds to the factionalising message in the grab of the collective "we" is actually a burlesque of the earlier, historical collective entity and unity.

Tragedy was not in our natures. A tragedy was taking place all right, a national tragedy on a grand scale, but those of us who played out parts were...clowns. Clowns! Burlesque buffoons, drafted into history's theatre on account of the lack of greater man. Once indeed, there were giants on our stage; but at the fag-end of an age, Modern History must do with what she can get. Jewa Harlal, in these latter days, was just the name of a stuffed dog (M.L.S., 352).

It is this consciousness of society guilt which has been echoed numerous times by Moraes. He confesses that they lack humanity, these Mainduck-style 'Littler Hitlers' and it is in their 'humanity that we must locate our collective guilt' (299). Behind this critique lies the pessimistic notion of Aurora that mixture and *mélange* can breed and spread darkness and distortion, and that 'inclusiveness can breed exclusiveness. Even 'Bombayness' is not powerful enough to overwhelm negating energies" (Mittapalli and Kuortti, 2003, 48). J.C. Ball has noted this special tone of the all-embracing pessimism at the heart of Rushdie's hybridity, which, in spite and despite his valorisation of its alternate intermingling of purity and impurity, fails to illustrate the true rejoicing of the Bakhtimian carnivalesque. Rather, it evinces an anemic spirit of joy, carnival and optimism in the Manippean strain of the grotesque in art.

The result is that Rushdie challenges more strongly than ever the moral and generic dualities he has always invoked

— of enabling Manippean multiplicity as the normative position from which violent exclusivity is satirised. If one can turn into the other — not just at the level of genre or textuality as in Midnight's Children, but on the societal level too — the distinction becomes impossible to maintain. As 'the (apparently) pluralist Uma, with her multiple selves...turned out to be the bad egg' (M.L.S., 272) and as the mongrel Moraes, excluded from love, is co-opted by those who would reverse the principles of secular — democratic tolerance, so India as a whole is increasingly hijacked by forces that would deny it (Mittapalli and Kuortti, 2003, II. 48).

We can, therefore, conclude that where hybridity is in question, and becomes the central issue at stake in postcolonial literature we may be at liberty to emphasise that colonial identities are in a constant state of flux. The dualities of the colonial encounter become evident in Rushdie's analyses of the trans-historical situation — that if Mooristhan and Hindusthan — where the hybrid, colonial subject in split and may be termed as being both, homogeneous and heterogeneous (Loomba, 178).

Chapter IX

The Ground Beneath Her Feet

The Ground Beneath Her Feet retells the myth of Orphyus and Eurydice in pop-cultural terms that sometimes border on the ludicrous. Ormus descends into the underworld to find Vina, who has been swallowed by an earthquake. Narrated by the photographer Rai (actual name Umeed Merchant), who is actually obsessed with Vina, their epic romance thunders its way through the cosmopolitan Bombay of the 1950s and the vivid London of the 1960s, to fester capriciously in frenzied contemporary Manhattan and then to plummet to oblivion and eternal grief.

Inventive, ambitious and complex, Rushdie's novel addresses the cosmopolitan experience of his audience. Cultures begin fusing page one and continue mutating until the end. This cultural mutation has its origin in the 'paradigmatic hybridity' of the heroine, Vina Apsara, as well as that of the hero, Ormus Cama, who is also well known as Rai Merchant (Umeed Merchant). Vina is a formidable hybrid of bombshell rock star — a la Madonna/Whitney Houston/Country Love — and goddess — a la (according to Rushdie) Helen/Eurydice/Sita/Rati/ Persephone. Likewise Ormus/Rai is a combination of Elvis, John Lenon and Dylan (Limaye, 1-2).

The novel presents a hybrid world, where Mullens Standish, a housewife pirate with two children can be found in association with a bullock driver and a lungi-wearing Indian country farmer. It is a world in which Ormus' father, Sir Darius Cama, an Anglophile barrister, devotes his later life to unearthing the similarities between Homeric and Indian myth. It is a world where Sam's Pleasure Island, a popular joint for music business honchos that resembled the intergalactic far in the original Star Wars replete with space gods form on Martian asteroids. It is a place where Ormus, a Bombay-born-and-fed musician, flies to London wearing black European hipster jeans, but also a Yankees baseball cap and a cutaway beat-generation T-shirt.

A stray sense of migrant identity haunts Vina Apsara. She is a symbol of hybridity and can be seen to incarnate a stable matrix or a homogeneous self. Ormus describes her thus:

To her last day, I could always see in her the skittish, disintegrated creature she'd have been when first came to us.... What a piece of jetsam she was then, what a casualty! Literally selfless, her personality smashed, like a mirror, by the first of her life. Her name, her mother and family, her sense of place and home and safety and belonging and being loved, her belief in the future, all things had been pulled out from under her, like a rug. She

floating in avoid, denatured, or dehistoricized, clawing at the shapelessness, trying to make some sort of mark....

She was a rag-bag of selves, torn fragments of people she might have become.... Sweet or savage, serene or stormy, funny or sad! She had as many moods as the Old Man of the Sea, who would transform himself over and over again if you tried to grab him, for he knew that if you did capture him he would have grant your deepest wish (TGBHF, 132-33).

It is though her understanding of music that she could put together the disparate elements in her personality; her polyphonic selves into a sort of mosaic so that the whole world fell in love with the goddess, the Galatea or Vina Apsara. But wherein lies the power of songs?

Maybe it derives from the sheer strangeness of there being singing in the world. The note, the scale, the chord; melodies, harmonies, arrangements; symphonies, ragas, Chinese operas, jazz, the blues: that such things should exist, that we should have discovered the magical intervals and distances that yield the poor cluster of notes, all within the span of a human hand, from which we can build our cathedrals of sound, is as alchemical a mystery as a

mathematics, or wine, or love.... Our lives are not what we deserve.... Song turns into something else (TGBHF, 19).

It was through the alchemy of music that Vina Apsara redeemed an entire world. She came to be seen as an emblem, an ideal by more than half the population of the world. She was no angel, but she was worshipped. And it was in America, that her talents found their culmination because in this land of migrant identities, where fineries were broken and a hybrid music was located, one could find the centripetal force of cultural syncretism which could cement the passion of Apsara and Lama. Rushdie's novel is almost like a rock 'n' roll love paean of America's self-inventing chaos, complete with the yikitaka-yikitaka and boom-chicka-booms Ormus' drum-beat-laden inner voice. American hybridity is a conglomerate of Polish dances, Italian weddings, Zonba-slithering Greeks and the drunken rhythms of the salsa saints. Our wounded souls are soothed by the cool music and we are enticed to dance by the hot democratic music.

