

"A LOVE-SONG TO OUR MONGREL SELVES"

"A LOVE-SONG TO OUR MONGREL SELVES":
MIGRATION, DISLOCATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF
THE COSMOPOLITAN SUBJECT
IN THE WRITING OF SALMAN RUSHDIE

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of the emergence and development of a new cosmopolitan ethic of belonging in three of Salman Rushdie's novels that speak most effectively to the reality of being a "global soul". In warning of the dangers inherent in binaristic and fundamentalist thinking, emphasizing the necessity of creating alternative hybrid spaces of cultural contact, and re-inscribing notions of "self" and "home," Rushdie articulates a global citizenship that accounts not only for the recognition of a universal human condition, but also for the valuing and preservation of multiple and diverse cultural localities.

Chapter One offers a theoretical framework for examining pertinent, contemporary considerations of issues of identity, alterity, history, authenticity, and belonging. It also addresses the rise of a reclaimed and redeployed form of cosmopolitanism that diverges from a traditional, Stoical vision of world citizenship and challenges the assertion that the global and the local are distinct, unrelated entities. Chapter Two focuses on *The Satanic Verses* as a novel that, far from exclusively imagining the birth of Islam, addresses significant questions about the nature of the migratory self and the trials and opportunities presented by postmodern uncertainty and the entrance of "newness" into the world. Chapter Three examines *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* as a testament to the need to establish moorings and create "home" in unexpected places in times of

fragmentation and disorientation. Finally, Chapter Four turns to *Fury*, Rushdie's most recent novel, to explore the loss and redemption of self, and the need for basic human interconnectivity in an age of simulated realities and mass consumer culture.

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Introduction

Salman Rushdie: Imagining the Otherwise

The courage to imagine the otherwise is our greatest resource,
adding colour and suspense to all our life.

Daniel J. Boorstin (27)

The story of Salman Rushdie is well known, if not always well understood. Countless opinions, accusations, and speculations about the vitriolic response of Islamic fundamentalists to a work of fiction have circulated in the thirteen years since the pronouncement of the *fatwa* in 1989, making the infamous “Rushdie affair” one of the most, if not *the* most, scrutinized and disputed of contemporary literary phenomena. Caught in a swirling eddy of scholarly debates, media hype, religious furor, and political machinations, Rushdie, the human being and novelist, all but disappeared into the pages of history, his reputation seemingly forever associated with controversy and “satanic” intrigue. In the last few years, however, concurrent with Rushdie’s growing freedom and mobility, and his desire to transcend both personally and professionally the stigma of the “affair,” there is a renewed interest, in critical circles, in rehabilitating Rushdie’s narratives as representative of much more than the turmoil surrounding *The Satanic Verses*.

Though criticized by Timothy Brennan and others variously, and at times justly, for pandering to the literary tastes of Western metropolises eager for tales of the exotic East, for being a privileged and elitist “Third World” intellectual or “celebrity”, for debasing the vernacular traditions of “Third World” countries by

choosing to write in English rather than his native Urdu, for ignoring or devaluing issues of class and gender, and for mocking and undermining “the vital work of creating ‘national culture’” (Brennan 40) in formerly colonized countries, Rushdie’s work, flawed though it may be, continues to pose important, if uncomfortable, questions about the nature of being and belonging. Traversing the murky waters of contemporary discourses on globalization, nationalism, and multiculturalism, his novels leave the reader with the feeling that, as one of his protagonists claims, it is not always necessary to answer questions, but “far better to find interesting ways of rephrasing them” (*Fury* 190).

Rushdie’s refusal to be silenced by critics or religious extremists has resulted in a formidable body of work that, from *Midnight’s Children* (1981) to his latest novel *Fury* (2001), constitutes an ongoing dialogue exploring pertinent postcolonial and postmodern themes of migrancy, belonging, and identity. As Rushdie has moved throughout the world, from his birthplace in Bombay, to a brief residency in Pakistan, to school and a longer residency and subsequent citizenship in Britain, and, most recently, to a new home in New York, so too has his narrative vision journeyed across frontiers, linking multiple continents and cultures. Committed to articulating the experiences of migrant individuals who, like himself, choose or are compelled to abandon a place of beginning and exist in between or on the borders of multiple cultures, Rushdie challenges normative constructions of home, history, origins, and self. His work demands that the

universe “open a little more” to allow for the possibility of newness to enter and for the acknowledgement that the only absolute in contemporary life is change.

Deconstructing the binaristic logic of East/West, self/other, colonizer/colonized, Rushdie’s novels attempt what Sabrina Hassumani calls a “‘space-clearing’ gesture”; that is, by subverting the imperialistic centre/periphery model, rather than merely inverting it and “leaving violent hierarchies intact”, Rushdie endeavours to “‘rewrite the center’”, clearing a space in the first instant of the present for differences to co-exist and co-create reality (30). The result is the depiction of an alternative “Third Space” (pace Bhabha) of postmodern hybridity in which disparate and dislocated peoples with various cultural, national, religious, and ethnic identifications interface, negotiate, transform one another, and create meaning. By demonstrating in his fiction that East and West are separate but connected, interdependent worlds, where one sphere is not privileged over the other, Rushdie attempts to move beyond a rigid practice of identity politics that frequently results in escalating tribalism and, ultimately, violence.

While his narratives frequently point to the dangers inherent in notions of “nation” and “homeland,” and advocate for the enactment of a more global citizenship, ultimately they do not deny a form of connection to one’s past and place of origin. Rushdie remains wary and critical of nationalistic projects that are predicated upon essentialist ideas of purity and authenticity; however, he does not necessarily dispute the validity of the nation as one means by which

human beings choose to organize and identify themselves. He does not go as far as to suggest, as Martha Nussbaum does, that nationality is a “morally irrelevant characteristic” (“Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” 5). Indeed, his life and work are unquestionably, and self-consciously, informed by an attachment to the nation of India, and his earlier texts, *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Shame* (1983), are heavily invested in imagining the challenges of the building of nation. Timothy Brennan asserts that, “A cosmopolitanism worthy of the name...would have to give space to the very nationalism that the term is invoked to counter” (*At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now* 25). I suggest that Rushdie’s cosmopolitan vision leaves room for all manner of belonging, including even a connection or sense of loyalty associated with the nation-state, and that its only incontestable requirement is the refutation of any maxim that works to confine the individual or community within the limits of a single, narrow, immutable determination. The problem, in Rushdie’s estimation, with the way in which nationhood, specifically a postcolonial vision of nationhood, has been conceived, is that it relies too much on a nostalgic remembering and *creation* of the past. Speaking as a member of the Indian world diaspora, Amitava Kumar in a recent book asks,

Is it impossible to use the memories of our loss, our not too burdensome displacement, and even our sometimes huge gains to reflect not only on our past but also on the processes through which we *create* our pasts? Why do we so easily replace our material past with a mythical one, pure and glorious – and then shed blood, ours and that of others, to protect the unreal, entirely illusory sense of ourselves? (31)

Kumar's echoes Rushdie's concern when he declares, "I am disturbed that the 'soft' emotion of nostalgia...is turned into the 'hard' emotion of fundamentalism" (30). At its most elemental, the message of all Rushdie's work is one of caution. He refuses to countenance any of the grand narratives of exclusion that have governed *both* Eastern and Western civilizations. Beware, he warns, of fundamentalism in all its shapes and forms. Dare, he implores, to imagine the otherwise.

Interested in exploring identity as a fluid and ongoing process of adaptation and re-inscription across and between manifold cultural boundaries, rather than as a fixed and continuous product of national, ethnic, or religious fundamentalism, Rushdie's work supports a vision of cosmopolitanism that charges the individual with the moral responsibility of continually and creatively fashioning his or her sense of self in an ever-changing world. As his narrative vision has progressed, from the depiction of Saladin's adoption of a cosmopolitan perspective that allows him to incorporate the divergent aspects of his life in *The Satanic Verses* (1988), to an examination of Rai's ability to establish moorings in an age of disorientation in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), to an affirmation of Malik's need to develop and nurture basic human connections in order to stave off the tempest of postmodern life in *Fury* (2001), Rushdie has demonstrated a growing interest in and awareness of the condition of the individual in an increasingly globalized world. Contrary to the convictions of some critics, Rushdie does not condone a wholesale rootlessness. His

cosmopolitanism diverges from traditional, Stoical notions of universalism that offer only the inimical image of the morally and ethically detached cultural interloper who simultaneously lives everywhere and nowhere at all. Rather, Rushdie's view of belonging more closely approximates Anthony Appiah's model of the "rooted cosmopolitan," living and caring for multiple localities while maintaining an awareness of the globality of the human condition. Invoking his father's cosmopolitan philosophy, and speaking to Rushdie's understanding of cosmopolitanism, Appiah notes,

My father wanted his children to be, like [Gertrude] Stein, rooted citizens of the world – able to attach ourselves firmly to any place that would have us and where we found reason to live, concerned with its welfare especially – but still, in the end, only as a place among places; and never quite giving up our special concern for other places where we, or our friends and relatives, lived or had lived. ("Against National Culture" 188)

While Rushdie celebrates hybridity, *mélange*, and the processes of transculturation in his novels, ultimately he condemns a rootless expatriation as self-destructive, indulgent, and non-productive. In his estimation, in the end those who insist upon negating their personal historical trajectories and denying all social and political affiliations and responsibilities to their chosen localities, thereby entering into a rootless limbo, suffer and cause suffering through their disconnection from themselves and others. In the maelstrom of postmodern existence, Rushdie demonstrates that only by creating multiple localities as lived experiences in a global context, and by rooting oneself in personal and community relationships and enacting the responsibilities of citizenship, can the individual survive and not be consumed by the fury of contemporary life. The

possibility of achieving self-knowledge, stability, and understanding – precious commodities in uncertain times – is to be found in a secular humanism that transcends destructive binaries and emphasizes quotidian human love and interconnectedness. Rushdie's novels imagine just such a possibility and express a confidence that, "(g)iven the gift of self-consciousness, we can dream versions of ourselves, new selves for old" (Rushdie "In God We Trust" 377).

Chapter One

Globalization, Identity, and the Cosmopolitan Initiative

No man is an island, entire of itself...

John Donne (98)

Philosopher Huston Smith has written that, "Daily the world grows smaller, leaving understanding the only place where peace can find a home" (qtd. in Iyer 268). In an age of jet planes, satellite dishes, global capitalism, ubiquitous markets, and global mass media, the world is indeed becoming more tightly integrated than at any earlier point in history. Many scholars, critics and malcontents argue, perhaps at times to exaggeration, that the postmodern world is rapidly and dangerously embracing a single identity, a global monoculture, and that in the annihilation of cultural distance through the construction of transnational economies and networks of transportation and communication, the richness of cultural difference and identity are also being threatened by extinction. Going global means that "(t)he traditional coordinates of personal [and collective] identity (family, church, party, race, class) weaken. It becomes difficult to state with certainty who we are: the question 'Who am I?' constantly presses for an answer" (Melucci 61).

In response to this perceived outcome of globalization, and in the wake of recent geopolitical events, namely September 11th and the ongoing crisis in the Middle East, there has emerged, worldwide, a renewed interest in several

quarters in an identity politics whose aim, itself an ironic form of “demagogic monoculturalism” (Giroux 70), is the revitalization of rooted traditions, religious fervour, and commitment to ethnic or national identities. A fundamental nationalism and its attendant prejudices clothed in patriotic, heroic language, are on the rise again. As Jason Hill notes, “The new millennium has opened against the backdrop of continued racial, ethnic, and nationalistic tensions, or escalating tribalism” (1). The late twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first have been fraught with acts of inconceivable human atrocity in the forms of genocide and “ethnic cleansing” in, for example, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Kurdistan and East Timor. These acts that have erupted as a result of an already existing yet growing tribal mentality, demonstrate the “psychic infantilism” (Hill 1) inherent in the destructive belief in and enactment of the myth of ethnic, national and cultural purities. Clearly, as the world grows smaller, and the boundaries and borders of personal and communal identities blur, the need for understanding increases as does the need to address and answer fundamental questions concerning issues of identity and alterity. If there is to be any hope of peace finding a home, then more than ever, individually and collectively, we must confront the crucial question posed in Salman Rushdie’s transgressive novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988): “What kind of idea are you?” (74). In other words, what is the nature and signification of identity in our global age? What are the roles and responsibilities of the individual and community? How, in changing times, do we envision and articulate the self, the nation, and the world?

As the violence of tribalism threatens to intensify, we are called upon to continually challenge and undo “(t)he single, homogenous point of view, that sense of perspective and critical distance, born in the Renaissance and triumphant in colonialism, imperialism and the rational version of modernity” (Chambers 24). This point of view, which can be said to evolve out of a need to safeguard and assert mastery over one’s space and one’s self in the face of the growing discontinuity and disorientation of a globalizing world, is a harmful and craven retreat into the security and familiarity of the cultural narrative of the unadulterated “I”, a unified, static vision of the self as a superior, sacrosanct, organically whole entity untouched by the influence of the so-called Other. In times of uncertainty and fragmentation, how much easier it is to “close ranks” and espouse a fictive construct of identity than to embrace change and practise understanding.

...that famous old “I” is, to put it mildly, only an assumption, an assertion, above all not an “immediate certainty”.

Friedrich Nietzsche (197)

Postcolonial theory recognizes that, in the same manner in which the discourses of nation and belonging require the formation of the imagined landscape of community and home¹, so too is our understanding of identity a “labour of the imagination, a fiction, a particular story that makes sense” (Chambers 25). The peril is that while these fictions and stories concerning the

immutable authenticity of the ethnic, national, and cultural "I" may make sense to some, they frequently lead to the suffering, degradation and destruction of others in their denial of the complex interweaving of history and their embracing of systems of outmoded knowledge. Michel Foucault's work on the discourses of history and subjectivity attempt to expose and support the discontinuity of history, deploying postmodernism as a politics of heterogeneity, hybridity and difference that undermines the notion of authenticity. In his examination of Nietzsche's ideas about the discourses of History and the necessity of challenging, from a genealogical perspective, the notion of the historical "origin" (*Ursprung*) of places, peoples, events and ideas, Foucault notes that,

if he [the genealogist] listens to history, he finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. (78)

Identity, imagined as a historically constructed narrative of truth, that exists outside of time and is therefore unchangeable, is rendered untenable by the practice of genealogy. Recognizing that human history and the self cannot be understood as continuous, pre-destined or teleological, Foucault seeks to reveal the hidden or overlooked deviations or "accidents" of history that emerge and undermine the suprahistorical notion of origins and the unity of identity: "the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a masked 'other'" (88). Further, he is interested in understanding the way in which ideas about identity and difference

come into existence, or descend to us, and how they, in turn, inform our conception of ourselves as subjects of knowledge and power relations. Effective history (*wirkliche Historie*), in contrast to traditional History, for Foucault, unmasks the volatility of such ideas, refutes absolutes of knowledge and makes apparent the discontinuities and dislocations that comprise our contemporary lives. Foucault's genealogy, in effect, articulates a methodology for the rediscovery and recovery of forgotten or neglected histories, both personal and collective, histories that have been obscured by the grand narratives of (primarily) Western progress, exploits, and conquest. Foucault's work speaks to the hybrid reality of our contemporary time with its discontinuities and fissures, embodying "the Benjaminian 'present': that moment blasted out of the continuum of history" (qtd. in Bhabha 8).

Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it.

Salman Rushdie ("In Good Faith" 394)

Postmodern and postcolonial cultural interlocutors like Salman Rushdie attempt to subvert antiquated fictions that support a narcissistic, myopic vision of a historically unified self by examining the ways in which newness enters and alters the world through the processes of transculturation² and the movement of migrant individuals across and between cultural and national boundaries. The objective is to explore Edward Said's assertion that "(n)o one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are no more than

starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind" ("Movements and Migration" 407). By revealing these starting-points as pedagogically and politically ineffective and uninteresting, Rushdie and others demonstrate that identity is a process of fluidity, metamorphosis, a continual transformation and acculturation of the self enacted "in those border crossings, fissures, and negotiations that connect the public and private, the psyche and the social sphere" (Giroux 97-98). Cultural works like *The Satanic Verses* invest heavily in the notion of identity as consciously constructed and continuously reinvented.

