

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-emptying 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.