Ormus possesses for Jewish, Italian, Spanish, Roman, French, Latin American, "Red" Indian, and Greek. Race can never be a fixed point but is subject to redefinition as Rai arrives in Manhattan. Ormus and Vina's music crosses all frontiers, rising above the limits of family, clan, nation, and race and flying over the minefields of turf and taboo. Though Ormus has always hoped that humans would rub out the colour line — not just

cross it — it is Vina who finally brings about this larger sense of global kinship. Her death causes mourners on the frontlines of the world's armed conflicts to lay down their weapons and embrace each other.

Rushdie's novel is about hybridity and migrant identity, of rootlessness and exile, and angst. At the same time, it eulogises and celebrates the values of the tramp, the rebel, the assassin, the thief, the mutant, the outcast, the delinquent, the devil, the sinner, the traveler, the gangster and the escapist. Our literature recognises and accepts the course of their existence, by finding and locating in them our least-fulfilled needs. Hence, time and again, the outcast, the rebel and the mutant has been reinvented to give expression to a timeless need. Thus

in every generation there are a few souls...who are simply born out of belonging, who come into the world semi-detached, if you like, without strong affiliation to family or location or nations or race; that there may even be millions, billions of such souls, as many non-belongs as belongs.... And not only by that: for those who value stability, who fear transience, uncertainty, change, have erected a powerful system of stigmas and taboos against rootlessness, that disruptive anti-social force, so that we mostly conform, we pretend to be motivated by loyalties and solidarities we do not really feel, we hide our secret identities beneath the false skin of those identities which

bear the belongers' seal of approval. But the truth leaks out in our dreams; alone in our beds (...) we soar, we fly, we flee. And in the walking dreams over societies permit, in our myths, our arts, our songs, we celebrate the non-belongers, the different ones, the outlaws, the freaks, what we forbid ourselves we pay good money to watch, in a playhouse or movie theatre, or to read about between the secret covers of a book. Our libraries, our palaces of entertainment tell the truth (TGBHF, 78-79).

Through *Ormus and Vina*, Rushdie has tried to explain the uncertainties and fluidity of the migrant's hybrid discourse which transcends any geographical location and sense of time and place. Militating against the traditional impulse to conform and be loyal to the demands of religion, race, the migrant has developed and evolved a new psychology — the psyche of the mutant, who is fearless and candid enough to admit of his secret desires and identities which would have otherwise suffered repression and containment in an insular society. The orthodox and the conservative ethos in society has been ironically portrayed and guilt-ridden by contradictions. Society both adulates and castigates the mutant and the hybrid because it is riddled with ambivalence and double existence, to put it differently, the mutant and the migrant is a part of the very society it is alienated and the hidden impulses, with which we sympathise and are emotionally found but from

which we detach ourselves consciously, fearing our dissolution in the larger global music of universalisation.

Limaye agrees with Tony Morrison that The Ground Beneath Her Feet is a “global novel”. As Limaye observes, on its surface, the term would seem to describe the work of those writers with mixed cultural backgrounds who seem not to fit into any of the usual modern regional traditions. Whole schools of “post-colonial” literature have arisen at the end of the century featuring novelists who draw on mixed cultural sources. This especially apparent among Indian and Asian authors: the Seth/ Ghosh/ Tharoor/ Roy/ Amit Chaudhuri/ Kiran Desai/ Divya-Karuni. Indian expatriates who have earned their fame in the West by writing about an eroticised East. And there’s the P.C.-obsessed “Asian-American”/ diaspora writer tradition, the Amy Tan/Bharati Mukherjee/ Jhumpa Lahiri types, whose reputations have come from writing about American encounters between East and West.

Some readers may encounter a novel about expatriate displacement... and see globalism...but they are about the opposite of globalism: they are about difference. “Globalism”, if the idea is to describe anything, is about cultural weddings, about dynamic syncretism. At their core, such works are not merely geographically diffuse. On the contrary, they draw their strength from highly specific contexts of places and cultures in flux (Limaye, 4-5).

Placed within the context of such critical opinion, The Ground Beneath Her Feet may be considered to be truly representative of such “global novel” since it draws upon a plethora of various cultures and which defies the limiting boundaries of regional traditions. More than any other novelist, Rushdie celebrated this unique medley of several identities within a polyphonic self, as Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama travel from country to country. In this depiction of the mutability of identity in multiple cultural contexts lies Rushdie’s special brand of hybridity. Thus Vina’s person has been rendered ‘selfless’, and ‘her personality smashed, like a mirror, by the fist of her life’ (TGBHF, 132).

Her name, her mother and family, her sense of place, and home and safety and belonging and being loved, her belief in the future, all these things had been pulled out from under her, like a rug. She was floating in a void, denatured, dehistoricized, clawing at the shapelessness, trying to make sort of mark....

She was a rag-bag of selves, torn fragments of people she might have become (TGBHF, 132).

According to Rushdie, the problematics of identity-crisis begins at the nature when man developed his own identity as differentiated from his own tribe in primitive times. The tribe and its existence had ensured a multi-bodied but single collective entity, but when man broke away from the herd, with his own distinctive individuality, this gave rise to a wide

fracturing of selfhood. All this was the result of a complex process of entrapping or self-liberation. As a result the categories of time and space were diluted and violated. This began the movement of deconceptualisation (TGBHF, 378).

Well, we weren't expecting to be followed, we didn't realise we were-starting anything, and it looks like it's scared us so profoundly, this fracturing, this tumbling of walls, this forgodsake freedom, that at top speed we're rushing back into our skins and war paint, postmodern into pre-modern, back to the future (TGBHF, 378-79).

In the postmodern era we inhabit a fractured world of ourselves, as well as that of time and space. But somehow, Rushdie vividly paints such a world where the individual is at home. No more, an individual, we have already seen that man is a conglomerate of polyphonic selves. It is here that Vina's and Ormus Cama's identity merge in movements of flux, and rebirth. They become unique figures in both, processes of fracture and reunion (rebirth).

He clings to her, without touching her. They meet and whisper and short and make each other up. Each is Pygmalion, both are Galatea. They are a single entity in two bodies; male and female, constructed they themselves. You are my only earth. There are heavy burdens, but she bears them willingly, asks for more, burdens him

identically in return. They have both been damaged, are both repairers of damage. Later, entering that world of ruined selves, music's world, they will already have learned that such damage is the normal condition of life, as is the closeness of the crumbling edge, as is the fissured ground. In that inferno, they will feel at home (TGBHF, 162).