The migrant, variously defined as exile, émigré, expatriate or transnational, is perhaps the greatest harbinger of a new millennial conception of identity formed in the "twist of displacement and re-invention" (Papastergiadis 277-78). Rushdie frequently claims in his literary and cultural essays that the migrant is a defining figure in our current times, and while it may be extreme to say that the displaced individual is the "Everyman" of the twenty-first century, Martin Heidegger's observation that "(h)omelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world" (qtd. in Chambers 1) indeed, in part, characterizes the peculiar postmodern condition of impermanence. In the post-1945 period the forces of colonialism, decolonisation, neocolonialism, ethnic and religious warfare, ecological disaster, famine and disease have conspired to scatter people across the globe in search of refuge and renewal. While exile from a place of origin is by no means a revolutionary human condition, recent decades have witnessed

an unprecedented unsettling of lives, for never before have so many individuals, by force or desire, been compelled or elected to abandon home and exist in a state of perpetual geographical dislocation. Said stresses that,

the difference between earlier exiles and those of our own time is...scale: our age – with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers – is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration. (“Reflections on Exile” 174)

Driven to live what Homi Bhabha terms “unhomely lives” (9), these uprooted individuals move beyond the spatial and psychic boundaries of nationhood and are initiated into the kaleidoscopic conditions of cross-culturalism. Bhabha employs artist Renee Green’s architectural metaphor of the stairwell to designate the liminal space occupied by the unhomed. The nature of the stairwell, in which motion never ceases, as an intervening and interconnecting space between defined locations symbolizes the perpetual movement of the displaced individual, who, while shifting from one location/identity to another, never fully assumes a single, immutable self, but rather fashions a heterogenous, hybrid identity composed of many divergent cultural indicators. The multiplicity of the migrant challenges the homogenous point of view to recognize alterity, question, re-write and re-route notions of authenticity. In essence, we are compelled to realize that, from the beginning, there is no such thing as a fixed, already established self, and that identities cannot be pinned down or polarized but rather are perpetually in the process of becoming. It is in the “interstitial passage between fixed identifications” (4) that Bhabha believes a politics of mongrelisation may develop that allows for the

negotiation and acknowledgement of *difference* without imposing a hierarchy through the multicultural rhetoric and consumption of *diversity*, which serves only to exacerbate ethnic, national and cultural tensions.

...emergence designates a place of confrontation, but not as a closed field offering the spectacle of a struggle among equals. Rather, as Nietzsche demonstrates in his analysis of good and evil, it is a "non-place," a pure distance, which indicates that the adversaries do not belong to a common space. Consequently, no one is responsible for an emergence; no one can glory in it, since it always occurs in the interstice.

Michel Foucault (84-85)

Drawing a distinction between cultural difference and cultural diversity in representation, Bhabha develops the genealogical notion of a "Third Space" of enunciation, a border zone at which cultural difference begins the process of "presencing", or making itself known in the world (34-5). The colonial idea of cultural diversity, defined as "an epistemological object...an object of empirical knowledge," (Bhabha 34) assumes an established, unchanging set of cultural indicators, practices and symbols for a given ethnic, racial or national group. Relying upon old, outdated forms of knowledge, the dominant culture claims supremacy and authority over newness by categorizing and effectively ghettoizing migrant cultural groups, according to the myth of the immutable "I". Taking his cue from Foucault, Said says in his discussion of the Western political and cultural hegemonic practice of Orientalism and the interchange between

knowledge and power, the Orient, or the Other, has historically constituted for the West an object

suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial, and historical theses about mankind and the universe. (*Orientalism* 7)

Through the knowledge and construction of the Other according to the rules of a supposed fixed, essential cultural identification or diversity, a system of power relations, a “hazardous play of dominations” (Foucault 83), is established that allows for the control and manipulation of difference through the social and political mobilization of the migrant into programs of exotic multiculturalism.

Cultural difference, in contrast, is “the process of the *enunciation* of culture as ‘knowledgeable’, authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification” (Bhabha 34). Cultural difference focuses not on homogenous, knowable concepts of identity but rather on the shifting, ambivalent nature of cultural identity as an object forever in the process of translation and hybridization.

It is in this space of enunciation, the “Third Space,” that cultural identity is assigned meaning, and it is in this conflicted and ambivalent space alone that we can begin to conceive of and put into action the practice of transculturation, a necessary step toward the realization of an empowering hybrid, or cosmopolitan, culture. The “Third Space” is not simply a liberal, multicultural arena in which differing cultures co-habitate with their essential frontiers intact, nor, conversely, is it a space in which foreign cultural elements mix and fuse thereby neutralizing

difference. As Bhabha ponts out, “Hybridity has no such perspective of depth or truth to provide: it is not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures” (113). Rather the process of hybridization within the “Third Space” is an ongoing dialogical negotiation and re-inscription of cultural identifications and significations that both enriches and complicates the question of identity.

To exist in and be cognizant of this in-between space is, according to Bhabha, “to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; *to touch the future on its hither side*” (7). In the creation of a “shared Time” (Fabian 31), or a sense of the coeval nature of cultural development, the imperialist discourses of progress and primitivism are disrupted and subverted. Moving out of the psyche of the past and the discourse of origins in order to imagine a common, global future, the focus becomes the here and now, a “return to the present” that allows for an examination of newness as a precondition for the articulation and understanding of not only cultural difference, but also the shared aims of humanity. Alberto Melucci notes that,

A new model of intra- and inter-society relations is one of the greatest contemporary aspirations. Humankind must make an enormous effort to give political shape to its co-living; a political arrangement able to govern the plurality, autonomy and richness of difference – but one, however, which also expresses humanity’s shared responsibility for the fate of the species and the planet, and of each individual. (69)

To be simultaneously “rooted” and “rootless”.

Trinh T. Minh-ha (335)

No longer acceptable or productive is an exclusively local, tribal vision of citizenship in which the individual assumes responsibility solely for herself and for those of *her own kind*. The present condition of the globe and the political, social and environmental challenges facing humankind demand that we devise new ways of not only co-existing, but also of co-creating better living conditions for all. In our present age of late capitalism and its gross socio-economic inequality, this aspiration, which may seem naïve or even utopian, can be achieved only through the transcendence of an archaic, colonial form of identity politics, one which continues to be the source of much suffering and human indignity. A new trans-cultural model of identity and belonging is required, in effect, to borrow James Clifford’s terms, a “post-identity politics” (“Mixed Feelings” 369) that does not ignore or negate the necessity and richness of cultural difference, nor attempt to ghettoize or categorize that difference within the rhetoric of diversity, but rather recognizes the value of the local as an aspect of, and in its relationship to, the global. That is, we must live locally and think globally, consciously celebrating and preserving the coordinates of local affiliation while simultaneously thinking beyond difference to realize and act upon our shared human inheritance. In order for this paradoxical post-identity politics to gain efficacy and moral ground in the face of periodic resurgences of a panicked, aberrant tribalism, there must first be a radical re-invention of the concepts of “home” and “roots”.

Writers like Pico Iyer, in *The Global Soul* (2000), have recently taken up the challenge of redefining what it means to be locally affiliated. “Home” and “roots” are notions typically and traditionally associated with “sociospatial attachments” (Clifford “Mixed Feelings” 367); that is, geographical places (streets, towns, cities, nations), and physical structures (houses, schools, churches). In botanical metaphors, we speak of the need to “put down roots”, to ground ourselves in a defined location or on a piece of land, in order to secure a better understanding of the world and of who and what we are. Often this kind of existence, which appears desirable for its sense of security and predictability, can be restrictive, parochial, and even dangerous. For individuals like Iyer, who reject the narrow, self-protective rooted way of life, “home” in the twenty-first century is a relative term encompassing much more than four walls and the comfort of knowing that you and your neighbours speak the same language and share the same views (a condition rapidly dissipating in today’s increasingly diverse local communities). In Iyer’s new model of transcultural identity, the world citizen or “global soul” has multiple homes and multiple affiliations at the local and global level. As Homi Bhabha says, “to be unhomed is not to be homeless” (“The World and the Home” 141). Rather, to be unhomed is often to find oneself in the fortunate position of being able to choose one’s affiliations above and beyond the traditional notions of what constitutes a “home” and to fashion one’s identity, or identities, outside of the borders of nation, ethnicity or culture. The deterritorialization of culture, such that community bonds no longer

depend upon locality and physical proximity, has altered the way in which community and belonging are conceived. A sense of community is increasingly to be found in the temporality of shared experiences and identifications between peoples in a variety of locales throughout the world. "Thus, transnational communities are almost destined to provide the most significant form of 'community' in the future" (Kennedy & Roudometof 24). As a world citizen, one may be rooted in personal relationships and involved in local responsibilities, yet maintain a global awareness or cosmopolitan view of one's self as, primarily, a human being connected at a universal level to the community of human beings. When one recognizes the liberating potential inherent in the condition of being unhomed, not merely bodily, but more importantly psychically, "the world first shrinks...and then expands enormously" (Bhabha "The World and the Home" 141).

The equation of cosmopolitanism with jet planes and world travelers will cease, because those journeys and experiences do not radically alter one's soul nor transform the moral consciousness one needs to navigate within the world.

Jason D. Hill (x)

Contemporary academic preoccupations with the intersecting issues of nationalism, multiculturalism, and globalization have given rise to a renewed interest and sense of urgency in re-examining and re-conceiving an ethic of identity based on a model of cosmopolitanism that is no longer merely a condition or state of being associated with the privileged few, but more imaginatively and productively as a cultural disposition, exercised by ordinary

people around the world every day. In essence a very old concept, cosmopolitanism as a model for citizenship has had at times a troublesome history, dating back to the philosophical writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The word “cosmopolitan” derives from the Greek *kosmou politês*, meaning “world citizen”. Broadly defined, cosmopolitanism is “an ‘attitude of mind’ centered on the notion of human unity” (Lu 245). For ages, it would seem, philosophers, academics and artists have been wondering and asking what it would mean to be loyal to the world and not just to one’s self or one’s fellow tribal members.

Martha Nussbaum, in her controversial essay “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism,” outlines the historical development of a cosmopolitan ethic of belonging, beginning with the assertion made by the Greek Cynic Diogenes: “I am a citizen of the world”. This statement, which prefigured similar sentiments expressed much later in the Enlightenment period by Immanuel Kant in his *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (1795) in connection with the development of the notion of liberal democracy and individualism, signifies the refusal of a person to be exclusively defined by local or group identifications and obligations, favouring instead a more global vision of citizenship. Nussbaum’s philosophy that “the accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation” (“Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” 7) compels her to assert that identities founded in nationalism

and ethnocentric particularism are unethical, immaterial and potentially damaging to human society.

Working from within the Stoic perspective on the question of citizenship, Nussbaum articulates a cosmopolitanism that has been classified and criticized by some as extreme and idealistic in the context of the present and ongoing human condition of fragmentation and discord. While most of her critics do not take issue with her appeal to a sense of morality and reason and the importance of recognizing the primacy of universal human rights, many argue that in her assessment of the cosmopolitan as someone whose primary “allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings” (“Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” 4), and her insistence that issues of class, race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and nationality are “secondary and morally irrelevant attributes” (“Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism 5), she does not fully take into account the inescapable and complex nature of local and personal bonds and responsibilities.

Nussbaum’s cosmopolitan at times resembles the sort of rootless, socially and politically ineffectual world sojourner³ who has garnered much critical antipathy. This model of cosmopolitanism approximates the much-reviled colonial, parasitic interloper who samples from a variety of cultural experiences, denying attachment or assumption of responsibility. We encounter this version of the undesirable, culturally detached globetrotter in Rushdie’s *The Moor’s Last Sigh* (1995). In an acrimonious description of the denatured expatriate hangout in Benangali, “the street of Parasites” (390), non-Spaniards speaking English,

American, French, German, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Dutch, are referred to as “lost souls in alligator shoes and sports-shirts with crocodiles over their nipples...blood-suckers [who] are already in Hell” (390). In this case, the cosmopolitan initiative is rendered abstract and meaningless and appears exploitative rather than enabling.

This description of the cosmopolitan expatriate may, in part, be a fair measurement of Nussbaum’s argument; however, as Ross Posnock notes, detectable in her thinking, in an albeit understated fashion, is precisely the kind of required post-identity politics that asserts the moral equality of all human beings, yet leaves room for the richness of cultural difference (807). While she insists on the supremacy of individual allegiance to a universal ethic of human unity and well-being, she puts forward the Stoic conviction that we should strive to make “all human beings more like our fellow city dwellers” (“Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” 9) by thinking of ourselves “not as devoid of local affiliations, but as surrounded by a series of concentric circles” (9). The largest of these circles is humanity as a whole and it is the obligation of the world citizen, in Nussbaum’s estimation, to draw the outer-most circle in through the circles of fellow countrymen, city-dwellers, neighbours, extended family and family, to the centre or the self. This line of reasoning alludes to the possibility of multiple loyalties and begins to challenge the notion of the cosmopolitan individual as being indifferent to matters of local concern.

America is my country and Paris is my hometown.

Gertrude Stein (61)

Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism, while hinting at the need to recognize local attachments, nevertheless remains grounded in a universalism that "too readily assumes the 'givenness' of a commonality" (Bhabha "Unsatisfied" 193) of human experience. Stoic and Enlightenment libertarian values of human unity and equality, while admirable, still seem too ambiguous and elusive to contend with the very real socio-economic problems of our contemporary, globalizing world and the pressing issues of difference and identity formation. Nussbaum's work in reviving the cosmopolitan initiative has, however, allowed for recent, more developed considerations of the possibility and application of a new, localized cosmopolitanism, or what has been variously referred to as "rooted cosmopolitanism,"⁴ "discrepant cosmopolitanism,"⁵ and "vernacular cosmopolitanism".⁶ The "new" cosmopolitan theorists are seeking to address the question of citizenship as a "*principle of action* that develops a notion of the common good but leaves room for dissent" (Giroux 99, my emphasis). That is, scholars such as Appiah, Clifford and Bhabha are principally interested in reclaiming cosmopolitan theory from a banal rhetoric of universality and redeploying it as a more radical, practicable approach to examining the identity and cultivation of the twenty-first century global citizen. The issue at hand is not merely one of conceptualizing or feeling a sense of the global, but more urgently

transforming and integrating such a sense into everyday local life practices. No longer is cosmopolitanism exclusively a matter of the corporeal mobility or jet-setting of the privileged figure of the artist-intellectual, but rather it is a state of mind or way of life that may be experienced by the ordinary individual dwelling anywhere, committed to his or her own personal affiliations as well as to collaboration at a local and global level with those whose affiliations differ.

According to John Tomlinson, cosmopolitans are ordinary people who

can recognize and value their own cultural dispositions and negotiate as equals with other autonomous locals. But they can also think beyond the local to the long-distance and long-term consequences of actions, recognize common global interests and be able to enter into an intelligent relationship of dialogue with others who start from difference assumptions, about how to promote these interests. (195)

Tomlinson, among others, advocates the abandonment of a view of the world in which the local and the global are conflicting concepts, and appeals to the formation of cosmopolitan communities, or “glocalized” (198)⁷ communities. Within these communities, the global and the local inform and transform each other in a process of ongoing intercultural exchange and communication, in effect enacting the “twofold process of the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular” (qtd. in Jameson Preface xi). In such a living arrangement, the cosmopolitan individual, neither exclusively a global nor local being, may be “rooted” in a variety of local relationships, and in any number of communities, involved in the political, social and cultural maintenance of personal affiliations while concurrently embracing a global vision of the shared responsibility of humanity. Paul Rabinow further explains the globalization of

communities, writing that cosmopolitanism should be redefined as “an ethos of macro-interdependencies, with an acute consciousness (often forced upon people) of the inescapabilities and particularities of places, characters, historical trajectories, and fates” (qtd. in Robbins “Actually Existing Cosmopolitanisms” 1). Overwhelming, abstract notions of belonging to a larger, human order in which individual agency seems unachievable are dispelled by a view of cosmopolitanism that begins at the level of the self and charges the individual with the moral obligation of cultivating and enacting a more open, worldly perspective while caring for those closer to “home”. Interested in the development of such a workable, personal ethic of world citizenship, Appiah claims that,

It is because humans live best on a smaller scale that we should defend not just the state, but the country, the town, the street, the business, the craft, the profession...as circles among the many circles narrower than the human horizon, that are appropriate spheres of moral concern. (“Cosmopolitan Patriots” 29)

Within these circles that are “narrower than the human horizon,” in an in-between space where identities emerge, the ordinary person encounters and negotiates with cultural difference, viewing as natural and productive the constant flow, as Rushdie puts it, of “new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs” (“In Good Faith” 394). The new cosmopolitanism dictates that there is no single, transcendent ideal of citizenship; in other words, there is no *one way* to be cosmopolitan. Rather, cosmopolitanism, like all forms of identity, is in constant flux and depends upon

the particular, local circumstances of cultural interaction and the ambiguous processes of cultural hybridization for its configuration.

The project of universal justice? Let us say something that is neither banal nor unrealistic: we're working on it. In the meantime, be a citizen of the world...Listen to somebody as unlike you as possible, including machines and animals, every day. And argue with anyone who says that this is the best of all possible worlds – or even just a world beyond changing. It is neither.

Mark Kingwell (222)

In fragmented and violent times such as our own, the realization and implementation of a new cosmopolitan politics of identity seems more necessary than ever. Undeniably, through the ongoing processes of globalization and the ubiquitous nature of media we are, in truth, already to some extent cosmopolitan and have been so for some time. TV, film, radio, newspapers, books, and the Internet have increasingly made accessible the remotest areas of the world to the armchair traveler. On a daily basis, through our TV, movie theatre, and computer screens we interact with “other” peoples and in this way come to think of ourselves as members of a broader, global community that extends beyond the imaginary borders of our towns, cities and nations.

