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.
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> 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 has 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 in 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 acquires 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 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).