This notion of fracture is an essential element of postmodernity and governs today's world. It finds its into the dissolution of identities, selves and beliefs. Such a sense of schism and loss finds its way in Rushdie's hybrid world; where one has to part from one's beloved, kindred world of dreams and strike out into the unknown, into strange cultural realms.

This break away from one culture and entry into another is a poignant and heartbreaking movement. Hereafter Rushdie's peregrinations involves a journey into imaginary possibilities; either clinging to roots or evolving towards rootlessness. On the one hand the epic romance of Ormus and Vina thunders its way through cosmopolitan Bombay of the 1950s and the vivid London of the 1960s, only to fester capriciously in frenzied contemporary Manhattan and then to plummet into the other world and oblivion, into the frightening world of obsession, the realm of rock 'n' roll (TGBHF, 481). On the other hand Anita Dharkar refused to leave her country even after being brutally raped by it because

according to her, there is no escape from her roots, where she actually belongs.

'They have finished with me now'.... 'So, no problem'. She meant that India was still the only place on earth to which she could imagine herself belonging, corrupt and crooked and heartless and violent as it was. She belonged, and optimism and home were still not dead in her in spite of her appalling violation. She could not define herself, could not give herself any meaning, except here, where her roots had gone too deep and spread too wide (TGBHF, 270).

According to Rushdie, however, both adherence of roots and breaking away from them becomes a matter of interpretation. Rai, the philosopher, would pose the question thus: "Something required me to leave. Something else required her to stay" (270). The nature of Rai's schism from his home country is to be understood in the context of a divorce between husband and wife.

At the end of a marriage the moment comes when you have to turn away from your wife, from the unbearably memory of the way you were, and turn towards the rest of your life. That's me at this point in this story. Once again, I'm the dumpee.

And so fare well, my country, don't worry; in won't come knocking at your door.... My home is burned, my parents dead, and those I loved have mostly gone away.... I go — I hurt — alone (TGBHF, 272).

Rai feels that today's India has been precipitated into a crisis of several identities. This melting of a stable matrix or self provides the pattern of a polyphonic discourse.

Very well then: I have walked your filthy streets, India, I have ached in my bones from the illness engendered by your germs.... India, my *terra infirma*, my maelstrom, my cornucopia, my crowd, India, my too-muchness, my everything at once, my Hug-me, my fable, my mother, my father and my first great truth. It may be that I am not worthy of you, for I have been imperfect, I confess. I may not comprehend what you are becoming, what perhaps you already are, but I am old enough to say that this new self of yours is an entity I no longer want, or need, to understand. India, fount of my imagination, source of my savagery, breaker of heart. Goodbye (TGBHF, 272-73).

Rushdie's manner of bidding adieu to his mother country is ambiguous for a couple of reasons. First and foremost, his last moments in India is in a certain sense, an expression of his own hybridity. It is so

because his departure signals in another sense, his entry into a different country, here for example America. At the same time, however, Rushdie cannot completely cut his umbilical cord. He for instance, can never completely adjure his Indianness at the heart of America. This feeling has traumatised the current and flow of several cultures and traditions of different nations which in his psyche.

Through Ormus Cama's words Rushdie explains his own ambivalence by stating how his account of journey into his own motherland is just another way of bidding goodbye to it. He confesses that he is taking the boy way round to the exit because he can't agree with himself to let go, to be done with it, to turn away towards his new life, just to settle for that fortunate existence, lucky Rushdie: *America* (262).

But it's also because my life hinges on what happened out there, on the banks of the Wainganga River, within sight of the Seonee hills. That was the decisive moment that created the secret image which I have never revealed to anyone, the hidden self-portrait, the ghost in my machine.

Nowadays I can behave, most of the time, as it never happened. I'm a happy man, I can throw sticks for my dog on an American beach and let the turn-ups on my stone-grey chinos get met in the Atlantic tides, but sometimes in the night I wake and the past is hanging there

in front of me, rotating slowly, and all around me the jungle beasts are growling, the fire grows dim, and they are closing in (TGBHF, 262).

Ormus reveals his perception with his own lost self in the new world of America to Vina because he realises that he can neither get rid of his earlier identity, nor can he resurrect it in the context of what has happened earlier in India. His new identity in America can at best be understood as a *palimpsest*: a rejuvenation of an earlier life which is beset with irony. For one thing, Rushdie or Ormus' never forgets his origins in Bombay. Viewed from another context, he also is not content to remain in his own birthplace, Bombay. What then makes him a happy man in America? It is his own present conditions, his newness in a different country that makes Ormus alias Rushdie, resuscitate his own identities, for he has several. In his remaking of himself lies Ormus's own secret, of which he often boasts to Vina.

Vina: I promised you that would open my heart, I swore that nothing would be spared. So I must find the courage to reveal this also, this terrible thing I know about myself. I must confess it and stand defenceless before the court of anyone who can be bothered to judge. If anyone remains, you know the old song. Even the President of the United States sometimes must stand naked.

Or I washed my hands in muddy waters, I washed my hands but they wouldn't come clear (TGBHF, 262).

Ormus describes how, in his journey throughout the world, he has successfully mastered and conned several nationalities. He was diligently bribed and sweet-talked his own way past the road blocks of regional warlords in Angola and former Yugoslavia. He had also located several routes in and out of twenty-seven different revolutions and major wars. He has snapped his fingers under the collective nose of the security cordons at the Milan and Paris fashion collections. But Ormus feels that it requires a unique courage to look with one's own eyes into the eyes of the truth and stare it down. 'To see what was thus, and show it so. To stop away the veils and turn the thunderous racket of revelation into the pure-silence of the image and so possess it' becomes the main objective of Ormus, as he leaves his own country (263). As he reaches England, he gingerly reaches out for the ultimate experience of being present in a totally foreign land. 'His footprints are the only fixed points in his universe' and that 'Everything must be made real, step by step' (294). Ormus' imagined journey from the periphery to the centre envisages an abolishing of binaries; the dichotomies of race and nation. One who has crossed the boundaries of his own country had to shed the stifling peculiarities of his own tradition and identity. He, in Rushdie's words, has to be out of his native self and transcends by *stepping across the line* of nationality. In England and America

How throne leans in on Ormus, blasting him with a fog of whisky breath. Listen, Mowgli, he says not without aggression, you're our fucking guest here, see. How'd you expect to understand the fucking host culture if you insist on remaining teetotal, if you obstinately refuse to fucking integrate in this obstinate fucking Paki obstinate bastard away? (TGBHF, 302).

Slowly Ormus comes to realise that in England he must adjust to the new circumstances. His first 'wholeheartedly erotic encounter with London life' involves the daily purchase and consumption of great quantities of bread, instead of chapatti (318).