Clearly, the hybrid condition can no longer be said to describe solely the migrant, exile or expatriate, separated physically from the location of their homeland. Rather, the condition of belonging to multiple cultures is a global one, experienced as the inevitable progression of human history, one that may be embraced by an individual who has never left the place of his or her birth but who recognizes his or her critical role as a member of the human race. As Rushdie

claims, “the past is a country from which we have all emigrated...[and]...its loss is part of our common humanity” (“Imaginary Homelands” 12). The challenge facing us now is to collectively acknowledge and release a past that is marked by suffering, degradation and separation based on a destructive conception of immutable cultural identity. Ours is the moral task of fashioning a view of the world and each other that reflects the inevitable reality of cultural hybridity, emphasizes the responsibility of the individual to engage at the local level with multiple affiliations, and recognizes the connection of human beings at a level that transcends the imagined authenticity of historical narratives of self and nation. Whatever strides have been made toward the realization of a cosmopolitan ethic through increasingly integrated systems of communication and transportation we must continue to promote an understanding of the universal and the plural.

The achievement of a full and functioning cosmopolitan citizenship in the twenty-first century will depend greatly upon the strength, impact, and political commitment of cultural production and the ability of artists, writers, and filmmakers to combat, through their aesthetic representations of the evolving human condition, the growing threat of a tribal mentality. Salman Rushdie, one of the most celebrated and controversial writers of the contemporary world, who has dwelled for most of his life within the borderlands of multiple cultures, nations and identities, is one such cultural producer who has continually sought “new angles at which to enter reality” (“Imaginary Homelands” 15) in order to enunciate

his presence, and the presence of others living in similar circumstances, as hybrid individuals occupying marginalized yet potentially powerful positions at the forefront of a dawning cosmopolitan age.

The novel as political, postmodern art form, its efficacy and value much discussed and debated (Lukács 1963, Bakhtin 1981), is undeniably one of the most powerful and enduring means of cultural communication. The strength of the novel lies in its capacity to contain and give voice to a multiplicity of divergent perspectives. As Appiah claims, “we do learn something about humanity in responding to the worlds people conjure with words in the narrative framework of the novel: we learn about the extraordinary diversity of human responses to our world and the myriad points of intersection of those various responses” (“Cosmopolitan Reading” 225). Rushdie’s own understanding of the power of the novel reflects a confidence in the hybrid, metamorphic and polyphonous nature of literature and its uncompromising ability to traverse the sacred and the profane in order to expose dangerous fundamentalisms. Literature, he believes, compels us to ask extraordinary and difficult questions and “opens up new doors in our minds” (“Is Nothing Sacred?” 423). For Rushdie, literature is one of the few forms of expression in which the artist can, or should be, in a position to freely ask difficult questions and challenge the status quo. In an essay concerning the politics of art, “Outside the Whale”, Rushdie asserts that “there is a genuine need for political fiction, for books that draw new and better maps of reality and make new languages with which we can understand the world” (100). As he has come

to realize all too well, the artist cannot withdraw or hide from the often-unforgiving response of a world in which political art is both necessary and potentially endangering.

Rushdie's fiction, which seeks to "draw new and better maps" and to articulate the splendor of cultural impurity, the desirability of multiple loyalties, and the danger inherent in narratives of national, ethnic or religious insularity, is a call to mobilization that demands the re-examination of imperial concepts of identity and difference. Rushdie depicts human beings in metamorphosis, embracing and releasing affiliations, repeatedly transplanting their roots in an ongoing process of transculturation. Charging the individual with the responsibility of cultivating a moral cosmopolitanism that recognizes similarity, respects difference and allows for the possibility of serious social and political change, Rushdie looks to a future in which the blasphemy of dissent no longer threatens to divide and destroy people, communities and whole cultures. In the following chapters I will explore the progression of Rushdie's dream of a global citizenship from *The Satanic Verses*, through *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, to his most recent work, *Fury*. At the heart of each of his works is the simple yet fundamental question that must be addressed if peace is ever to find a home: "How are we to live in the world?" ("Imaginary Homelands" 18) Time and again, Rushdie poses this question as he searches for answers, writing and rewriting his ardent "love-song to our mongrel selves" ("In Good Faith" 394).

NOTES

¹ Benedict Anderson, in his famous discussion of the historical emergence of nationalism and the nation-state as anomalous cultural artefacts, argues that the nation exists only in the imaginative conception of a political community formed by people bonded through shared ethnic, religious, and lingual backgrounds. Anderson employs a telling quote from historian Tom Nairn to illustrate the flawed logic of “nation-ness” and “home” as authoritative concepts that inform personal or collective identity:

“‘Nationalism’ is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as ‘neurosis’ in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for descent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable” (qtd. in Anderson 14-15).

² This term was coined in the 1940s by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz, and “refers to the reciprocal influences of modes of representation and cultural practices of various kinds of colonies and metropolises, and is thus ‘a phenomenon of the contact zone’, as Mary Louise Pratt puts it” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* 233).

³ Roland Barthes describes his interpretation of the “sojourner” in a critical essay on a novel called *Aziyadé*, concerning a young British Lieutenant Pierre Loti’s time in Turkey. Sojourn, as Barthes conceives it, is the second stage of a three-stage process of naturalization. When Loti arrives in Turkey, he is first a tourist; then, when he settles into residency in Eyoub, he is a sojourner. Finally he becomes an officer in the Turkish Army and thus becomes a naturalized citizen. As a sojourner, or expatriate, Loti does not have the ethical, political, or civilian responsibilities of the citizen. The moment of sojourn leads to the “intoxication of the resident, whom a fine knowledge of sites, manners, and language allows him to satisfy every desire without fear” (118). Disconnected from the interest engagement of the tourist, and the responsibility of the citizen, the sojourner, in a sense, drifts in “a composite space into which is condensed the substance of several great cities, an element in which the subject can *dive*: that is sink, hide, slip away, intoxicate himself, vanish, absent himself, die to everything which is not his desire” (118). This experience of residency, which Barthes refers to as being schizoid in nature, compels Loti to break with society, with reason, and with other human beings, declaring: “I believe in nothing and in no one, I love no one and nothing; I have neither faith nor hope” (118).

⁴ See Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, eds. Laura García-Moreno and Peter C. Pfeiffer (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1996) 21-29. In response to Martha Nussbaum's "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism", Appiah develops the notion of a rooted cosmopolitan, or "cosmopolitan patriot," as someone who "can entertain the possibility of a world in which everyone is a rooted cosmopolitan, attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different, places that are home to other, different, people" (22).

⁵ See James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992) 96-112. Clifford proposes a form of cosmopolitan belonging that he terms, "*discrepant cosmopolitanisms*" (108), as a means by which to cut across discussions of globalism and localism as separate, divided entities. His intention is to deconstruct the notion that only certain classes of people are "cosmopolitan travelers" while the rest are "local natives". This, as he notes, "appears as the ideology of one (very powerful) traveling culture" (108). Invoking Clifford's ideas, Bruce Robbins emphasizes that

Instead of renouncing cosmopolitanism as a false universal, one can embrace it as an impulse to knowledge that is shared with others, a striving to transcend partiality that is itself partial, but no more so than the similar cognitive strivings of many diverse peoples. The world's particulars can now be recoded, in part at least, as the world's '*discrepant cosmopolitanisms*'. ("Comparative Cosmopolitanism" 181)

⁶ See Homi K. Bhabha, "Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism," *Text and Nation: Cross-Disciplinary Essays on Cultural and National Identities*, eds. Laura García-Moreno and Peter C. Pfeiffer (Columbia, South Carolina: Camden House, 1996) 191-207. Principally interested in Appiah's response to Nussbaum's cosmopolitan universalism, Bhabha praises Appiah's vision of human belonging that accounts for both the global and the local. He notes, "I am interested in a cosmopolitan community envisaged in a *marginality*, even metonymy, that I find in Anthony Appiah's vision of a certain postcolonial translation of the relation between the patriotic and the cosmopolitan, the home and the world" (195). Cosmopolitanism as an effective analytical model for examining ideas of citizenship, justice, and equality within the human community, Bhabha suggests, must be deployed in the "space that somehow stops short (not falls short) of the transcendent human universal", and turned instead to the "many circles narrower than the human horizon, that are the appropriate spheres of moral concern" (195).

⁷ See Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1992) 8. In contrast to the term globalization, which in contemporary theory carries connotations of Western monolithic practices of cultural and economic hegemony and homogenization, “glocalization” speaks more to the rhizomatic criss-crossing of cultural elements between the global and the local as they continually transform each other through the adaptation and translation of the global into local practices and values and vice versa.

Chapter Two

Old and New Selves: The Poetics of Migration in *The Satanic Verses*

Birds in flight, claims the architect Vincenzo Volentieri, are not *between* places, they carry their places with them. We never wonder where they live: they are at home in the sky, in flight. Flight is their way of being in the world.

Geoff Dyer (qtd. in Iyer 80)

To speak of *The Satanic Verses* as a transgressive work of postcolonial imagination is by no means original. Known internationally as the book whose publication launched and continues to propel contemporary debates surrounding artistic license, the right of free speech, and the role of art in political culture, *The Satanic Verses* is perhaps one of the most recognized, discussed, celebrated, and in contrast, undeniably vilified works of twentieth-century literature. It has established for Rushdie, in several quarters, the reputation of malicious anti-Islamic demagogue intent upon creating and spreading propaganda and racial hatred, knowingly exciting unwarranted turmoil ending in bloodshed.¹ Sadly, the book (which many claim to be familiar with but few, it seems, have actually read) has been clouded by religious rhetoric, misappropriated as solely “a deeply Islamic book” (Suleri 191) and dismissed as a gross error in judgment on its author’s part.² The result has been the near ruin of a critically important and valuable text whose true element of transgressiveness lies in its espousal of newness, border experiences, transculturation or the “leaking” of one culture into another, and the

possibility of historical, cultural, communal and personal reinscription and rebirth.

Paul Auster, invoking the thoughts of George Bataille, declares that,

Literature...is an essentially disruptive force, a presence confronted in 'fear and trembling' that is capable of revealing to us the truth of life and its excessive possibilities. Literature is not a continuum, but a series of dislocations, and the books that mean the most to us in the end are usually those that ran counter to the idea of literature that prevailed at the time they were written. (26)

The Satanic Verses is a quintessential example of such literature that seeks to disrupt the continuum of history and expose the excessive possibilities of the arrival of newness in the world.

In the wake of Ayatollah Khomeini's 1989 pronouncement of the *fatwa*³ to end Rushdie's life for the crime of offering, in fictional form, his vision of the world, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak famously pointed to the impossibility of a "mere reading" of *The Satanic Verses* (219). Many critics, including Rushdie himself, have vehemently insisted that the original intentions of the book have been severely misunderstood or entirely lost within the context of the so-called "Rushdie affair." Since the text's publication in 1988, the political, cultural and religious furor surrounding its controversial and, according to some, blasphemous content regarding the birth of Islam and the writing of the Qur'an, has, in subsequent examinations of the text, frequently obscured or obviated the author's intended message of the need for a secular humanism⁴ that challenges fundamentalism in all its avatars and recognizes the inevitable postmodern and postcolonial condition of cultural hybridity or *mélange*. Rushdie claims that *The Satanic Verses* is the least political novel he has ever written and that the

ensuing maelstrom in which he found himself caught was as much of a surprise and disappointment to him as to the rest of the world.⁵ Speaking to Peter Kadzis in an interview for *The Boston Phoenix* in 1999, Rushdie detailed his original vision of his now infamous book:

I felt that I'd written one novel, broadly speaking, about India [*Midnight's Children* 1981], and one novel, broadly speaking, about a kind of version of Pakistan [*Shame* 1985], and I thought it was time that my writing made the same movement that I'd made – that's to say, migrate into the West. And I felt, first of all, that I wanted to write a novel about the act of migration and, secondly, a novel about the internal effect of migration. (220)

Far from engineering an outright attack on Islam, Rushdie believed that he was writing a book about “migration, metamorphosis, divided selves, love, death, London and Bombay” (“My Book Speaks for Itself” *The New York Times* 17 Feb 1989 A39). In a number of essays (“In Good Faith” 1990, “Is Nothing Sacred?” 1990, “One Thousand Days in a Balloon” 1991) published after the burning and banning of *The Satanic Verses*, he reiterated his pre-fatwa assertion that *The Satanic Verses* is above all a poetics of postmodern migration; that is, an exploration of the experiences of the dislocated individual in chosen exile, moving through the world in search of a sense of self and an alternative understanding of what constitutes “home”.

As much critical attention has already, and exhaustively, been focused upon the ramifications of the *fatwa* and the Rushdie affair and on exploring the extent to which *The Satanic Verses* is or is not insulting to Islam and Islamic fundamentalists, it is not my intention to engage in an examination of these

issues.⁶ Instead, for the purposes of this thesis, I will pursue Rushdie's line of thinking and approach this novel as a "metaphor for all humanity" ("In Good Faith" 394), as a "migrant's-eye view of the world [...] written from the very experience of uprooting, disjuncture and metamorphosis (slow or rapid, painful or pleasurable) that is the migrant condition" (394). While it may be true that a "mere reading" of *The Satanic Verses* is problematic and easily derailed in the face of the overwhelming and continuing religious and political implications to which the novel is inextricably bound, it is crucial that a narrative that asks so pointedly and unabashedly questions about the nature of identity and belonging be recuperated and revitalized in our present age of globalization and escalating tribalism, when the need for answers is ever more pressing.

As a reflection of his own experiences as an "unhomed" individual, a condition he initially chose but was later compelled to accept by circumstance, Rushdie's writing has characteristically drawn upon themes of exile, memory, movement, uncertainty, fragmentation and historical discontinuity, while condemning claims to cultural and historical authenticity that inevitably result in the proliferation of ghetto or tribal mentalities. His two major works written and published prior to *The Satanic Verses* - *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* – anticipate major themes and issues raised in *The Satanic Verses* and they exemplify Rushdie's preoccupation with postmodern impermanence and the ambivalence he perceives in the postcolonial nationalist initiative. As Sara Suleri

notes, "Rushdie's work demands to be contextualized within his prior writing, so that *The Satanic Verses* functions as a necessary supplement to the precarious trajectory of *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*" (194). Both earlier novels are concerned with the breaking apart and piecing together of two newly independent nations - India and Pakistan - that are striving to achieve a sense of solid ground in uncertain times. These texts, which engage with and speak to actual historical-political events, are largely rooted in earthly metaphors; that is, their characters for better or worse are physically, mentally and spiritually tied to and representative of the land to which they "belong." This connection is most explicitly expressed in the characterization of Saleem Sinai, the narrator of *Midnight's Children*. "Handcuffed to history" (9) by virtue of his being born at the stroke of midnight on August 15th when India gained independence in 1947, Saleem's personal history becomes entwined with that of the nation. He suffers from a mysterious illness that causes his body to slowly disintegrate and that emblemizes the political and social upheaval and corruption of the nationalistic movement that Rushdie perceives as threatening to dismantle modern India.

Saleem speaks for and as the nation when he laments,

I mean quite simply that I have begun to crack all over like an old jug – that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage above and drainage below, mutilated by doors, brained by spittoons, has started coming apart at the seams. In short, I am literally disintegrating, slowly for the moment, although there are signs of acceleration. (37)

Powerless to bring to an end his bizarre decomposition, Saleem hurries to record his fragmentary memories of his past and his unusual connection to the

subcontinent. His narration, however, proves to be unreliable and full of distortions and his dependence upon the broken mirrors of memory to recount the history of post-Independence India effectively undermines the notion of historical truth or origin, establishing in its place a multiplicity of histories comprised of a “chutnified” mixture of memory and recorded fact.

Midnight's Children is Rushdie's earliest and most sustained attempt to reveal “the boggy of Authenticity” (“‘Commonwealth Literature’ Does Not Exist” 67) that haunts historical narratives of nationhood. Authenticity, in his understanding, is “the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogenous and unbroken tradition” (67). Having grown up in cosmopolitan Bombay, experiencing eclecticism as “the hallmark of the Indian tradition” (67), Rushdie finds absurd and untenable the assertion of a national authenticity from which all knowledge and expression must necessarily originate. Rather, his vision of India is founded in ideas of hybridity and multiplicity and his novels reflect a Bakhtinian preoccupation with the subversive power of postmodern multivocal narratives that seek to undermine homogeneity.

Mikhail Bakhtin asserts in *The Dialogic Imagination* that in order for a novel to creatively depict the “realities” of contemporary social life – cultural hybridity, diverse language communities, conflicting world views – and work to disrupt and transform narratives of authenticity and originality, it is essential that a multiplicity of voices and viewpoints be represented and heard, thus

establishing what he refers to as “social heteroglossia” (263). Rushdie, in his attempt to provide alternative versions of history that question from a variety of perspectives and dialogical counterpoints the politics of representation, abides by the imperatives of heteroglossia in his denial of univocal authority, the traditional roots of the self, and the simplistic logic of binary oppositions: East and West, Self and Other, identity and difference, history and narrative.