Soon it begins to feel like a long time ago that he was India, with family ties, with roots. In the white hear of present tense these things have shriveled and died. Race itself seems less of a fixed point than before. He finds that to these new eyes he looks indeterminate. He has already passed for Jewish...he is taken for an Italian, a Spaniard, a Romany, a Frenchman, a Latin American, a "Real" India, a Greek. He is not of these, but he denies nothing....

Here, he is at the frontier of the skin (TGBHF, 319).

Finally, it is rock music which involves the secret of alliance between nation and nation, race and class. It helps Ormus to cross all

frontiers of the East and West. He was the one to hear it first. It is the hybridity within Ormus and Vina who always claimed, never wavering for a moment that the genius of Ormus Cama did not emerge merely in response to or in invitation of America or the West. In a sense his early music, that of his unsinging childhood years was not of the West, except in the sense that the West was in Bombay from the beginning, impure old Bombay where West, East, North and South had always been scrambled, like codes, like eggs, and so Westernness was a legitimate part of Ormus, a Bombay part, inseparable from the rest of him (103). It was true that it was only Ormus, who had first felt and understood that rock music was the music of the present, of the metropolis and which crossed all frontiers of nation, class, religion and skin (103). It is here that Rushdie the novelist asks

What's a "culture"? Look it up. "A group of micro-organisms grown in a nutrient substance under controlled conditions." A squire of germs on a glass slide is all, a laboratory experiment calling itself a society.... Like slaves voting for slavery or brains for lobotomy, we kneel down before the God of all moronic micro-organisms and pray to be homogenised.... But if Vina and Ormus were bacteria too, they were pair of bugs who wouldn't take life lying down. One way of understanding their story is to think of it as an account of the creation of two bespoke

identities, tailored for the wearers by themselves. The rest of us get our personal of the peg, our religion, language, prejudices, demeanour, the works; but Vina and Ormus insisted on what one might call an auto-couture (TGBHF, 102-03).

Ormus and Vina can create, make and unmake their identities because they believe and participate in the power of love and of music, 'which is the sound of love' (465). Music and love not only help us to cross boundaries but also to bridge gaps between two personalities. They help us to change and liberate us from alienating influences. Rushdie does not mind words when he describes the enchanting power of music on the lives of Ormus and Vina, 'the music was their real lovemaking' (466). It was because of her musical genius that even after her death, she came to be looked up as either Persephone or Caesar. The astonishing after life of Vina rapidly spiraled beyond the power of any authority, temporal or spiritual, which could either control or censure it. It was through music, therefore, she could affirm and invent her sense of kinship with the family of mankind. Her songs appeal to all the races, at the frontiers of skin. It is in such instances that notions of hybridity or cross cultural interaction may be found and located.

Rushdie's novel, therefore, may be said to offer an adequate fictional representation of the dynamic contradiction within globalisation, which is a knife cutting both ways. It not only opens up Vina and Ormus

to American cultural domination but also offers avenues for limitless expression, exploitation of resources, of communication and understanding among nations and races. Both possibilities of domination and interaction are implied in any cross cultural encounter and in this sense Rushdie's novel is no exception. Finally, in the postmodern context, Rushdie's novel is a courageous statement of acceptance, of belief in the possibilities of changing; of metamorphosing unpredictably, where nothing can be relied anymore.

Chapter X

Fury

The play of migrant metaphors within the arena of cultural cross-currents becomes the focal point of Rushdie's Fury, first published in Great Britain in 2001. The centre-stage of the novel is multicultural America, where Malik Solanka as protagonist, predicts biological or germ warfare afflicting America and American paranoia about it. Malik diagnoses the neuroses besetting American culture within the very desire and attempt at homogenisation of a culture wherein different races, different cultural practices, different ideological and different religions have been boiled into a common broth; in a melting pot of multicultural America.

In an election year, America's confidence was political currency. Its existence could not be denied; the incumbents took credit for it, their opponents refused them that credit, calling the boom an act of God or else of Alan Greenspan of the Federal Reserve. But our nature is our nature and uncertainty is at the heart of what we are, uncertainty per se, in and of itself, the sense that nothing is written in stone, everything crumbles. As Marx was probably still

saying out there in the junkyard of ideas, the intellectual St. Helena to which he had been exiled, all that is solid melts into air. In a public climate of such daily-trumpeted assurance, where did our fears go to hide? On what did they feed? On ourselves, perhaps, Solanka thought. While the greenback was all-powerful and America bestrode the world, psychological disorders and aberrations of all sorts were having field day back home. Under the self-satisfied rhetoric of this repackaged, homogenised America, this America with the twenty-two million jobs and the highest home-owning rate in history, this balanced-budget, low-deficit, stock-owning Mall America, people were stressed-out, cracking up, and talking about it all day long in superstrings of moronic cliché (Fury, 115).

Rushdie's Fury challenges this rubric of an overall, homogenised American cultural entity by examining the disparate, heterogeneous elements, which constitute such culture and thereby attempts to show how the contesting cross cultures may and can exploit into the blitzkrieg of fury. In the quest for opulence; in the attempt towards repackaging of identities and cultures; in the very movements of personal, racial and ethnic identities, shifting and composing the American omnivorousness and being metamorphosed into the American dream lies, according to Rushdie, the germ of the clash between disparate culture and identities.

Rushdie explores the idea of hybridity under the rubric of heterogeneity. He shows the simultaneous co-existence of multifarious cultures, subcultures and counter-cultures, without dissolving into one. This matrix of discourses counter-challenges the idea of cultural fusion, the oneness of the American dream.

Rushdie's pet idea is that a linear notion of cultural fusion within the pan-American utopia itself subsumes and obfuscates the dystopian character of multiculturalism and attempts to contain such poly-discourse within a simplistic framework. American attempts are directed towards repackaging identity, coalescing the fiction of migrant metaphors within one dominant cultural trope. If America fails to comprehend the asymmetrical parameters within the very idea of hybridity, then the efforts of cultural symbiosis can be stalled or misdirected.

Among the young, the inheritors of plenty, the problem was most acute. Mila, with her ultra-precious Parisian upbringing, often referred scornfully to the confusions of her contemporaries. Everybody was scared, she said, everybody she knew, however good their façade, was quaking inside, and it didn't make any difference that everybody was rich. Between the sexes the trouble was worst of all. "Guys don't really know how or when or where to touch any more, and girls can barely tell the difference between desire and assume it, flirtation and

offensiveness, love and sexual abuse." When every thing and everyone you touch turns instantly to gold, as King Midas learned the other classic-be-careful-what-you-wish-for fable, you end up not being able to touch anything, or anyone, at all (Fury, 115).