In *Shame*, Rushdie turns from India to a country that is “not quite Pakistan” (29) and further explores the influence of official histories and the imposition of national identity on the personal history of the individual. Historical knowledge is again shown to be problematic in this novel. In his allegorical recounting of the birth of Pakistan, renamed “Peccavistan”, the narrator of *Shame* reflects on the historical process and the manner in which Pakistan’s pre-Independence history is rewritten in order to obfuscate all traces of its Indian heritage. Lamenting the problem of history: “what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing, how to deal with change” (87-88), the narrator employs Darwinistic language to describe the palimpsestic nature of Pakistani history: “History is natural selection. Mutant versions of the past struggle for dominance; new species of fact arise, and old, saurian truths go to the wall, blind-folded and smoking last cigarettes” (124). The frustration for the narrator is that in his desire and attempt to narrate the birth of his new homeland, he realizes that he too must work with the fragmented mirrors of memory and

must be satisfied with the knowledge that his narrative will necessarily be discontinuous and full of holes.

In his musings, the narrator voices Rushdie's concerns with the experience of countless Muslims uprooted from their homes in India and compelled to abandon their past, suffer a sense of fragmentation and discord and re-conceptualize their personal and collective identities in order to migrate north and build the "promised land" of Pakistan. As a microcosm, the migrant as (re)invented self connects with the wider theme of the novel and embodies the nation as (re)invented space. Rushdie suggests in *Shame* that the experience of being unhomed evokes for the migrant a sense of something gained but also, overwhelmingly, something lost - an ambiguity that he poignantly articulates:

What is the best thing about migrant peoples and seceded nations? I think it is their hopefulness. Look into the eyes of such folk in old photographs. Hope blazes undimmed through the fading sepia tints. And what's the worst thing? It is the emptiness of one's luggage. I'm speaking of invisible suitcases, not the physical, perhaps cardboard, variety containing a few meaning-drained mementoes: we have come unstuck from more than land. We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time. (86-87)

In the very act of migration the migrant, Rushdie asserts, is transformed. What form, he asks, does this transformation assume? In other words, what becomes of the individual's sense of self when he or she is borne across lands and cultures and is, in effect, translated? How, in the process of this supposed translation, does the individual imagine belonging? Is there in fact something "lost" in the translation?

Nascent in this novel is Rushdie's concern with the idea of departure or escape through flight and the impact upon the individual of the severing of ties to a homeland, and it is here that the seeds of his enduring need to discover and express the migrant condition may be found. In his examination of the import of the ideas of "home" and leave-taking in the film *The Wizard of Oz*, Rushdie contends that the film and its famous feature song, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" express a celebration of escape. Dorothy Gale's flight from the grey world of Kansas to the technicolour otherworld of Oz epitomizes "the human dream of *leaving*, a dream at least as powerful as its countervailing dream of roots" (23). Roots, Rushdie begins to believe, "are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places" (*Shame* 86), and it is in flight alone, he suggests, that one has hope of finding release. The earth's gravitational forces, which symbolically and mythically keep us firmly planted in our places and reinforce the notion of "belonging" to a single nation, culture or ethnic group, must be countered if the individual is to "come unstuck from their native land" (86) and explore new ways of being in the world.

With the writing of *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, the struggle of the individual to discover wings, be released from the shackles of nation and history, and manage feelings of displacement and alienation becomes central to Rushdie's literary vision, prefiguring his quintessential, most committed, and unquestionably more hopeful work of postcolonial migrancy and hybridity, *The Satanic Verses*. Desirous of enunciating his own experiences as a "translated

man", born Indian but residing elsewhere, Rushdie shifts his literary focus from the modern nation-states of India and Pakistan to explore, on a global and transnational scale, the migrant condition at the convergence of East and West. In relating the story of two Indian immigrants, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, who migrate westward from Bombay to London, Rushdie begins to articulate a more radical and positive view of migrancy in which he addresses not as much the question of what may be lost in translation, as what might be gained by and learned from the culturally displaced person who accepts change, incorporates the new, and willingly adopts a more hybrid, cosmopolitan understanding of belonging and citizenship. In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie supplants a Naipaulian exilic regret and nostalgia that dictates that, as Edward Said has noted, "the achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" ("Reflections on Exile" 173).

More interested in examining homelessness from a productive, future-oriented perspective, Rushdie "rewrites exile as migrancy in his novel, and replaces the modernist vision of the alienated and isolated [individual] with one of active engagement in society" (Dutheil de la Rochere 127). Whereas the notion of exile as "the dream of glorious return" (*The Satanic Verses* 205) connotes a sense of endless longing to return to something lost, migrancy for Rushdie suggests the imaginative potential for self-invention and the finding of "home" in new and unexpected places. Stuart Hall contends that, "Migration is a one way trip. There is no 'home' to go back to. There never was" (qtd. in Chambers 9).

For Rushdie, a similarly ambiguous and bittersweet conclusion forms the foundation of almost all of his fiction and compels him to acknowledge that in the act of migration, the self is forced to (re)invent itself, to be translated, in order to survive.

Saladin, Rushdie's mouthpiece in *The Satanic Verses*, comes to realize this condition of migration in the process of his own journey: "He was in a void, and if he were to survive he would have to construct everything from scratch, would have to invent the ground beneath his feet before he could take a step" (136). Fundamental to *The Satanic Verses* is the understanding that "the way in which people define what it is to be a human being alters – has to alter. One has to find roots in other places" (Thomson 78). Crossing not only geographical boundaries but psychic and conceptual ones as well inevitably generates confusion, anxiety, and a feeling of alienation from one's self. Nevertheless, such a crossing may also empower the individual to imagine and create new ways of being and belonging as the agent of his or her own identity. As Rushdie says in *The Wizard of Oz*,

the truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started out to make up our lives, armed only with what we have and are, we understand that the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that 'there's no place like home', but rather that there is no longer any such place as home; except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us. (57)

If earth, and the individual's connection to it, is the governing metaphor in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, then, as Gillian Gane asserts, "The element of

this novel [*The Satanic Verses*] is air" (19), and the metaphor, rebirth. As a study of the migrant as "the defining image of the 20th Century" (Thomson 77), *The Satanic Verses* articulates the experiences of two individuals disconnected from the earth, existing in a state of transcendental homelessness.⁷ Gibreel Farishta expresses this condition in his farewell letter to his erstwhile lover, Rekha Merchant: "We are creatures of air, Our roots in dreams And clouds, reborn In flight" (13). As the novel opens and the jumbo jet *Bostan* explodes over Ellowen Deeowen, the capital city of the "fabled country of Vilayet" (36), Rushdie's fictional version of London, England, Saladin and Gibreel are explosively launched from the womb of the aircraft to be reborn into the expanse of air and to enunciate their presence as newness entering the world.

While Rushdie's primary concern is the psychic effects of migration for the migrant, the importance of *The Satanic Verses* as a crucial political discourse on the postcolonial phenomenon of the "margin" speaking, writing, and traveling back to the "centre" cannot be denied. Newness is depicted as a creative and transgressive force powerful enough to break free from the reassuring certainties as well as the oppressive aspects of traditional, colonial ways of thinking. The arrival of newness and the introduction of difference into the postcolonial Western world create an interstitial space and intermediary moment between fixed identifications and subvert European univocal discourses of authenticity, authority and binarism. This disruptive phenomenon has been referred to by Said as "the voyage in" – a phrase that designates the reversal of the Conradian

colonial motif of the journey out from the western metropolis into the supposed uncharted, uncivilized lands of the Third World. For Said,

the voyage in, then, constitutes an especially interesting variety of hybrid cultural work...No longer does the logos dwell exclusively, as it were, in London and Paris. No longer does history run unilaterally as Hegel believed, from east to west, or from south to north, becoming more sophisticated and developed, less primitive and backward as it goes. ("The Voyage In and the Emergence of Opposition" 295)

In the same manner in which the universe and time came into existence "out of thin air" with a "big bang, followed by falling stars" (4), so too does the presencing or voyaging in of Saladin and Gibreel as "hybrid counter-energies" (Said "Movements and Migrations" 406) or agents of newness and difference, occur with a bang, destined to reconfigure the imaginary landscapes of the postcolonial Western world. As Gibreel exclaims to Saladin, "Proper London, bhail! Here we come! Those bastards down there won't know what hit them. Meteor or lightning or vengeance of God. Out of thin air, baby. *Dharrraaamm!* Wham, na? What an entrance, yaar. I swear: splat" (4). Unquestionably, however, it is the migrant, severed from one world and moving toward another who most acutely experiences the impact of voyaging in. Free-falling from twenty-nine thousand and two feet toward the English Channel, without benefit of parachutes or wings, Saladin and Gibreel experience, understandably, a feeling of disorientation at suddenly being devoid of a fixed sense of place in which to situate themselves. Disconnected from anything solid and plunged into the realm of uncertainty, they are compelled to ask, "Who am I? Who else is there?" (4).

The “air-space” through which Saladin and Gibreel move, the narrator of *The Satanic Verses* asserts, is a defining postmodern and postcolonial location, as air is “that soft, imperceptible field...the planet-shrinker and power-vacuum, most insecure and transitory of zones, illusory, discontinuous, metamorphic, - because when you throw everything up in the air anything becomes possible. (5) Adopting the premise that, as Karl Marx said, “all that is solid melts into air”(qtd. in Rushdie “Is Nothing Sacred?” 417), Rushdie attempts to convey in *The Satanic Verses*, utilizing the metaphor of air-space, the ephemeral and fragmentary nature of the postmodern condition in which the traditional points of reference or identification (culture, nation, language, ethnicity, religion, family) are “vanishing, poof!, like a trick, *into thin air*” (11).

Alleluia Cone (“Allie”), Gibreel’s mountain-climbing love interest, voices Rushdie’s concern with the validity of truth or self-knowledge in the face of postmodern uncertainty. She attempts to articulate what she perceives as a profound change in the human condition occurring sometime in the twentieth century when “information” or, to be more precise, the knowledge of self and the sense of one’s purpose and place in the world, was eliminated. “Since then”, she says, “we’ve been living in a fairy-story. Got me? Everything happens by magic. Us fairies haven’t got a fucking notion what’s going on. So how do we know if it’s right or wrong? We don’t even know what *it* is” (323). In Allie’s estimation, truth in contemporary times has retreated to the tops of the mountains, “it just upped and ran away from these cities where even the stuff under our feet is all made

up, a lie, and it hid up there in the thin air" (324). Allie, like her father Otto Cone, believes that "the most dangerous of all the lies we are fed in our lives'...[is] the idea of the continuum" (305). Otto warns his daughter that, "The world is incompatible, just never forget: gaga. Ghosts, Nazis, saints, all alive at the same time; in one spot, blissful happiness, while down the road, the inferno. You can't ask for a wilder place" (305-6).

Frederic Jameson perhaps best expresses the kind of postmodern disorientation and the loss of solid ground that Rushdie's novel details in his famous discussion of the *Bonaventura* Hotel, a characteristic postmodern work of architecture ("Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" 80-84). Several scholars, including Edward Said and James Clifford, in their study of the transitory nature of the migrant condition have sought to articulate a theory of the relationship between travel and culture - "traveling cultures and cultures of travel" (Clifford "Traveling Cultures" 105) - in the postmodern world. The hotel "as station, airport terminal, hospital, and so on: somewhere you pass through, where the encounters are fleeting, arbitrary" (96) has unquestionably become a predominant image of an era of constant movement and a state of being forever in-between multiple destinations or "homes." In his description of the *Bonaventura* in downtown Los Angeles, Jameson describes a scene of discombobulation in which travelers, cut off from the tangible outside world, exist in a compression of time and space, set adrift from the reassurance of solid familiar references. He points especially to the manner in which people are

physically conveyed throughout the hotel. Much like the airplanes that transport migrants across the borders of worlds, hotel escalators and elevators transport the individual from one location to another at dizzying speeds and angles, removing the need to walk, in effect cutting the once stable ground out from beneath the individual and thrusting him or her into the disorienting space of the air. Recontextualized, the “postmodern hyperspace” (“Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism 83) of the *Bonaventura*, which, through its sheer size, scale and kinetic energy, overwhelms the individual’s ability to physically or spatially situate him- or herself within the material surroundings of the hotel, symbolizes the struggle of the contemporary individual or migrant, alienated from a stabilizing sense of self or “home”, to “map [his or her] position in a mappable external world” (83).

In times when not even the ground beneath our feet is secure, when the very foundations of our understanding of ourselves and our surroundings are literally “up in the air”, Rushdie embraces and appropriates in *The Satanic Verses* this postmodern disorientation, delighting in the idea of air as a space in which everything is open to question and interpretation, where there floats “the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues...the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home*” (5). To be in flight, as Saladin and Gibreel are, is to transcend the grounding aspects of life, and to experience “that flight of the human spirit outside the confines of its material, physical existence” (Rushdie “Is Nothing

Sacred?" 421). Air is a space in which truth is relative and identity is constantly reconfigured, and in being vulnerable to persistent change and metamorphosis, the individual is prompted to think contrapuntally⁸ about differing peoples, traditions, and ideologies. In this way, the individual benefits from "the sense of being more than oneself, of being in some way joined to the whole of life" (421). For Saladin and Gibreel, hurtling through the air, passing through hybrid "cloudforms, ceaselessly metamorphosing, gods into bulls, women into spiders, men into wolves" (7), there is the uncanny sense that they are indeed becoming more than themselves. Saladin especially begins to feel the effects of air-borne transmutation, noting that, "he, too, had acquired the quality of cloudiness, becoming metamorphic, hybrid" (7).

In their fall toward earth, the two men collide in a head-to-tail embrace and Saladin perceives that he is "growing into" Gibreel, "the person whose head nestled now between his legs and whose legs were wrapped around his long, patrician-neck" (7). As the boundaries of their individual identities blur in the process of migratory transformation and they begin to question the foundations of their self-knowledge, Saladin and Gibreel momentarily merge into one new being, "Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha" (5). The coming together of this pair establishes the possibility of interchangeability, of an individual identity taking on another aspect or an alternative persona. This confusion of identities brought on by the transformative power of flight and the creation of "a fluidity, an indistinctness, at the edges"(8) of the self, speaks to the loss of traditional,

immutable personal markers experienced by the migrant in movement from East to West, and from past to present, but it also indicates the possibility for the creation of whole new forms of being in the adoption of multiple, diverse points of reference. As the two men spiral down “a cloud-walled funnel” through “the hole that went to Wonderland”(7), the horizons of their selves expand and they begin to acquire fantastical physical and psychic characteristics – for Saladin, horns and hoofs, for Gibreel, intensified dreams and encroaching madness - that will present challenges throughout the novel to their capacity for change and their willingness to become translated men.

Saladin and Gibreel’s descent from the heavens over the English Channel, “like bundles dropped by some carelessly open-beaked stork” (5), is, most obviously, an occasion for a metaphorical rebirth or reincarnation, significant to both the newly emergent and the expectant world. During the one hundred and eleven days that the passengers of the *Bostan* are held captive by hijackers, Gibreel begins to develop “increasingly eccentric reincarnation theories, comparing their sojourn on that airstrip by the oasis of Al Zamzam to a second period of gestation, telling everybody that they were all dead to the world and in the process of being regenerated, made anew” (85). Optimistically, Gibreel asserts that, “the day of their release would be the day of their rebirth” (85). When the two men achieve their descent toward land, miraculously waking on Rosa Diamond’s beach unharmed, Gibreel’s first words to Saladin proclaim their new beginning: “Born again, Spoono, you and me. Happy birthday, mister,

happy birthday to you" (10). Rebirth, however, or the notion of new beginnings, is for the migrant an ambivalent concept that involves, Rushdie suggests, a release of elements of the past in order to embrace the present. The inaugural words of the novel, uttered by Gibreel, signify the central and problematic theme of rebirth and the necessity and struggle of the "old" dying to make room for the "new":

‘To be born again,’ sang Gibreel Farishta tumbling from the heavens, ‘first you have to die. Ho ji! Ho ji! To land upon the bosomy earth, first one needs to fly. Tat-taa! Taka-thun! How to ever smile again, if first you won’t cry? How to win the darling’s love, mister, without a sigh? Baba, if you want to get born again... (3)

Gibreel’s leitmotif of migration - "To be born again, first you must die" -, which recurs throughout the text in variations, is identified in one instance as "the old Gramsci chesnut" (86). Rushdie appropriates and recontextualizes here an important idea from Gramsci’s essay "State and Civil Society" in the *Prison Notebooks* to illustrate his concern with the death and rebirth of the migrant soul. Gramsci’s passage, or "chesnut" reads: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" (276). Critics Gillian Gane and Paul Brians contend that Rushdie misreads Gramsci’s words and mistakenly applies them to his argument in *The Satanic Verses*. Gane believes that, in contrast to Gramsci’s understanding of the problem of the death of the old and the birth of the new, Rushdie’s migrant vision involves "no disabling gap between the dying and the birth; death is merely the necessary prerequisite for birth" (45). While

death may indeed be the prerequisite for birth, the process of regeneration that is described in *The Satanic Verses* is not as easily achieved as Gane seems to indicate. In fact, the entire novel is an extended meditation on the difficulties inherent in the struggle of the new to be born and the old to be released, a process that opens up a contestatory “third space” for the negotiation of difference but offers no easy answers to the questions of identity and belonging.