Against such notion of cultural symbiosis which has a tendency to gloss over the rich and checkered, hybrid character of American culture, Rushdie shows Malik Solanka exploding in fury. It is not that Rushdie is against multicultural America. But through Solanka, Rushdie has given expression to the unstable elements in the character and culture of the migrant.

What was true of him, he found himself thinking once again, might also be true to some degree of everyone. The whole world was burning on a shorter fuse. There was a knife twisting in every gut, a scourge for every back. We were all grievously provoked. Explosions were heard on every side. 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, when the fury ebbed and chaos abated, until the tide began, once again, to turn. Craters — in cities, in deserts, in nations, in

the heart — had become commonplace. People snarled and cowered in the rubble of their own misdeeds (Fury, 129).

In the novel, Malik Solanka enacts the forces of hybridity by incorporating within himself the subtle differences and nuances of several cultures, various nationalities and ethnic plethora. Within himself he crystallises the reaction, resistance, as well as collusion of several civilizations and cultures. His liaisons with several women like Mila Milo, Neela Mahendra may be explained on the basis of such hybridity, which may provide the site of interaction and where exchange takes place in cultural trans-national psychological, intra-personal and sexual terms. Hybridity involves processes of interaction that create new social spaces to which new meanings are bestowed. These relations enable the articulation of experiences of differences and change in societies split apart by the forces of modernity. In this sense such conflicting elements of culture may facilitate consequent demands for radical social transformations. This may be witnessed immediately in the social and personality changes of Solanka's ladies. Neela, for example, celebrates her profound "emotional wisdom" with Malik Solanka.

In all things pertaining to feeling.... Kabhi meri gali aaya karo.... Come up and see me sometime. They hadn't spoken since they left the graveside. She drew him down on to a cushion-stress rug and laid his head between her

breasts, wordlessly reminding him of the continued existence of happiness, even in the midst of grief (204).

She spoke of her beauty as something a little separate from herself. It had simply “showed up”. It wasn’t the result of anything she’d done. She took no credit for it, was grateful for the gift she’d been given, took great care of it, but mostly thought of herself as a disembodied entity living behind the eyes of this extraordinary alien, her body. Her description of her sexual being as “the other one” who periodically came out to hunt and would not be denied was a clever ruse, a shy person’s way of tricking herself into extroversion. It allowed her to reap the rewards of her exceptional erotic presence without being troubled by the paralysing social awkwardness that had plagued her as a stammering young girl” (204-05).

Neela Mahendra embodies the cross cultural traces of the Indian diaspora. Malik became introduced to her in the company of Jack Rhinehart, who had ushered her to Malik as “one of yours”. The change in Neela is due to the transformation occasioned within the Indian diaspora through the times. Following the “one hundred years of servitude” during the colonial era, the Indian diasporic culture has evolved into modern times, progressive and triumphant; emerging from a period of beleaguered slavery to a dominating class. Neela embodies this transitional culture of the Indian diasporic elite. Jack Rhinehart explains this cultural change thus:

One hundred years of servitude. In the eighteen nineties her ancestors went as indentured labourers to work in what's-it-name, Lilliput Blefuscu. Now they run the sugar cane production and the economy would fall apart without them, but you know how it is wherever Indians go. People didn't like them. Dey works too hard and dey keeps deyself and dey acts so dang uppity. Ask anyone. Ask Idi Amin (Fury, 61).

Such assimilation of cross cultural currents may be understood in terms of a physical metaphor employed in connection with Neela's beauty, she being dubbed as "the most beautiful woman Malik has ever seen. In the words of Pat Boone: "four favourite parts are not unknown but the way you assemble 'em's all your own" (61). Neela represents the legacy of her fore-fathers. The culture she has left behind as well as the attractions of the lusty present. She crystallises in her the conflict between the rising Indian aspirations and the indigenous, ethnic "Elbee" community. "She was still connected to her origins" and hence critical of Pan-Americanism (63). And yet, like all exponents of hybrid cultures she seems to carry within herself a grand communion and mixing up of the races. "Stir all the races together and you get the most beautiful people in the world" (63). Neela's "extreme physical beauty" becomes in this sense a magnet-like power which "draws all available light towards itself" and thereby becomes a "shining beacon in an otherwise darkened world" (62).

Rushdie's novel experiments with the migrant identities of women in a rapidly expanding global culture where hybridity becomes a site of contest between various cultures, producing alternate rhythms of cultural collusion and collision, of critical distancing and tense assimilations. Thus, in his article entitled The new ethnic novel and the American idea, Sam B. Girgus argues that:

A renaissance of the ethnic novel now galvanises the continuing ethnic reformation of America. Even as America in turn transforms ethnic cultures, the emergence during the past twenty years of a new ethnic novel compels a reconsideration of what it means to be an American. Writers embodying the ethnic regeneration of America make the novel a centerpiece for a program of both cultural transformation and continuity. They forge the novel into a form for cultural and ideological dialogue and debate between forces of reformation and tradition...many other writers and groups have achieved recognition (among them are the Asian India)... Ethnicity emerges as a key to identity, race, class, gender and cultural consensus... In the process, the novel of ethnicity, a work by and about an indefinable "other" within a broader American cultural and historical context, is transformed when it enters into the once restricted domain of the postmodern novel. The

novels in this ethnic emergence employ various rhetorical and discursive strategies, such as conflict, community and consensus, to mediate the ideological dilemma of achieving a common culture based on difference and heterogeneity (Girgus, 1).

In more ways than one, Fury represents Rushdie's ambitious attempt to "mediate the ideological dilemmas of achieving a common culture based on difference and heterogeneity (Girgus, 1). The pan-Americanism which Malik resists, as well as accepts and celebrates equally, is a form of multiculturalism which dilutes and universalises the difference among various racial heritages, thus playing a positive role in eliding the notion of the Other as being culturally different, especially as an outsider. This dialogue between the different cultural components within the very idea of homogeneity is not self-defeating, but actually enriches the cultural texture of the synthetic activity whereby any movement at ultimate closure has been foreclosed. This dialogue between different cultural constructs has been emphasised in Fury though the many complex processes of cultural evolution in America itself. This is especially true in the cultural changes taking place in women in America. Solanka has compared the evolution of modern American women to mass production of culture and puppets. With the growth of fashion and style, women imitate marionettes. Indeed, they literally become puppets of mass culture and modernisation of the human figure. Solanka draws attention to this dehumanisation of modern women in Fury.