As Saladin and Gibreel strive to make sense of their new selves and surroundings, they find themselves caught in a hybrid moment, or interregnum, of change, in which there is a perpetual translation of cultural elements of difference, that Bhabha refers to as “*neither the One [...] nor the Other [...] but something else besides*” (*The Location of Culture* 28). Their process of rebirth and transmutation, with its attendant assortment of “morbid symptoms”, is an ongoing process throughout the novel, and only begins with the explosion of Flight 420. The challenge that befalls them after they land again on solid ground is to fully realize their secular humanity and to reinscribe their antiquated preconceptions of categories of identification based on nationality, religion, language and class. As Rushdie points out, “When we are born we are not automatically human beings. And some of us get there and some of us don’t” (Meer 121). Ultimately, and unexpectedly, it is Saladin who makes it, while Gibreel chooses a different path, one that leads him to self-destruction. In Rushdie’s estimation, Saladin achieves his humanity by “facing up to the *big things*” (Meer 121), embracing his fragmented and metamorphosed self, and

adopting a cosmopolitan perspective on and way of contending with what Otto Cone refers to as the “incompatible realities” (325) of his life in the postmodern world.

“And another thing, let’s be clear: great falls change people” (137) we are informed by the narrator who claims that falls such as the one taken by Saladin and Gibreel cannot help but bring about tremendous changes and side-effects. As the narrator says: “under the stress of a long plunge...mutations are to be expected, not all of them random. Unnatural selections” (137). Upon their arrival on the shores of Proper London, Gibreel, (whose name “Gibreel” a form of “Gabriel” and “farishta” meaning, in Urdu, “angel”) has acquired a halo, “a faint, but distinctly golden, *glow*” (137) around his head. In addition, his once famously foul breath has miraculously sweetened. The fall, it seems, has bestowed upon Gibreel angelic qualities. He is optimistic about his unusual arrival and rebirth in Vilayet, crying out to a barely conscious Saladin lying on the snowy beach, ““Come on, baby...Rise ‘n’ shine! Let’s take this place by storm!” (135).

Initially, Gibreel appears to embody an ideal hybrid, cosmopolitan outlook on the world. He is the one to embrace the notion of new beginnings, in contrast to Saladin who is suspicious of Gibreel’s vociferous optimism and of the severity of his credo “To be born again...first you have to die”. As an actor, starring in numerous “theologicals” in Bombay, Gibreel is accustomed to and comfortable

with crossing religious boundaries in his representations of deities and mythical figures not only from the Islamic faith, but from Hinduism and Buddhism as well. He is, "to hundreds of millions of believers in that country [India]...the most acceptable, and instantly recognizable, face of the Supreme" (17) in all its forms. His own faith, badly shaken by a mysterious and near-fatal illness he suffers before the flight on the *Bostan*, is such that he is open to the transcending of a narrow-minded fundamental approach to religion by performing a diverse number of theatrical, theological roles. In addition to his seemingly secular approach to religion, he identifies with a multiplicity of cultural and national references, singing of the kind of worldly identity that Rushdie advocates in *The Satanic Verses*: "O, my shoes are Japanese...(t)hese trousers English, if you please. On my head, red Russian hat; my heart's Indian for all that" (5).

Nevertheless, Gibreel's apparent angelic goodness and eclecticism are misleading, for shortly after he lands on the snow-covered beach and sets out to pursue Allie Cone, recently returned from her mountain-climbing excursions, he begins to experience and exhibit more fiercely the effects of his transmutation. As mentioned previously, he suffers from troublesome dreams, "a nocturnal retribution" (32) for his loss of faith, that intensify and form the basis for the novel's chapters on Mahound and the writing and subsequent removal of the so-called satanic verses in the Qur'an. During these dream sequences, Gibreel reluctantly finds himself playing the role of the Archangel Gabriel, counseling the Prophet on the creation of the new religion of Islam and watching over the

progress of a pilgrimage to Mecca led by the ethereal butterfly-girl Ayesha. The tormenting confusion of the dreams fractures his weakened sense of self and leads Gibreel to disintegrate into a state of paranoid schizophrenia in which he “no longer recognizes the distinction between the waking and the dreaming states” (472). He enters a deep spiritual crisis in which his already troubled faith is further aggravated by his mental breakdown, and he becomes obsessed with questioning whether he is to be “the agent of God’s wrath...[or] his love” (472).

By the end of the novel, Gibreel violently rejects his new “home”, abandons his earlier, hopeful cosmopolitan attitude, and reverts to his roots, espousing a narrow, nationalistic perspective on culture. In conversation with Saladin, Gibreel denigrates western culture, especially films, asserting that “everything that is worth knowing” comes from “back home” and is “aggressively lowbrow. *Mother India, Mr. India, Shree Charsawbees*” (454). He criticizes the English weather and in a fit of madness decides that he will undertake the magical feat of transforming London into a city more like his home, Bombay: tropical, with “increased moral definition...higher-quality popular music...(r)eligious fervour, political ferment, renewal of interest in the intelligentsia...[and] (s)picier food” (365-366). Gibreel fails to live up the challenges of migration; his old self cannot be released and his “morbid symptoms” (Gramsci 276) become fatal. Ironically, he is “reborn” into the kind of fundamentalist state of mind he initially rejects and which Rushdie’s novel as a

whole attempts to reveal as destructive and unacceptable. The narrator of *The Satanic Verses* asks,

Might we not agree that Gibreel, for all his stage-names and performances; and in spite of born-again slogans, new beginnings, metamorphoses; - has wished to remain, to a large degree, *continuous* – that is, joined to and arising from his past; - that he chose neither near-fatal illness nor transmuting fall; that, in point of fact, he fears above all things the altered states in which his dreams leak into, and overwhelm, his waking self, making him that angelic Gibreel he has no desire to be; - so that is still a self which, for our present purposes, we may describe as “true” (441).

Gibreel returns to Bombay, a “cosmopolitan film star ‘reborn’ islamist reformer” (Dutheil de la Rochere 85), and resumes his film career intent upon making movies based on his bizarre dreams of the Prophet Mahound. His halitosis returns with a vengeance, signifying an internal, inescapable rottenness, and his inner demons finally overtake him, effacing his angelic guise and prompting him, ultimately, to commit suicide. Unable to contend with the changes that are brought upon him by the process of migration and the challenge of hybridity and finding different principles upon which to reinvent oneself, Gibreel chooses to remain, “for all his vicissitudes, at bottom, an untranslated man” (441-42).

The Satanic Verses is involved in imagining the effects of change, brought on by the act of migration, upon the individual’s conception of self and identity, and it is unquestionably Saladin who endures the most radical change, faces the greatest challenges and speaks most convincingly to the predicament, in all its tragic-comic aspects, of the migrant condition. Rushdie’s portrayal of the

afflicted Saladin raises fundamental questions about the nature of identity that are especially pertinent in our contemporary globalizing, increasingly interrelated world. In his exploration of identity in *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie frequently employs, as he does in his earlier works, the metaphorical language of evolutionary theory to account for the state of inevitable and constant flux experienced by the migrant and for the hybrid transformations that occur when newness enters the world. The narrator assures us that the transmutations that Gibreel and Saladin experience in their fall "would have gladdened the heart of old Mr Lamarck: under extreme environmental pressure, characteristics were acquired" (6). We are further informed that Darwin, though not as extreme an evolutionist as Lamarck, nevertheless also "accepted the notion of mutation in extremis, to ensure survival of the species" (259) in the last edition of *The Origin of Species*. Even Saladin, late in the novel, has to admit that,

It was now being argued that major changes in species happened not in the stumbling, hit-and-miss manner first envisaged, but in great, radical leaps. The history of life was not the bumbling progress – the very English, middle-class progress – Victorian thought had wanted it to be, but violent, a thing of dramatic, cumulative transformations: in the old formulation, more revolution than evolution. (432-433)

By comparing the process of migratory transmutation to the natural progress of human history through an accelerated form of evolution, Rushdie clearly indicates that the migrant individual who assumes new, extreme forms in a short period of time is part of a revolutionary moment that undermines the authenticity of the colonial fossil record and brings attention to the gaps in which "the random mutations...the monster-children, the deformed babies of evolution"

(432) dwell and begin the process of enunciating their presence on the borders of culture. If it is true that the dislocated individual experiences rapid, violent change or “evolution” such as that undergone by Saladin, in the course of being borne across geographical and psychic boundaries, then what, Rushdie questions, is the extent of the impact made upon the individual's self or soul by such change?

In several of his works, Rushdie has articulated a fascination with the enduring philosophical debate concerning the nature of the soul as eternally immutable or subject to transformation. While he is wary of any understanding of the human soul as determined in nature by the outside forces of religious, national or ethnic fundamentalism, he articulates a belief in a basic secular human spiritualism that allows the individual some measure of self-knowledge and stability in the midst of postmodern uncertainty. In an interview in 1989 with Aameena Meer, he notes,

what I'm trying to do for myself is work out a set of spiritual values and a way of thinking about the spiritual life of people which is internal. Which says that we all have that inside us, you don't need to go outside to look for the divine. Nor for the demonic. You don't need to look outside – it's all there – in a shifting relationship. (114)

Convinced of the existence of this inner human spiritualism that does not involve external influences, Rushdie is prompted to question whether this secular self can endure the dramatic and traumatic transformations experienced in the migratory process. In discussing the themes of *The Satanic Verses*, he ponders

whether the soul changes, or whether it doesn't. Whether it's the same thing all along or whether there's a kind of choice to make – about what you think human beings are like – whether social conditions can make such a revolution in the self that there's nothing left of the original self, or whether there is always that irreducible thing. (Meer 115)

In a telling conclusion to his musings, which will be further explored later, Rushdie declares, "I go more along that line myself. That there is *something*" (115). His investigation into "whether we are just a collection of moments, or whether there is some kind of defining thread" ("Salman Rushdie talks to the *London Consortium*" 58), leads Rushdie to delve into an examination of divergent perspectives on metamorphosis in order to shed light on the situation in which Saladin finds himself after his fall.

Upon waking on the shores of Vilayet, Saladin discovers that bumps have begun to erupt at his temples; within hours the bumps have grown into full-blown horns, his feet have turned to cloven hoofs, his body is almost entirely covered by thick, dark hair, and his breath has soured. He is, in effect, transformed into a "Goatman". Picked up by the immigration police, confined to a sanatorium attached to the detention centre for illegal immigrants where he meets other hybrid beings, "beings he could never have imagined, men and women who were also partially plants, or giant insects, or even, on occasion, built partly of brick or stone" (176), Saladin is forced to endure a scene of classic Althusserian subject interpellation that demonstrates the demonization and dehumanization of the "Other" and offers a biting commentary on British multiculturalism and immigration policies.⁹

Desirous of knowing how he, and others, have come to assume such a bizarre, demonic appearance, Saladin asks a fellow detainee, a manticore, "But how do they do it?" The manticore replies, "They describe us...That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (174). As this is not Saladin's first time in England, he wonders why he is now undergoing such a transformation and, more importantly, whether it is a permanent condition. Muhammed Sufyan, proprietor of the Shaandaar Café, where Saladin resides in hiding for most of the novel, is the one to first express to Saladin the question of identity and metamorphosis by contrasting the perspectives of Lucretius and Ovid, noting that the "Question of mutability of the essence of the self...has long been subject of profound debate" (285). He goes on to offer his rough translation of Lucretius and Ovid's differing understandings of the soul:

"'Whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers,' – that is, bursts its banks, - or, maybe, breaks out of its limitations, - so to speak, disregards its own rules, but that is too free, I am thinking... 'that thing', at any rate, Lucretius holds, 'by doing so brings immediate death to its old self'. 'However,' up went the ex-schoolmaster's finger, 'poet Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*, takes diametrically opposed view. He avers thus: 'As yielding wax' – heated, you see, possibly for the sealing of documents or such, - 'is stamped with new designs And changes shape and seems not still the same, Yet is indeed the same, even so our soul,' – you hear, good sir? Our spirits! Our immortal essences! – 'Are still the same forever, but adopt In their migration ever-varying forms'" (285).

Is the self, as Lucretius indicates, eternally transfigured in the act of migrating across physical and psychic borders? Or, is there an essential self that remains intact, in spite of movement, and that merely takes on new identifications and

systems of reference depending upon situation and location? For Muhammed, “it is always Ovid over Lucretius” (285) and, addressing Saladin in his unfortunate circumstance, he says, “Your soul, my good poor dear sir, is the same. Only in its migration it has adopted this presently varying form” (285). Saladin, however, remains unconvinced and chooses the philosophy of Lucretius over that of Ovid, avowing that he will submit to his new, hideous self in the belief that “a being going through life can become so other to himself as to *be another*, discrete, severed from history” (297). In this way, Saladin accepts his interpellated self and his role as demonized “other,” as the colonized victim at the mercy of the dominant culture’s narrative of alterity. As Sabrina Hassumani contends, “Chamcha’s belief in the dominant British narrative allows him to be remade into its image of him” (84). Rushdie implies that as long as Saladin views himself as exclusively the victim of British multicultural racism, he will continue to exhibit goat-like characteristics as a manifestation of his own self-hatred and subjectivity.

Like Gibreel, Saladin, born Salahuddin Chamchawala, is an actor, as well as a voice-over artist or “mimic” for commercials and a performer in a children’s television program called, ironically, *The Aliens Show*. He is a self-avowed Anglophile who

understood by his thirteenth year that he was destined for that cool Vilayet full of the crisp promises of pounds sterling...and he grew increasingly impatient of that Bombay of dust, vulgarity, policemen in shorts, transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers and the rumoured singing whores of Grant Road...In his secret heart, he crept silently up on

London, letter by letter, just as his friends crept up to him. *Elloven deeowen London*. (37)

Dreaming of escaping the clutches of Bombay and flying to Vilayet, Saladin jumps at the opportunity offered to him by his father, Changez Chamchawala, to be educated abroad. The next fifteen years of his life pass and “his transmutation into a Vilayeti” (44) is nearly complete, including a new name, a new accent, and a marriage to an Englishwoman, Pamela Lovelace. Saladin respects and admires everything non-Indian and, in contrast to Gibreel, even his film tastes indicate a decidedly more western influence: *Potemkin, Kane, Otto e Mezzo, The Seven Samurai, Alphaville*, [and] *Angel Exterminador*” (454). Saladin is capable only of interpreting the world in binary terms: East/West, self/other, colonizer/colonized. Believing that he must choose to be either English or Indian he opts to assimilate into the colonizer’s culture, adopting a British persona in the attempt to escape what he perceives as the weakness and inferiority of his Indian past. When he returns to Bombay years after his initial departure, he meets Zeeny Vakil, a proponent of eclecticism who quickly becomes his first Indian lover and challenges Saladin to re-examine and repossess his abandoned Indian heritage as an important aspect of himself. Zeeny embodies a model of rooted cosmopolitan hybridity that Saladin is challenged to achieve. She takes local social and political responsibilities and affiliations extremely seriously. She works as a doctor, cares for the homeless, is politically informed and active (she immediately offers her medical services to the

victims of the Bhopal tragedy), and is concerned with harmful artistic discourses of fundamentalism:

She was an art critic whose book on the confining myth of authenticity, that folkloristic straitjacket which she sought to replace by an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest? – had created a predictable stink. (52)

Zeeny asserts that Saladin's constructed English identity is a shameful mimicry of the colonizer that only perpetuates binaristic thinking and leads to increased racial hatred and "othering" embodied in multicultural policies of tolerance and diversity. For Zeeny, the only way to overcome fundamentalist conceptions of identity and survive in an increasingly global world is to explode the binary of self/other and to integrate a multiplicity of cultural references in the spirit of eclectic openness. Saladin, however, remains steadfastly attached to his English persona, which slips from him like a "false moustache" (53) or mask, and he tells Zeeny: "Give up on me...I don't like people dropping in to see me without warning, I have forgotten the rules of seventiles and kabaddi, I can't recite my prayers, I don't know what should happen at a nikah ceremony, and in this city where I grew up I get lost if I'm on my own. This isn't home" (58-59). To demonstrate his abjuration of his Indian past, he demands that his father cut down a walnut tree, ceremonially planted at Saladin's birth supposedly to house his soul. "Cut it down," he said to his father. "Cut it, sell it, send me the cash" (70). Even in his metamorphosing descent toward earth in his embrace with Gibreel, he insists upon his Englishness, singing the British national anthem,

“Rule, Britannia” to counteract Gibreel’s cosmopolitan tune. Saladin’s initial inability to find value in his past and his unwillingness to incorporate his Indian self into his English experience is clearly presented as a negative and fundamentalist approach to identity-formation based on the myths of Western power and Eastern subjugation.