But now living women wanted to be doll-like, to cross the frontier and look like toys. Now the doll was the original whereas the woman in real life becomes only its 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 wardrobeed, that there was no room left in them for messy humanity. Sky, Bindy and Ren thus represented the final step in the transformation of the cultural history of the doll. Having conspired in their own dehumanisation, they ended up as mere totems of their class, the class that ran America, which in turn run the world, so that an attack on them was also, if you cared to see it that way, an attack on the great American empire, the Pan-Americana, itself....

.... Oh, who even thought like this any more, other than himself? Was there anyone else left in America with such ugly, misconceived notions in his head? (Fury, 74).

In fact, much of the novel is centred on the thinking (aloud) of Malik Solanka. Wallhead observes that “the narrative is refracted though the consciousness of his fury — tormented mind (Wallhead, 171). Celia M. Wallhead has shown how Rushdie’s fury is the product of many causes and sources and is equally productive in persons, in fact, fury becomes a metaphor (literary trope) in the process (Mittapalli & Kuortti, 170). Rushdie has borrowed the three Furies, the Erinnyes, who had

pursued Orestes, perpetrator of matricide. But, as pointed out by C.M. Wallhead, Rushdie's fury may also be taken as a manifestation of creative energy. But what critics like Wallhead, Mittapalli, others have failed to notice is the very idea of hybridity which lies at the centre of Rushdie's gallery of female characters. For example, the notion of cultural symbiosis becomes in essence the inspiration behind Rushdie's conflation of the three females in Malik's life with the three Furies from the Greek tragic spectrum and who in turn, are translated into the Muses, who direct his creative energy. Such cross-cultural currents bring a richness to Rushdie's art of characterisation, which shows, in effect, a constant process of development because all cultural transformations are found to be subjected to flux and change.

Indeed, the very idea of hybridity may be seen as a scenario where culture becomes a site of contest. In Rushdie's oeuvre, even the historical as well as the mythical context of culture has been subjected to a revisionist, post-modern ideology, where nothing is negated, but transformed or sublated to a contemporary global project. As remarked by Sutherland, Rushdie's greatness lies not in a particular novel but in the whole oeuvre as such. Rushdie crosses continents and is a global, international writer and his books span countries like India, Pakistan, Britain, the Middle East, Spain as well as eastern and western countries. From a specific milieu, the location of his novels spread far and wide, over national and cultural demarcations on the strength of his ideology

which may be extrapolated to apply to the world at large. The protagonist, Malik Solanka is not only a version of the author but also a cultural hybrid, in the sense that he becomes the product and expression of a medley of cultures.

According to Malik Solanka, the ultimate cultural transformation of today's American women inevitably leads to dehumanisation of the female figure.

If you'd asked these young women, these tall confident beauties on their way to summa cum laude college degrees and glamorous yachting weekends, these Princesses of the Now, with their limo services and charity work and mile-a-minute lives and tame, adorable superheroes striving to win their favour, they would have told you they were free, freer than any woman in any country in any time, and they belonged to no man, whether father or lover or boss. They were nobody's dolls, but their own women, playing with their own appearance, their own sexuality, their own stories. The first generation of young women to be truly in control, in thrall neither to the old patriarchy nor to the man-hating hard-line feminism that had battered at Bluebeard's gate. They could be businesswomen and flirts, profound and superficial, serious and light, and they would make those decisions for themselves. They had it all —

emancipation, sex appeal, cash — and they loved it (Fury, 74).

Rushdie's complaints against the cultural changes that has taken place in the post-modern American woman has its source in his critique of American acculturation of everything that is not American. He firmly set his sights on the forces of Pan-Americanism: "America, because of its omnipotence, is full of fear; it fears the fury of the world and renames it envy (114). The rest of the world cannot help but being touched by the overflow of American bounty.

But New York in this time of plenty had become the object and goal of the world's concupiscence and lust, and the insult only made the rest of the planet more desirous than ever (Fury, 6).

Here it must be noted that while Malika forcefully deplores the contradictions and impoverishment of the Western human individual in America, it is nonetheless admissible that it is only in America that Solanka finds a dialogic movement of migrant metaphors, from imprisonment to liberation and back to imprisonment, recognising that there is of course, no way out of this mess. The great American omnivorousness is an inescapable and ineffable human destiny written large over the face of the nation and it is so because of its multiracial and complex cultural cross currents. It is an ontological condition and reality which precipitates the play of several cultures: mass culture, elite culture,

sub-culture, cross-culture, bringing everything on to the brink of fact, which alternately spills over and into fiction. It is this sense of hyper-reality which obfuscates and overcomes the play of signs in today's culture. Nothing is what they seem to be.

Damian Grant has suggested that we ought to regard Salman Rushdie as a "pilgrim of the imagination, and read each of his novels as a stage in that pilgrimage" (Grant, 124). Actually, if we consider the genealogy of Rushdie's protagonists, we find that most of them belong to hybrid cultures and that most of them are migrants. Thus all the characters from *Flapping Eagle* through Saleem Sinai, Omar Khayyam Shakil, Gibrel Farishta, Haroun and his father, Moraes Zogoiby and Ormus Cama to Malik Solanka, all have been migrants. Such journeys through different stages in cultural transition questions the very identity of the hybrid artist. The fear of Malik Solanka at the approach of the three Furies is simultaneously real as well as fictional.

He recognised this funk. Long ago in a Cambridge hostel he had been unable to rise and face his new undergraduate existence. Now as then, panic and demons rush in at him from every side. He was vulnerable to demons. He heard their bat-wings flapping by his ears, felt their goblin fingers twisting around his ankles to pull him down to that hell in which he didn't believe but which kept cropping up

in his language, in his emotions, in the part of him that was not his to control (Fury, 83).

Not only Malik, but others who attempts to flee from an impossible situation are Joseph Schlink and Mr. Venkat in Fury, Allie Cone's father Otto in The Satanic Verses. Raymond, the uncle of Eddie, Mila Milo's boyfriend is hounded to destruction as well as Mila Milo's own father, who is also portrayed in Fury as fleeing from an impossible situation where he is guilty of having broken the incest taboo. Even Malik's Cambridge friend Krysztof Waterford-Wajda or "Dubdub" is also on the run, pursued by the Furies (83):

All of these had taken refuge from the Furies in America, "the land of self-creation": "the country whose paradigmatic modern fiction was the story of a man who remade himself — his past, his present, his shirts, even his name — for love (Fury, 79).

Malika thinks of Jay Gatsby (who also came to a sticky end) as an example of the "unselfing of the self": "Not to be but to un-be" as Hamlet might have put it (Fury, 79). As all three characters flee, it is as if they are escaping from a crisis of anger that is outside themselves.

Actually it would be untrue to say that these characters are only the victims of a situation like Orestes. The question of victimisation is essentially related with the process of remaking one's identity. As has

already been stated by Rushdie, it involves an activity of “unselfing the self” which is really the situation in which the migrant finds himself (79). The cultural remaking or acculturation is a complex process which may occasion Malik’s anger since he is denied control over his new destiny in America. He can neither shed his cultural origins completely nor can he assume predominance over the cultural cross-currents in America, “the hand of self-creation”. He has lost his mastery over the doll he created, “the female time-travelling doll, Little Brain,” a television interrogator of “Great Minds” dolls (16-17). The fictional creation of Malik Solanka has been magnified into the hyper-real, and actually she becomes a mockery of his own efforts. Little Brain crossed all boundaries of language, race and class. She became, variously, her admirers’ ideal lover or confidante and goal. Her first book of memories was originally placed by the Amazon people in the non-fiction lists. The decision to move it, and the subsequent volumes, across into the world of make-believe was resisted by both readers and staff. Little Brain, they argued, was no longer a simulacrum, she was a phenomenon. The fairy’s wand had touched her, and she was real.

All these Malik Solanka witnessed from a distance with growing horror. This creature of his own imagining, 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 (Fury, 98).

Malik has entered America to absolve himself from anger, fear and pain associated with his back-story (Fury, 50). But in his new capacity as an intellectual, he is tormented by frustration. He was erstwhile comfortable as a Cambridge don. In America, however, he “feels left behind by the ‘new age’ of the human genome deciphered at the beginning of the millennium” (Mittapalli *et al.*, 2003, 177). Malik experiences a total change of environment in America, where “the new age had new emperors and he would be their slave” (Fury, 45). Malik’s research into the origins of anger and its aftermath leads him to the new informal American discourse as well as the Shakespearean idiom of his old life in the form of a rhetorical question: “Let’s get to anger, okay? Let’s get to the goddamn fury that actually kills. Tell me, where is murder bred?” (Fury, 70). Malik has a feeling that his anger comes from a force which is situated outside himself. In this respect J.M. Wallhead has commented:

It is the Furies, or the malign power of the one Little Brain doll removing after he had had the others destroyed in a sort of auto-da-fe (Wallhead, 178).

The most remarkable fact in the novel is the transition from fiction to reality and which assumes a dialogue between different cultures across the globe. The idea of acquisition, simultaneously of intellectual as well as sexual property has been exhibited in the interplay of “living dolls” and his girl-friends: Mila Milo and Neela Mahendra, who along with his English wife, Eleanor, whom he had left behind, manifest themselves in

the three Furies of Greek myths. Eleanor is Alecto, "Unceasing in Anger", Mila is Tisiphone, "Avenger of Murder", and Neela is Megaera, jealousy personified.

The theme of dehumanisation in a hybrid culture, which accommodates the different sorts of culture across society like crass-culture, sub-culture, materialism, commercialism, ethnic cultures and so on may also be said be one of the sources of Malik Solanka's anger. Ironically, the girls with whom he got involved were totems of their class, the class that ran America which in turn ran the world, so that an attack on them was also, if you cared to set it that way, an attack on the great American empire, the Pan Americana, itself (74).

Ironically, the dialogue between various cultures within the very idea of Pan-Americanism might not be homogenous at all, rather, it can betray subversive characteristics. Thus, the decline of America has often been likened to the fall of Rome by Malik Solanka. In the very idea of hybridity of American culture lies the notion of militant ethnicity and racialism. The Muslim taxi driver encountered by Malik symbolises the racial resentment of the Third World and especially, of some sections of the Muslim world against America. The appropriation of other nations and cultures may lead to a volatile situation where America might be blamed for sufferings of the people in the Middle East:

In this case, as the Middle East peace process staggered onward and the outgoing American president, hungry for a

breakthrough to buff up his tarnished legacy, was urging Barak and Arafat to a Camp David summit conference, Tenth Avenue was perhaps being blamed for the continued sufferings of Palestine (Fury, 65-66).

It is true that Rushdie speaks about the supremacy of American culture and civilisation as being spread all across the globe in an all controlling manner and in all sorts of ways. In this melee of cultural cross-currents, where different cultures, both compatible and incompatible, complete and clash against each other in an uncertain heterogeneous mixture, and where there can be no complete fusion, or an unalloyed state, Solanka reviews and questions the superimposition and the domination of the Pan-American dream over other cultures. Simultaneously, Malik Solanka does not reject his hybrid status. Rather, he celebrates his migrant nature within this flux of variegated cultures. One of the main objectives of this chapter is to illustrate the tensions within the protagonist, Solanka who both accepts and criticises the American attempts towards a homogenised culture. The valorisation of the American dream is a cult and a goal which none can ignore. Yet, what Solanka fiercely resists, is the insistent and consistent attempt at a valorisation of everything that is American. Categories of perception, aesthetic and cultural norms; the rise and fall of markets as well as the rise and decline of nations and everything throughout the world, including the track and flow of intellectual concepts and ideas, have been directly and indirectly the result of American ideological invasion:

Everywhere on earth — in Britain, In India, in distant Lilliput — people were obsessed by the subject of success in America, Neela was a celebrity back home simply because she had got herself a good job — “made it big” — in the American media. In India, great pride was taken in the achievements of U.S.-based Indians in music, publishing (though not writing), Silicon Valley and Hollywood. British levels of hysteria were even higher. British journalist gets work in U.S.A.! Incredible! British actor to play second lead in American movie! Wow, what a superstar! Cross-dressing British comic wins two Emmys! Amazing — we always knew British transvestism was best! American success had become the only real validation of one’s worth. Ah, genuflection, Malik Solanka thought. Nobody knew how to argue with money these days, and all the money was here in the Promised Land.

Such reflections had become germane because in his middle fifties he was experiencing the superlative force of a real American hit, a force that blew open all the doors of the city, unlocked its secrets and invited you to feast until you burst (Fury, 224).

The valorisation and consequent legitimisation of the American dream has been both brilliantly portrayed and questioned by Rushdie in

Fury. Rushdie's writing hovers between acceptance and rejection, adulation and castigation and makes his stance ambivalent. Solanka's approach to the manifestation of the American dream is thereby dubious and uncertain. Rushdie excels in analysing how Solanka's personality in turn breaks up and becomes the site of contending cultures. His personal life also is diluted as we see how he abandons his wife Eleanor and gets involved in all sorts of amorous adventures with Mila Milo and Neela Mahendra. As he strides between continents, Solanka changes lovers and his categories of perception gets blurred. In the country of plenty, fiction turns into reality, making Solanka step into the world of fantasy, where he is deprived of all kinds of control of his brain, on his intellectual creation as well as on his emotional life. In fact, he enjoys several personalities within himself. His unfixity of purpose is squarely blamed by Solanka on the pervasive omnivorous quality of American life and thought.