Yet, despite his own misgivings about history and the notion of origins, Rushdie evidently views as dangerous an absolute rupture from one’s personal past. While he condemns Gibreel’s ultimate inability to embrace a multiplicity of cultural identifications, resulting in his retreat into his fundamental Indian identity and ending in his self-destruction, he also criticizes Saladin’s wholehearted assimilation into English culture, which alienates him from his past, his father, and Zeeny. In attempting to be severed completely from his essential self, the *something* that Rushdie refers to in his observations on identity, Saladin acquires a split identity, as Jaina Sanga says, from “the desire to be English and the fact of being Indian” (83). In the same manner in which Gibreel’s cosmopolitan slogans are put to the test by the explosion of Flight 420, *Bostan*, Saladin’s challenge is to realize that his personal history cannot be simply negated or re-written by donning the mask of a superficial English identity. The old self that must die in Saladin is the one that he has assumed in his effort to be “more English than the English themselves” (245). The new self that is attempting to be born, and that is causing the variety of “morbid symptoms” that he endures, is one that remains in constant metamorphosis, embracing and releasing

identifications as it moves between cultures. Saladin's artificial yet determined Englishness, Rushdie contends, is every bit as dangerous a fundamentalism as Gibreel's reclaimed Indianness, the difference being that by the end of the novel Saladin is able to meet the challenge of migration and transform and expand his narrow view of identity and belonging to encompass divergent points of cultural reference.

After being cocooned in the upstairs rooms of the Shaandaar B and B and interfacing with members of London's marginalized immigrant community represented by Muhammed Sufyan and his family, Saladin's illusions of English grandeur and goodness are shattered. His English self begins to erode as he gradually realizes the change that has come upon him in his fall from the sky. He tunes in to a television program, *Gardeners' World*, and learns about a "chimeran graft" (420) of two trees into one new form. Witnessing

a chimera with roots, firmly planted in and growing vigorously out of a piece of English earth: a tree...capable of taking the metamorphic place of the one his father had chopped down in a distant garden in another, incompatible world" (420),

Saladin is convinced that if the tree, a mixture of two divergent entities, can survive in the world, then "he, too, could cohere, send down roots, survive" (420).

This realization propels him toward another equally important one that results in the initiation of his true rebirth through his angry refusal to be defined as a victim or "other". Consequently, his normal human form returns to him. As he begins to break away from the rigid identity that he has co-constructed for himself with the dominant culture, he moves toward self-discovery and

comprehends that, in order to survive and successfully and contentedly exist in the world, he must assume the responsibility of fashioning for himself a flexible, eclectic, cosmopolitan mentality and perspective. "A new, dark world had opened up for him (or: within him) when he fell from the sky; no matter how assiduously he attempted to re-create his old existence, this was, he now saw, a fact that could not be unmade" (433). However, to fulfill this realization, and to become a truly global, hybrid being, Saladin must first return to Bombay, and reconcile himself with his past and his Indian self, in effect grafting together his multiple identities to create a whole, new transcendent form. In this way, *The Satanic Verses* speaks to the larger human condition in that it is a familiar human narrative of personal development in which "the protagonist must reject the place of his birth in order to discover the true value in what he has forsaken" (Kalliney 51). His departure from his cultural home allows him to judge it and the world as a whole with a necessary detachment. In effect, his global experiences compel him to re-evaluate and revitalize his local, personal affiliations and connections, inspiring him to recuperate his Indian heritage while maintaining a sense of his position as a global citizen.

Jaina Sanga rightly argues that "Rushdie cannot disavow himself from a sense of origins...that all notions of identity, howsoever fractured or displaced, have a real set of histories that are anchored within real conditions as well, not just imaginary landscapes" (21). Rushdie has never denied place, nor claimed that rootlessness is the ideal state of existence for the individual. As Bruce

Robbins notes and Rushdie's work details, "Absolute homelessness is indeed a myth" (173). Rushdie subscribes instead to the notion of a multiplicity of rootings; that is, he believes that we, as postmodern, uprooted and cosmopolitan beings have many "homes" and manifold "origins" or places from which we start and move out to and through the world. This "density of overlapping allegiances" (Robbins 173) that emphasizes a repetitive re-visioning of cultural identity according to spatial and psychic situatedness, undermines abstract notions of rootlessness and stresses the moral responsibility of remaining involved in the social, political, economic and ecological betterment of the planet by acting at a local, community level.

Saladin's return to Bombay and his reconciliation with his father, Changez, allow Saladin to feel "closer to many old, rejected selves, many alternative Saladins – or rather Salahuddins – which had split off from himself as he made his various life choices, but which had apparently continued to exist" (538). He reassumes his original name and even finds that his Urdu is returning to him. As Sabrina Hassumani suggests, Bombay is conceived by Rushdie as an ideal, eclectic location – a "Third Space" – that disrupts colonial binaristic thinking and offers an alternative space of hybridity in which divergent points of view are negotiated and culture is afforded meaning. (88) Saladin's homecoming and his re-involvement with Zeeny, which lead him to conclude that his "old English life" (548) seems remote and irrelevant, have compelled some critics to question Rushdie's commitment to hybridity and migratory metamorphosis. Does the end

of the novel, with Saladin's return to his place of birth, in effect betray an ambiguity in Rushdie's cosmopolitan message? D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke claims that rather than advancing the notion of a global self, the events at the end of *The Satanic Verses* demonstrate a breaking away from the concept of hybridity. He notes that Rushdie "entertains a doubt and worry regarding hybridity, though it is a major (in his case too) and widely accepted positive today. Saladin, in the end, turns his back on it" (82).

I contend that neither Rushdie nor Saladin turns his back on hybridity but rather embraces and champions a rooted cosmopolitanism that incorporates the local and the global, the past and the present, constructing a perspective that allows Saladin to create a new space for himself beyond the dichotomy of East/West and live as a whole being, "perpetually in the first instant of the future" (549). Zeeny, who understands the necessity of maintaining local affiliations while embracing a more worldly outlook, encourages Saladin to not "fall into some kind of rootless limbo" (555) but rather to fully immerse himself in the city to which he has returned and take part in its political processes. Saladin begins to enact his citizenship through an "adult acquaintance" (555) with Bombay that strikes at the heart of ethnic particularism. Along with Zeeny and her activist friends, he publicly demonstrates against the intensification of communal violence arising from the escalating tribalism of fundamentalist Hindus and Muslims. Zeeny voices Rushdie's belief that in the face of such fundamentalism, in all its forms, "We must show that there are counterforces at work" (552). In the

face of a narrow, parochial essentialism, Saladin and the others promote community over communalism. Saladin's participation in the formation of a human chain to counteract the forces of essentialism and declare the need for a secular humanism that "doesn't rely on some moral absolute like a god or a devil or a holy book" (Meer 114), not only indicates his growing awareness of the need to act locally in order to effect global change, but it also speaks to Rushdie's strong belief in the blasphemy of dissent and the heresy of cultural hybridity.¹⁰

Saladin and Zeeny's struggle for a human community free from fundamentalism of all sorts resembles Bhabha's ideal of a "subaltern secularism" ("Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism" 205) that emerges out of the need to collectively assert the right to choose one's affiliations and devotions. This form of secularism, which locates the responsibility of securing free choice within the community of human beings rather than in the liberal secular individual, confirms that "choice is less an individualistic internal desire, than it is a public demand and duty" (205). In this way, the cosmopolitan individual, rooted in a given community or communities, must work in partnership with others to secure for all the unconditional right to "follow our strange gods" (205).

Saladin's fledgling identity as a rooted cosmopolitan discovering a multiplicity of belongings - in his love for Zeeny, in his re-found sense of family and community, and in his neophyte political activism intended to undermine the dangerous ethnic, nationalistic and religious discourses of authenticity - suggests that he has succeeded in assembling his divided selves and in recovering and re-

establishing his essential, irreducible self – the self that Ovid and Rushdie believe remains regardless of migratory transformations. Symbolically, Saladin turns away at the end of the novel from the window looking out at the city of Bombay. In so doing, he turns away from his childhood impressions of a Bombay that could never measure up to the England of his colonial fantasies. He chooses to embrace Zeeny and Bombay in an “adult” relationship that, as Hassumani contends, suggests that he will also be able to form an “adult” relationship with London and, indeed, any other location in the world in which he may choose to develop affiliations. Saladin seemingly manages to transcend the gap between leave-taking and return, in effect not having to decide between a “homeland” and a foreign environment. As Rushdie suggests in *The Wizard of Oz*, home is wherever we imagine it to be; there is no need for the hybrid cosmopolitan to choose between East and West, local and global, past and present, thereby being forced to permanently sever some aspect of him- or herself. In Rushdie’s short story, “The Courter” from *East, West*, Mary anticipates that her survival will depend upon choosing between her native land in the East and the land to which she migrates in the West. The narrator of the story, who also feels the pull of East and West, like ropes around his neck, ultimately refuses to choose, preferring instead to adopt a cosmopolitan attitude toward belonging and “home”: “I buck, I snort, I whinny, I rear, I kick. Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoos, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose” (211).

Ten years after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, the “precarious trajectory” of Rushdie’s work on hybridity, mongrelization, and the cosmopolitan initiative continues with the writing and publication of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. In a hyperreal realm of music, media, celebrity and constant movement, Ormus Cama, Vina Apsara, and the narrator, Rai, negotiate their positions as cultural hybrids and global souls who, like the narrator of “The Courter” and Rushdie himself, refuse to choose one cultural identity over another. Instead they elect to live between and on the borders of multiple cultures, rooting themselves in a variety of local and global affiliations through their common bond of music and memory. Rushdie’s preoccupation with the question of how newness enters the world in *The Satanic Verses* becomes, in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, an exploration of how newness survives, thrives and works to connect disparate peoples in an increasingly global world.

NOTES

¹ Novelist John le Carré's 1989 letter to the British daily, *The Guardian*, in the wake of the pronouncement of the *fatwa* proclaimed that Rushdie must have been aware of the consequences of insulting a great religion like Islam by writing and publishing a book like *The Satanic Verses*. Le Carré's seeming concurrence with the judgment of Rushdie's assailants sparked a series of letters written to *The Guardian* in 1997 between the two authors following Le Carré's complaint that he had been branded an anti-Semite. Rushdie's letters in response to Le Carré conveyed his unwillingness to sympathize with a fellow writer who had, years before, refused to support him in his own fight for freedom of speech.

² While many Muslims and non-Muslims responded with letters of unconditional support and encouragement for Rushdie following the issuing of the *fatwa*, others reacted in a less compassionate fashion. Writer and scholar Ziauddin Sardar advised Rushdie, in an article written for the *UK Independent* (November 11, 1991), to "shut up" and not call further attention to himself. As he insultingly pointed out, "A fly caught in a cobweb does not draw attention to itself; it lies motionless in the hope that the spider will find some other distraction" (*Fiction, Fact and the Fatwa* 71). To his great credit, Rushdie refused to be silenced and, from his position in hiding, spoke out against those who would take away his voice. The following excerpt from his poem "6 March 1989", exemplifies Rushdie's determination to be heard:

Now, misters and sisters, they've come for my voice.
If the Cat got my tongue, look who-who would rejoice –
muftis, politicians, 'my own people', hacks.
Still, nameless-and-faceless or not, here's my choice:
not to shut up. To sing on, in spite of attacks,
to sing (while my dreams are being murdered by facts)
praises of butterflies broken on racks. (*Granta: The First Twenty-One Years* 171)

³ The *fatwa* (religious edict) that was pronounced against Rushdie was broadcasted on Tehran radio, February 14, 1989. The wording of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's edict was as follows:

I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of *The Satanic Verses* book which is against Islam, the Prophet and the Koran, and all involved in its publication who were aware of its content, are sentenced to death...Anyone who dies in the cause of ridding the world of Rushdie will be regarded as a martyr and go directly to heaven. (*Fiction, Fact and the Fatwa: A Chronology of Censorship Revised* 1).

⁴ I invoke here Edward Said's concept of secularism as an opposing term not only to religion, but more significantly, to nationalism. As Bruce Robbins points out, "Said sets the 'ideal of secular interpretation and secular work' against 'submerged feelings of identity, of tribal solidarity', of community that is 'geographically and homogenously defined'" ("Secularism, Elitism, Progress, and Other Transgressions: On Edward Said's 'Voyage In'" 159). Said's secularism does not promote the critical detachment of "intellectual tourism" (160) – a charge frequently leveled by critics such as Timothy Brennan against individuals like Rushdie who are viewed as "Third World" privileged intellectuals - nor does it encourage an unexamined notion of universality embodied in a "general all-encompassing love for all of humanity" (160). Rather, Said's secularism, based on the experiences of "actual living human beings...[who] produce their own history...[within] a community that is political, cultural, intellectual" (Said "Criticism and the Art of Politics 129-130), approaches Rushdie's understanding of the power of an inner human spiritualism unencumbered by external, and tribalistic narratives of religious and nationalistic purity and authenticity.

⁵ Ten years after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie reflected on the disappointment he felt at having acquired a "satanic" reputation:

It's a terrible thing to be famous for the wrong thing. I'd always hoped that people would respond to and like my work, and that's all I'd ever wanted, really – to write books that did well and that were well thought of...And to have this other reputation hasn't at all been beneficial to me as a writer. I think in many ways, for people who didn't know my writing or don't know my writing, it's often been something that put them off because they felt that this dark, theological cloud that descended over my work must in some way be representative of the world itself. And, I think, it made them think I must be an arcane writer, with these dark, theological inclinations. (Kadzi 221-222)

⁶ I will not be addressing Gibreel's dream sequences in which the stories of the prophet "Mahound" and the pilgrimage led by the butterfly girl, Ayesha, are described. I will focus exclusively on the main storyline of the migration and transformations of Gibreel and Saladin.

⁷ The origin of this phrase is George Lukacs's *Theory of the Novel*, 61.

⁸ Said coined the term "contrapuntal" to describe a way of reading texts or approaching historical discourses in order to reveal hidden colonial implications. Univocality is challenged and cultures are revealed to be "contrapuntal ensembles" comprised of a polyphonous "array of opposites, negatives, [and]

oppositions" (*Culture and Imperialism* 60). The term originates in musical theory and designates the blending of a variety of disparate yet equally important musical themes in which each theme remains clearly discernable as an individual entity while functioning as a part of a whole.

⁹ Saladin's physical mutation signifies an Althusserian interpellation of Saladin as a subject of racial discrimination perpetuated by the policies of British multiculturalism under Margaret Thatcher. "Called forth" or described by the British state as a subject, Saladin's self-consciousness is constructed by the state's ideologies and discourses on immigration and he is literally transformed into the image of the demonic "other". In his essay, "The New Empire Within Britain," Rushdie notes,

...now there's a new catchword: 'multiculturalism'. In our schools, this means little more than teaching kids a few bongo rhythms, how to tie a sari and so forth. In the police training programme, it means telling cadets that black people are so 'culturally different' that they can't help making trouble. Multiculturalism is the latest token gesture toward Britain's blacks, and it ought to be exposed, like 'integration' and 'racial harmony', for the shame it is. (137)

¹⁰ See Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 192. In reference to the response of Islamic extremists to the publication of *The Satanic Verses*, Suleri asserts, "A postcolonial desire for deracination, emblemized by the protagonist Saladin Chamcha, is equally represented as cultural heresy. Acts of historical or cultural severance become those blasphemous moments that proliferate in the narrative" (192).

Chapter Three

“Locality as a Lived Experience”: Finding “Home” in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

The Times They Are A-Changin'

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who
That it's namin'.
For the loser now
Will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin'

Bob Dylan

The Ground Beneath Her Feet, Rushdie's 1999 glittery rock 'n' roll paean to transculturation, signals his post-fatwa commitment to explore a more global fiction that bridges multiple continents, celebrates a hybrid vision of contemporary life, and attempts to “map” the cultural spaces of the global and the experiences of globalization.¹ The familiar tropes of identity, fragmentation, duality and uncertainty that are to be found in all of Rushdie's fiction reach new and mythic heights in this novel, which effectively takes the postmodern disorientation and ephemerality articulated in *The Satanic Verses* and elevates them to the hyperpostmodern in an examination of increasing cultural complexity in a deterritorialized, global world.

Clearly, globalization is not a new phenomenon; as many critics have pointed out, this process has been in existence as long as people have expressed and acted upon the desire to travel, trade, share cultural elements and expand their experience of the world. Nevertheless, few would argue against the notion that our contemporary moment, mega-wired by technological and communicational networks, is more self-conscious of and engaged with its global nature than ever before. This occurrence is, in part, attributable to what Arjun Appadurai considers a shift, as a result of the forces of cultural deterritorialization, of the role of the imagination in the lives of ordinary individuals. In our global moment, the power and reach of the mass media provide a virtual storehouse of possibilities for re-conceiving ways of being, conveyed to all corners of the world through television, cinema, radio, and print materials. The imagination, in effect, taps into this endless supply of images and presents to the individual an infinite number of prospective ways to live (53).

As Appadurai says, in the process of globalization, imagination or “fantasy is now a social practice; it enters, in a host of ways, into the fabrication of social lives for many people in many societies” (53-54). Therefore, more people than ever are imagining that they can create “home” and commit to personal affiliations in distant parts of the globe, far from their places of origin. It is precisely this new power of imagination, assisted by mass media in the creation of virtual realities, that propels Ormus Cama, Vina Apsara and Umeed (Rai) Merchant to cross oceans and travel toward their imagined understandings of

England and the United States. Rushdie expresses a curiosity about imagined realities, echoing Appadurai's theoretical assertions. In an interview with Hartley Moorhouse, he remarks, "I've always wanted to explore the way in which we, by our imagination, construct the world – the way in which reality is a creative act" (264). This necessary process, for the migrant, of imagining new ways of living, and essentially and constantly reinventing the very ground upon which he or she stands, is a critical component of Rushdie's vision of Ormus, Vina, and Rai's transcultural journey.

The task of comprehending globalization, "the modern or postmodern version of the proverbial elephant, described by its blind observers in so many diverse ways" (Jameson Preface xi), is, however, fraught with complications, limitations and ambiguities that raise difficult, seemingly unanswerable questions about belonging and the enactment of citizenship. For Frederic Jameson, the social phenomenon of globalization can be defined only provisionally as "an untotalizable totality" (xii) that defies clear-cut characterization and creates a heightened sense of postmodern fragmentation and anxiety. It seems that globalization, rather than resolving issues of identity and difference, as anticipated through the formation of a mythical monoculture, in fact exacerbates divisions between divergent groups and often promotes a retreat into narratives of national, ethnic and religious authority and essentialism.

Rai points to the alarming return of a tribal mentality in the face of postmodern uncertainty when he suggests that the processes of globalization

and the deterritorialization of world cultures have “scared us so profoundly, this fracturing, this tumbling of walls, this forgodsake freedom, that at top speed we’re rushing back into our skins and war paint, postmodern into premodern, back to the future” (343). This argument is aptly demonstrated through the characterization of music mogul and self-proclaimed global soul, Yul Singh, who orchestrates Vina and Ormus’s appearance on the American music scene. As the novel progresses, it becomes apparent that

(t)he celebrated Non-Resident Indian Mr. Yul Singh, the very same Yul Singh who has been taking such an interest in American underground cults and cells, Yul Singh the consummate rock ‘n’ roller, who has always presented himself to the whole world as the ultimate cosmopolitan, wholly secularized and Westernized, Boss Yul, Coolest of the Cool, YSL himself, has been for many years a secret zealot...in short one of the financial mainstays of the terrorist fringe of the Sikh nationalist movement...(407).

Rai’s insightful observation and the subsequent actions of Yul Singh suggest that Rushdie is aware of the need to develop an alternative space of hybridity that transcends the binary of either/or and offers a means of existing in a deterritorialized world that denies a return to the too-comfortable narratives of nationhood while also providing a measure of stability and cohesiveness in a sometimes dauntingly, seemingly borderless world. Unquestionably, in the attempt to understand the process by which cultures, economies and peoples collide, hybridize, and negotiate their positions in the world, there are few certainties or absolutes.

The circumstances surrounding Rushdie’s life as a “global soul” and the work that he has produced, particularly in the wake of the “Rushdie affair”, speak

to the need to acknowledge an unique historical moment in which the forces of nationalism, multiculturalism and globalization intersect and create a context for a reconsideration of concepts of cosmopolitanism that may potentially offer the means by which an alternative “third space” of hybridity can take shape. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* clearly addresses the complex issue of world citizenship and asks how newness, in the form of migrant individuals, can survive in an era in which not even the ground beneath one’s feet is dependable. As Rushdie claims in a cogent articulation of the instability of the global condition, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

is a novel of provisionality, and how you can’t take things for granted, of how all the things you think of as certain can change very suddenly. The earthquake is a kind of metaphor of that. Obviously, it is in some part personal, part observational. But I also think it is at the moment a kind of global metaphor because the world is changing at a speed that it has never changed before. The rate of transformation, both technological and political, is so fast that it seems like you wake up everyday, and it is a different planet. The uncertainties created by that, by one of the great moments of transformation in the human race, probably the greatest moment of transformation, creates, I think for many people, that sense of uncertainty, of not knowing how things stand, of not knowing what to do for the best. (Lakshman 282)

While *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* has been variously defined as a great love story, an examination of the cult of celebrity, and a retelling of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice – all of which are accurate though partial accounts of a sprawling, complex work – I am most interested in the critical, underlying current of global migration and the effort to locate “home” in an ever-changing world. At the heart of the novel is the struggle of three migrant individuals to come to terms with the puzzling condition of disorientation or, as Rushdie insists, the “loss of the

East" (5), brought on by the shifting, quaking ground of postmodern life. As Ormus, Vina, and Rai take leave of Bombay and embark on their global voyage to the metropolises of London and New York, they are confronted with a bewildering world of discontinuities, fragmentation, and split identities that threaten to undermine or obfuscate their self-knowledge. They are compelled to imagine their world anew and to fashion for themselves a redefined sense of self and belonging. "What kind of idea are you?" is the question that Rushdie again poses, this time with respect to the lives of his protagonists in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. How, he wants to know, will Ormus, Vina, and Rai, as displaced individuals set adrift in a global sea of endless cultural references, construct their world and their place within it?

In the creation of new realities, Rushdie is alert to conflicting visions or descriptions of how the world and its inhabitants should be. "It became a very very important idea in the book," he says, "that there should be these diverging descriptions of the world which were in fact in conflict and they both couldn't survive...There is a war of descriptions" (Moorhouse 264). In effect, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* may be understood as an examination of this war of descriptions and the way in which some descriptions endure while others, ephemeral and ineffectual, are extinguished.

Just as the ground proves to be unstable and constantly in a state of upheaval, so too is Rushdie's narrative vision frequently susceptible to its own internal earthquakes of critical skepticism and anxiety. A self-professed

exponent of multiplicity, impurity and *mélange* - "My preference is for mongrels over pedigree dogs" (MacCabe 223) – Rushdie is aware of the potential dangers inherent in the discourse of the global initiative. Beneath the novel's affirmations of eclecticism and non-belonging there is a detectable dubiousness regarding the global condition and its impact on the migrant individual. It asks, almost plaintively, "How to find moorings, foundations, fixed points in a broken, altered time?" (184)

While Rushdie is determined to explode the fundamentalist binary of East/West, praising the opening up of global, hybrid spaces where dissimilar cultures can interrelate and identities metamorphose, and demonstrating the necessity of stepping physically and psychically "out of the frame" in order to "see the whole picture" (43), I contend that ultimately he condemns the fetishization of a globalism – embodied in the novel in the intersection between imagination and contemporary ideas of celebrity and mass media – that eradicates all traces of self-knowledge, locality, or personal historical trajectories.

In an attempt to depict the type of cosmopolitan "ethnoscape"² that Appadurai proposes as an analytic model, Rushdie is concerned with addressing the question: "What is the nature of locality as a lived experience in a globalized, deterritorialized world?" (Appadurai 52). Here I take locality to mean less the articulation of situated communities based on territorial configurations, and increasingly the expression of eclectic pockets of people associating by virtue of their shared interests, desires, and identifications as displaced persons.

Rai's group of fellow world-renowned photographers from the Nebuchadnezzar Agency in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* – which comes to reside in a common studio space in New York, forms its own specialized community through its mutual endeavours, and invents itself anew “to make a new world in the company of other altered lives” (441). – is an ideal example of locality as a lived experience in the globalized world. As Rai notes, “It was perfect. So this is what they feel like, I thought: roots. Not the ones we're born with, can't help having, but the ones we put down in our own chosen soil, the you could say radical selections we make for ourselves. Not bad. Not bad at all” (414). In this instance, the term “soil” refers less to a fixed, spatial referent than to a metaphorical imagining of the multiple alternative ways in which one may be “rooted,” including, for example, in cyber communities.

By contrasting the experiences of the ill-fated, mythical Ormus and Vina, whose world-wide fame elevates them to the position of two quasi-religious icons immortalized by the fundamentalism of celebrity-worshippers, with those of the fallible and very human Rai, Rushdie indicates that in times of constant change only those who are able to create locality or “home,” through connections to other human beings and to a transcendent secular spiritualism epitomized in quotidian human love, survive and avoid being engulfed in an otherworld/underworld of postmodern alienation and mythologization.

Rushdie is interested in exploring how the global influences and, in some cases, transforms the local and vice versa; however, his novel clearly betrays a

conviction that human beings live best, as Anthony Appiah has concluded, in the many circles narrower than the human horizon. In the same manner in which Saladin in *The Satanic Verses* survives his migratory transformations by rejecting fundamentalism, developing a flexibility of self, and rediscovering value in his local, personal affiliations, so too does international photographer Rai manage to survive his own movement from Bombay to his “home” in New York by enacting a cosmopolitan citizenship that allows him to contend with the Baudrillardian hyperreality³ of the contemporary period, avoid the fundamentalism of celebrity cult status, and moor himself in and interact with his locality of living and his relationships, without slipping into a space of rootless limbo associated with the detached globe-trotter.

Along these lines, Rushdie explores the need to preserve and enrich the function of world city-centres as a network of globalized interconnectivity lived at a localized level. While his work has always, in part, been invested in imagining the city-space, particularly Bombay, his recent novels more notably address the issue of the global city and its prospective politico-cultural role in the new millennium – a contemporary area of inquiry that is currently being investigated by theorists such as Saskia Sassen (1998, 2001). In describing his impetus for writing *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rushdie notes,

I wanted to write about the phenomenon of being a city person, you know being a citizen in a literal sense, and the feeling that if you are such a person, then all cities are kind of accessible to you...The metropolitan phenomenon is a great phenomenon of the 20th century and it connects to the idea of migration because cities are magnets...I wanted to have this triangle of cities [Bombay, London and New York] and to show that in

certain ways they are the same city...The great cities of the world have that sort of underlying echo of each other, and I wanted that to be in the book. (Lakshman 282)

The notion of the city as a heterotopic⁴, contradictory space, in which diverse peoples interface and co-create a reality that allows for difference while recognizing the universality of the human condition, is particularly significant to Rushdie's global vision in both *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and his latest work, *Fury*.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet opens at the climax of the story in Guadalajara, Mexico with one of the most destabilizing of events: an earthquake. In the same way that Rushdie establishes a sense of extreme postmodern disorientation and ephemerality through the metaphor of air and air-space early in *The Satanic Verses*, he utilizes "(g)eology as metaphor" (203) and the constant breaking up of the once-thought solid earth at the inception of the novel to convey a similar feeling of uncertainty and fragmentation that bespeaks the rest of the narrative. It seems that, as Rushdie's narrative vision has evolved, there is no longer any space, airborne or earth-bound, in which the individual, migrant or otherwise, is safe from the anxieties of postmodernity. Ironically and symbolically, the fictional Mexican earthquake that consumes Vina and impels Rai to narrate the events of her life and those of Ormus and his own, occurs on February 14, 1989 – the day of the pronouncement of the *fatwa* against Rushdie. The inclusion of this autobiographical element highlights Rushdie's personal

experience with cataclysmic events that rip the ground out from beneath one's feet and forever alter the course of one's life. The earthquake, in essence, is the culmination and release of all the accumulated turmoil and disquiet expressed throughout the novel, associated with a world in constant flux, a world in which all is not what it seems:

We must brace ourselves for the tectonic movements, the slippages, the tsunamis, the landslides, the rocking, rolling cities et cetera et cetera, the smashing of the real. We must prepare for shocks, for the fragmentation of the planet as it goes to war with itself, for the endgames of the self-contradictory earth. (327)

Rushdie goes to great lengths to convey this sense of perpetual change as well as the self-contradiction and irreconcilability of narratives of authenticity in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* by once again demonstrating that history is discontinuous and open to interpretation and re-visioning. In an alternative version of commonly known, primarily American, "real" historico-political occurrences, John F. Kennedy, for example, survives the attempt on his life in Dallas, Texas as a result of the jamming of Oswald's rifle and the overpowering of a second gunman, Steel, on the infamous grassy knoll (185). Instead, some years later, ex-President Kennedy is killed along with his brother, and now president, Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles, by the same bullet fired by a crazed Palestinian (225). The Watergate debacle, satirically, is rendered fictional as a cheap fantasy-thriller paperback, *The Watergate Affair* (280) that is published prior to Nixon's presidency. Art and cultural production are also vulnerable to Rushdie's re-imagining. In the otherworld of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Don

Quixote is written by “the immortal Pierre M  nard” (280), and F. Alexander authors *A Clockwork Orange* (280). The female duo Carly Simon and “Guinevere Garfunkel” (156) sing “Bridge Over Troubled Water,” and Elvis Presley is known as Jesse Parker (91).

By parodying and destabilizing familiar historical and cultural events and references, Rushdie creates an alternate, parallel world that offers a recognizable though distorted version of the reality of the “real” world. According to Ormus, “‘Everything’s off the rails. Sometimes a little off, sometimes a lot. But things should be different. Just...different’” (184). Rai notes that it is as if Ormus “‘had access to some other plane of existence, some parallel, ‘right’ universe, and had sensed that our time had somehow been put out of joint” (184). In this way, Rushdie unsettles the supposed reliability of historical narratives and communicates his fascination with the multiplicity of possible ways in which the world is imagined or constructed by means of arbitrary decisions made, actions taken, and the ensuing consequences. As a result, Rushdie suggests, we are compelled to acknowledge that nothing can be assumed, trusted, or taken for granted, since we can never be sure of exactly what is real or knowable in our contemporary war of descriptions.

The multiple earthquakes, large and small, that occur throughout the novel and represent the “inner irreconcilability, the tectonic contradictoriness that has gotten into us all and has commenced to rip us to pieces like the unstable earth itself” (339), speak to the constant shifting and inversion of historical, political and

cultural references in contemporary life. On another level they are connected, in a causal manner, to some of the most explosive twentieth-century world political upheavals:

Did you see that fault that just ripped out the whole iron curtain?...And after the Chinese opened fire in Tiananmen, did you see the rift open up along *the entire length* of the Great Wall of China?...Oh, man, the things these quakes are throwing up. Poets for president, the end of apartheid, the Nazi gold buried for fifty years deep in Swiss bank accounts...(501)

Provocatively, Rushdie attributes this seismic activity in the global era to the political maneuverings of Western, namely American, power and the forces of neo-colonialism. No longer merely natural phenomena, earthquakes in the novel are becoming increasingly controllable hegemonic geo-political weapons of destruction at the disposal of the leaders of the “Seismic Seven,” whose intent it is to “shake and break the emergent economies of the South, the Southeast, the Rim” (554). The imperialistic ambitions of the super-powers, and the lengths to which they are prepared to go in order to realize them, are such that “Third World” countries like India, China, and Iran are compelled to develop a “plate wars” (554) budget to contend with the new global weapons race. Rushdie’s condemnation of Euro-American might is particularly vociferous in his depiction of the after-effects of the Vietnam War and the U.S. withdrawal. Rai journeys to Indochina to photograph what he anticipates as the “McDonaldization”⁵ of Indochina for his book, *The Trojan Horse*. As expected, he discovers that in the wake of the war, the U.S.

left a wooden horse standing at the gates...Indochina became just another consumer-serf of (and supplier of cheap labor to) Americana International.

Almost every young Indochinese person wanted to eat, dress, bop and profit in the good old American way. MTV, Nike, McWorld. Where soldiers had failed, U.S. values – that is, greenbacks, set to music – had triumphed. (441)

Clearly, in these examples, Rushdie is painting a grim picture of globalization as implicitly a process of homogenization and Americanization. In this way, his views echo the sentiments of many contemporary theorists and malcontents who claim that the inexorable spread of American mass consumer culture is a serious threat to the political, economic, and cultural independence and production of “Third World” countries.⁶ Throughout *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* Rushdie remains mistrustful of an overtly optimistic global vision that does not take into account the dominant role that the United States and the western world play in the opening up of global markets and cultures. Rai voices Rushdie’s ambivalence about American power when he articulates his feelings of heartache and conflict in being torn between the “dream America” of Langston Hughes (419) and the reality of its uncompromising, overpowering force. As he says,

ask the rest of the world what America meant and with one voice the rest of the world answered back, Might, it means Might. A power so great that it shapes our daily lives even though it barely knows we exist, it couldn’t point to us on a map. America is no finger-snapping bopster. It’s a fist. (419-420)

While Rushdie obviously does not deny the profound and wide-ranging influence of American power, he also does not wholeheartedly consent to the notion of Americanization or the potential homogenization of the world’s cultures. He refuses to overtly demonize the United States or espouse an essentialist

outlook on the processes of globalization and transculturation, desiring instead to examine the issue from multiple points of view. In a characteristic about-face, Rushdie shifts his narrative perspective to consider the ways in which globalization can be understood less as a process of forced assimilation from above into American ways of being, than as a complex and “ongoing process of the heterogeneous, rhizomatic criss-crossings of cultural influences and production” (Pirbhai 62). In this way, he acknowledges the reality of “the hand of Mighty America [falling] hard on the back yards of the world” (419), but moves beyond a discourse on globalization and identity that merely rearticulates a colonial system of power relations based on the binary of victim/victimizer.

More interested in the transformative flow or exchange of cultural material across and between multiple borders and boundaries, than exclusively in the flow from West to non-West, Rushdie proposes an understanding of globalization that more closely resembles the idea of “glocalization”. Interpreted in this way, the global and the local, the Western and the indigenous, intersect, creating an alternative hybrid space that is neither universal nor particular but “something else besides” in which culture, identity, information, and technology are negotiated and re-inscribed. As Mike Featherstone argues, the discourse of globalization often polarizes into a depiction of the global and the local as distinct, embattled entities whose inevitable collision most often results in the destruction or co-optation of local or indigenous culture and production. (118) “What these arguments fail to consider,” suggests Appadurai, “is that at least as

rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way" (32). Thus, cultural elements constituted as global infiltrate the local sphere but rather than absorbing or obliterating traditional indigenous forms of cultural production, they are re-inscribed, creolized, and "tailored" to "meet the demands of the local markets" (Featherstone 9), thereby creating whole new, "chutnified" forms. As Saleem Sinai points out in *Midnight's Children*, "Things – even people – have a way of leaking into each other" (38). This concept of cultural seepage, otherwise known as hybridization or "glocalization," is the basis for Rushdie's exploration of what he considers "the world's first globalized cultural phenomenon" (Lakshman 286): rock 'n' roll music.