Rushdie's novel is unique not only because it charts the superficiality and hollowness of the American dream, but also because it shows the plausibility and possibility of human expansion and of the amplification of the self. "In the world of the imagination, in the creative cosmos that had begun with simple doll-making and then proliferated into this many-armed, multimedia beast, it wasn't necessary to answer questions; far better to find interesting ways of rephrasing them.... The ransacking of the world's storehouse of old stories and ancient histories was entirely legitimate. Few web users were familiar with the myths, or

even the facts, of the past; all that was needed was to give the old materials a fresh, contemporary tourist. Transmutation was all. The Puppet Kings website went on line and at once achieved and sustained a high level of "hits". Comments flooded in, and the river of Solanka's imagination was fed from a thousand streams. It began to swell and grow" (190-191).

In Malik Solanka, we find a confluence of many cross cultures. Indeed, his ambivalence is due to his omnivorousness, just like that of multicultural America. In this context, his "Fury" may be likened to that of the American assumes multiple dimensions and cannot be simplistically designated rage. Fury can also be creative rage. In this sense fury is essentially American; it reaches out to the world and transforms it and in the process it metamorphoses itself into a homogeneous entity. Fury leads to multiculturalism since it rises above ethnicity and dilutes the differences of racialism, religion, cultures and nations. On a personal level it embodies itself in Mila Milo's reincarnation as "Faria". Watched by Malik Solanka, Mila Milo transforms herself as "the world-swallower, the self as pure transformative energy. Unmatched, her "riverine abundance" both "overwhelms" and "underwhelms" Malik (178). Technology and humanity fuse together in a rushing movement of creative energy.

The computer screen burst into images raced towards him like bazaar traders. This was technology as hustler, peddling its wares, Solanka thought, or, as if in a darkened

night club, gyrating for him. Laptop as lapdancer. The auxiliary sound system poured high-definition noise over him like golden rain. "I didn't need to think about it", he told her. "Let's do it. Let's go" (Fury, 179).

Again, in Neela's arms Malik was fortunate in experiencing once more the feeling of fury as transformed into creative energy or ecstasy (206). In a sense, fury may be defined as a transforming power which can transmute culture and make possible, as if in alchemy, the confluence of several contradictory social forces into the overall pattern of American life and ideology.

Chapter XI

Conclusion

The uniqueness of Rushdie's artistic endeavour may be grasped in his contribution both to Indian fiction written in English as well as to fiction written in trans-national terms. He is the only India-born author to be awarded Germany's Author of the Year Award for his novel The Satanic Verses in 1989 and also the only author from the subcontinent to be awarded the Australian Stat Prize for European literature in 1993. In the same year his Midnight's Children was adjudged the "Booker of Bookers", the best novel to have won the Booker Prize in its first twenty five years. Moreover, Rushdie enjoys the distinction of being read throughout the world. His books have been published in more than two dozen languages. But, more than any diasporic author, Rushdie enjoys an intimate relationship with his birthplace, Bombay. When he left India finally in January 1961 he never guessed that his step would change his life forever. But a few years later when he found that his father had suddenly sold Windsor Villa, he was shocked. Rushdie confesses in his collection of essays between 1992-2002, entitled Step Across This Line (2002):

The day I heard this, I felt an abyss open beneath my feet. I think that I never forgave my father for selling that house,

and I'm sure that if he hadn't I would still be living in it. Since then 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 (Step Across the Line, 195).

Rushdie celebrates his Indian origin even when he is staying in England as its citizen. Having grown up in a tolerant, broad-minded city like Bombay, Rushdie has imbibed a liberal imagination, which shares its kinship with people of different nationalities across the globe. He never forgets the Indian response to his novel about India, that is, Midnight's Children. He writes in "A Dream of Glorious Return":

Midnight's Children (1981) was my first attempt at...literary land reclamation. Living in London, I wanted to get India back; and the delight with which they, in turn, claimed me, remains the most precious memory of my writing life (Step Across the Line, 195).

However, the Indian reception of Rushdie's next novel, The Satanic Verses changed his world and he agonisingly records that he was no longer able to set foot in the country which he has been his primary source of artistic inspiration. Rushdie has never forgotten that India was the first country to ban The Satanic Verses. Again, following the

publication of The Moor's Last Sigh (which had raised a furore in Bombay), when BBC Television attempted to make a prestigious five-hour dramatization of Midnight's Children; they were refused permission to film by the Indian government. However, when the British and Indian governments reached an agreement in 24 September 1998, things changed for him since he was granted a five-year visa one year later. In his accounts Rushdie expresses his great happiness to be in India once more:

‘Exile’, it says somewhere in The Satanic Verses, ‘is a dream of glorious return’. But the dream fades, the imagined return stops feeling glorious. The dreamer awakes. I almost gave up on India, almost believed the love affair was over for good. But as it turns out, not so (Step Across This Line, 196-197).

Rushdie, therefore, is the quintessential migrant who possesses a keen sense of preservation, reading book to his earlier tradition as well as reducing forward to new experiences and countries in a kind of global quest for completeness. He is very fond of saying often that in the process of translation or migration there is always a sense of something carried over or borne across national boundaries. According to Rushdie, nothing is ever lost in translation. In his essay “Step Across This Line” he explains his literary project by situating himself in the midst of cross cultural contexts. He explains that

The crossing of borders, of language, geography and culture; the examination of the permeable frontier between

the universe of things and deeds and the universe of the imagination; the lowering of the intolerable frontiers created by the world's many different kinds of thought policemen: these matters have been at the heart of the literary project that was given to me by the circumstances of my life, rather than chosen by me for intellectual or 'artistic' reasons (Step Across This Line, 434).

Finally, Rushdie's quest for homelands is an eternal one because it is neither there nor here, neither in the past nor in the present since its ambience may be located in the world of imagination. Standing at the confluence of national boundaries as well as historical demarcations, Rushdie is expansive enough to accommodate the conflict of several cultures within him. The writer, according to him is always engaged in overcoming his subjective limitations and like Tennyson's Ulysses constantly searches for new horizons and new experiences:

The idea of overcoming, of breaking down the boundaries that hold us in and surpassing the limits of our own natures, is central to all the stories of the quest. The Grail is a chimera. The quest for the Grail is the Grail (Step Across This Line, 410).

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