In *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, rock 'n' roll employed as an example of a uniting force that transcends the binary of East/West and works to connect divergent peoples and cultures. Rushdie speaks of rock 'n' roll as "a language of cultural reference...which people all around the world would easily get, just in the same way that people once might have got a range of classical or mythological reference" (Kadzis 222-223). In several interviews, Rushdie has detailed his adolescence in Bombay and his experiences with "contraband" Western popular music. While Indian radio was, during the 1950s, state-controlled and did not allow for the playing of Western music, Rushdie and his contemporaries did have access to it through the more liberal Radio Ceylon. In addition, in a truly

international city like Bombay, there were occasional, clandestine imports of early American rock 'n' roll records made available in record shops like the one Rushdie frequented in his youth, Rhythm House – the prototype for Vina and Ormus's original meeting place in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, Rhythm Center (90). The birth of rock 'n' roll, while celebrated by the younger generation, was, as is well documented, greeted with vehement protest by an older generation that viewed it as a detrimental and even demonic force in the lives of their children. For some time the controversial style of music was prohibited not only in the East but in the West as well. As Rushdie notes,

This was the day before the transistor, and the radiogram was under your parents' control and you had to work out whose parents were out and get around that...It had that feeling of contraband...you would have had the same feeling here [America]. (Lakshman 286)

In this way, Rushdie believes that the rapid growth in popularity of rock 'n' roll and its stealthy dissemination to all corners of the earth during a time when it was considered a "bad influence" by Westerners and Easterners alike established it as the world's first globalized phenomenon.

Even more significant, though, than the simultaneity of the emergence of rock 'n' roll in all parts of the globe, is the notion that the music, which crosses all frontiers, does not really belong to or even originate in the West. Rushdie's characterization of rock 'n' roll in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* seeks to undermine the commonly held belief that the East "borrowed" the music from the West – mainly America and Britain. Rather, Rushdie attempts to convey that popular music of the 1950s and 1960s was the possession of the world at large.

In a twist on the anticipated account of the American domination of the rock music industry, Ormus and Vina, two former Bombayites, form the most popular band, VTO, in the history of rock music. This “completely outrageously fictitious proposition” (Rose 260) – that two Easterners should rise to international superstardom in a cherished American musical genre– is one aspect of Rushdie’s subversive tactics. He further destabilizes the notion of a Western ownership of rock ‘n’ roll with his description of an unusual ability of Ormus’s to hear the melodies to the songs that are to be imported into India from America months, even years, prior to their production. As a result, he is convinced that he is the true author of some of the most celebrated songs of the day.

Ormus’s prescience, a function of his relationship to his dead twin brother, Gayomart, who, Ormus contends, comes to him in dreams transmitting the songs, clearly complicates the idea of origins and originality. “How does an Indian come to hear the all-American tune before the American?” (Pirbhai 63). Rushdie’s answer is simple: “the West was in Bombay from the beginning, impure old Bombay where West, East, North and South had always been scrambled, like codes, like eggs, and so Westernness was a legitimate part of Ormus, a Bombay part, inseparable from the rest of him” (95-96). In making such a claim – one that plainly denies the binaristic logic of separate and unrelated Eastern and Western spheres - Rushdie expresses a conviction that in our hybrid, multi-faceted contemporary world it is impossible to ascertain the exact origin of any cultural element. Therefore, Rai is right to point out that “we

Bombayites can claim that it was in truth our music, born in Bombay like Ormus and me, not 'goods from foreign' but made in India" (96). According to Rai's understanding, Ormus's music emerged in his youth not as an imitation of American music, purportedly "one of those viruses with which the almighty West has infected the East" (95), but as a legitimate hybridization of Eastern and Western cultural elements. In a contrapuntal process of "glocalization," Ormus composes songs, not only as an adolescent but also later as a founding member of VTO, that blend "global" American rock 'n' roll melodies and more noticeably "local"

un-American sounds....the sexiness of the Cuban horns, the mind-bending patterns of the Brazilian drums, the Chilean woodwinds moaning like the winds of oppression, the African male voice choruses...the grand old ladies of Algerian music...the holy passion of the Pakistani *qawwals*. (379)

In so doing, he modifies the global to incorporate the local, and vice versa, creating a whole new heterogeneous cultural and musical form that undermines the notion of an unqualified Americanization or homogenization of the East. As Mariam Pirbhai notes,

Ormus Cama's world music is conceived both as a Bombayite's response to American rock 'n' roll...and a repatriation of rock 'n' roll in new, more eclectic, diversified forms. Not only do locals tailor imports to their own cultural tastes, but they also transform and then export those newly localized tastes. (63)

Not only is the West, primarily America, described as an integral and inseparable part of the East in Rushdie's global, hybrid world, but it is also depicted as a site of heterogeneity in which a variety of non-Western influences

shape its character. Vina, the most “American” of the three protagonists by virtue of her being born “in a shack in the middle of a cornfield outside Chester, Virginia” (102), is of mixed cultural heritage. Like Ormus’s music, Vina’s origins are heterogeneous and indefinite, “a bit of this and a bit of that.” She is born American, but her mother is Greek and her father, “a sweet-talking Indian gent, a lawyer – how’d he get all the way out there?” (102). Regarding Vina’s father’s migratory movements, Pirbhai suggests that the ironic question: “how’d he get all the way out there?” echoes the question concerning Ormus’s ability, as a Bombayite, to hear American music before anyone else (63). In other words, it is no more unusual that an Indian man should be found living in Virginia, married to a Greek woman, than that an Indian man living in Bombay should be the first to transmit American rock ‘n’ roll. By implying that East and West are culturally interwoven and interdependent, Rushdie attempts to articulate a world of cross-cultural movement in which the idea of dissociated cultures and peoples that do not overlap, interface, and therefore work to muddy the narratives of authenticity and origins, is erroneous.

For Vina, who is born Nissa Shetty, becomes Nissy Poe upon the remarriage of her mother, then Diana Egiptus when adopted into the Egiptus family of Chickaboom, New York following her mother’s suicide, and finally takes on the name Vina Apsara when she is sent to live with her distant relatives, the Doodhwalas, in India, identity is clearly a metamorphic concept. Constantly shifting locations and selves as a child, then coming to reside in Bombay as an

adolescent, where she meets Ormus and Rai, Vina develops a predilection for a condition of non-belonging and a sense of perpetual change. Indeed, "if there's one thing she's learned it's that nothing stays the same for five minutes, not even your goddamn name" (369). She becomes incapable of rooting herself in any one place, constantly convinced "*there must be somewhere better*" (166). Her nomadic tendencies lead her to believe that

the right place was always the one she wasn't in. Always in the wrong place, in a condition of perpetual loss, she could (she did) unaccountably take flight and disappear; and then discover that the new place she'd reached was just as wrong as the place she'd left. (163)

As the ringleader of the three friends, Vina is the first to abandon Bombay in the mid -1960s in search of fame and success in the West. Her mantra, much like Gibreel's slogan, "To be born again...first you have to die" (*The Satanic Verses* 3), becomes "Life is elsewhere. Cross frontiers. Fly away" (146). Crossing frontiers in part to escape a painful severing of ties with her surrogate mother, Ameer Merchant (Rai's mother), Vina migrates to London, followed shortly by Ormus, to pursue a musical career. Rai's understanding of Vina and Ormus's decision to depart Bombay and reject their familial bonds is

to think of it as an account of the creation of two bespoke identities, tailored for the wearers by themselves. The rest of us get our personae off the peg, our religion, language, prejudices, demeanour, the works; but Vina and Ormus insisted on what one might call auto-couture. (95)

They represent, for Rushdie, the ultimate example of "people who don't have roots and who in a certain way don't have a need for roots. Who are voyagers, you know, who are people like Kerouac's bums who are happiest on

the road" (Gross 275). Vina is driven to remain in constant motion in order to escape the torment of a past filled with family disasters and lies, and Ormus is, in turn, compelled to pursue Vina and his music into his fantasy of the West. Both are, according to Rai, propelled by "some sort of *centripetal force*...[as] finding the centre was what drove Ormus and Vina on" (100).

The advent of Vina's voluntary migration prompts Rai to meditate upon the nature of belonging and his own motivation for leaving his "home" and entering into a state of disorientation. Disorientation, we are told, "is loss of the East. Ask any navigator: the east is what you sail by. Lose the east and you lose your bearings, your certainties, your knowledge of what is and what may be, perhaps even your life" (176). As a young man about to embark on his global journey, Rai is skeptical of this conclusion and of the "powerful system of stigmas and taboos against rootlessness" (73). He derisively compares culture to a "squirm of germs on a glass slide...a laboratory experiment calling itself a society" (95). Voicing Rushdie's anxieties about the homogenizing powers of cultural, national, and ethnic narratives that insist upon the sacredness of the "homeland," Rai is alert to the necessity of maintaining a more worldly and secular perspective. He feels suffocated by the past and by the seemingly, and overwhelmingly, superhuman love of his parents, and despite an obvious affection and nostalgia for Bombay, fostered by his parents' deep love for and connection to the metropolis, he expresses a desperate need to "cross oceans just to exit *Wombay*, the parental body"(100).

As an adolescent, Rai becomes conscious of and sensitive to the possibilities of a more worldly existence through his privileged contact with global cultural elements. The opening up of the world to Rai, however, results in his increased dissatisfaction with what he perceives as a narrow, parochial existence immersed in the mediocrities of quotidian life. As Homi Bhabha contends, "it is precisely there, in the ordinariness of the day to day, in the intimacy of the indigenous, that, unexpectedly, we become unrecognizable strangers to ourselves in the very act of assuming a more worldly, or what is now termed 'global' responsibility" ("Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism" 197). Within the claustrophobic fold of the family, and by extension Bombay, Rai becomes a stranger to himself and understands that he must move into a more global space, assuming a cosmopolitan perspective, in order to effect a measure of self-realization and independence.

If the East orients, Rai is prepared, though with conflict, to accept the instability and uncertainties of Western life. While he may remain conscious of the importance of his personal history – one aspect of his character that allows him to survive when Vina and Ormus self-destruct – he challenges the notion of roots and opts, as do Saladin and Gibreel, for "the blessed kingdom of the air" (177) and the metamorphic possibilities of flight. "What if the whole deal," he muses,

orientation, knowing where you are, and so on – what if it's all a scam? What if all of it – home, kinship, the whole enchilada – is just the biggest, most truly global, and centuries-oldest piece of brainwashing? Suppose that it's only when you dare to let go that your real life begins? (177)

When he finally decides to quit India and follow Vina and Ormus abroad, Rai's leave-taking is more difficult and emotional. Whereas Vina and Ormus seem summoned by destiny to the other side of the world, and make their departure in a swift and detached manner, Rai is unable to elude the nostalgia of his childhood memories from a youth spent in the golden age of Bombay. In Rai's lamenting farewell to India, Rushdie's own attempt to disconnect himself from his "homeland," both real and imaginary, is discernible:

India, my *terra infirma*, my maelstrom, my cornucopia, my crowd. India, my too-muchness, my everything at once, my Hug-me, my fable, my mother, my father and my first great truth. It may be that I am not worthy of you, for I have been imperfect, I confess...India, fount of my imagination, source of my savagery, breaker of my heart. Goodbye. (249)

In retrospect, Rai acknowledges that while he too, out of curiosity, a weakened sense of affiliation, and his frustrated obsession with Vina and her relationship to Ormus, succumbed to the seduction of elsewhere, he is, ironically, "the only one who lived to tell the tale" (177) of their entwined lives. In part his survival is attributable to his willingness, in Bhabha's words, to remain "(c)ommitted to the specificity of event and yet linked to a transhistorical memory and solidarity" ("Unsatisfied: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism" 196). That is, while Rai opts to enact a cosmopolitan citizenship that allows him to live perpetually in the first instant of the global present, he recognizes his personal, and local, historical trajectory as an important and undeniable aspect of self-identity. Like Vina and Ormus, Rai travels abroad to re-create himself beyond the boundaries of nation and culture. "But if I'm honest," he admits,

I still smell, each night, the sweet jasmine-scented ozone of the Arabian Sea, I still recall my parents' love of their *art dekho* city and of each other. They held hands when they thought I wasn't looking. But of course I was always looking. I still am. (417)

In this way, the memories and experiences that Rai takes with him on his global journey ground him in an otherwise groundless world, creating multiple localities and points of reference in uncertain times. Only by departing his "homeland," stepping outside the frame, and gaining perspective on his past can Rai, like Saladin, come to fully appreciate the advantages and privileges he enjoyed as a child. The example of his parents' love and their value of human relationships, he recognizes, serves as a model for how he can achieve some measure of stability in the face of postmodern disorientation: "Though that love had often oppressed me and stifled me, I now wanted it for myself, wanted to have my parents back by loving what they loved and so becoming what they had been" (210-211). It is this desire to become what his parents had been that compels Rai, by the end of the novel, to attempt to recreate the "ordinariness of the day to day" in his own relationship with Mira and her daughter, Tara.

Ultimately, all three protagonists, "the Pilgrim Children" (251), pass through an invisible "membrane" in the sky that divides East and West, becoming, by choice, members of the ranks of the earth's dispossessed. Theirs becomes the task of imagining their world, and their place within it, into being. Of the three friends, Ormus is the one to experience the most profound alteration as he flies across the unseen frontier. While he does not assume an alien physical form the way that Saladin does in his migratory journey in *The Satanic Verses*,

he does undergo a type of mutation. He perceives that in the crossing of cultural boundaries, and entering into a heightened state of postmodern disorientation, his old self has died and a new self has been born as he has “moved from the eternal past of early life into the constant now of adulthood” (253).

In addition to his musical prophesying, he acquires the ability, which is later intensified by his injuries in a car accident and subsequent protracted coma, to see a crack or tear in the sky, in the fabric of the “real”. Through this tear, Ormus witnesses evidence of another world lying alongside the one that he, Vina, and Rai inhabit. The suggestion is that this “otherworld” is, in fact, the real world of our experience in which J.F.K *is* assassinated, Watergate is not a best-selling novel but a political actuality, and Simon and Garfunkel are actually a *male* singing duo. This newfound capability allows Ormus to psychically jump from one world to another and communicate with individuals like Maria who “have found a slip-sliding method of moving between the worlds” (348). As a result of his migratory transformation, Ormus is tortured with visions of this “otherworld” and becomes obsessed to the point of madness with the need to find a way to recover the lost “otherworld” and harmonize the two opposing worlds. His earthquake songs, possessed of fury in the highest degree, express his doomsday fixation with chaos and his belief that the two worlds will eventually and catastrophically collide. “The songs are about the collapse of all walls, boundaries, restraints. They describe worlds in collision, two universes tearing into each other, striving to become one, destroying each other in the effort” (390).

Living in one world with its own set of startling discontinuities, while maintaining an involuntary awareness of another one that exists in his dreams and visions and frequently disrupts his waking hours, Ormus becomes increasingly unstable and disconnected from his past, from others, and his sense of self as his life spirals into confusion and fragmentation.

He continues to work on his music while apprenticing on a 1960s London pirate-radio ship, the *Frederica*. Here he encounters Eno, a fellow expatriate and a techno-wizard who alerts Ormus in cryptic messages to the dangers of utter rootlessness: "*May the gods save me from becoming a stateless refugee! Dragging out an intolerable life in desperate helplessness! That is the most pitiful of all griefs; death is better*" (294). Nevertheless, Ormus remains determined to deny any and all affiliations that would categorize him according to culture, ethnicity, or nationality.

What I want the music to say is that I don't have to choose, Ormus finally speaks up. I need it to show that I don't have to be this guy or that guy, the fellow from over there or the fellow from here, the person within me that I call my twin, or whoever's out there in whatever it is I get flashes of beyond the sky; or just the man standing in front of you right now. I'll be all of them, I can do that. Here comes everybody, right? (303)

In this way, Ormus represents a form of cosmopolitan citizenship that advocates for the right to *not choose* and to remain in a permanent state of detachment.

Such a cosmopolitanism, however, reflects only the empty, meaningless version encountered in *The Moor's Last Sigh* on the "street of Parasites." Ormus could, indeed, be described as one of the "lost souls in alligator shoes." His multiplicity and heterogeneity, embodied in his music and his embracing of non-belonging,

on one level appear commendable and resemble Gibreel's initial cosmopolitan propensities; however, like Gibreel, who eventually self-destructs as a result of his inability to cope with the dislocations and fragmentation of postmodern life and who retreats into a narrow fundamentalism, Ormus, Rushdie concludes, "hasn't fully grasped how to make of multiplicity an accumulating strength rather than a frittery weakness. How the many selves can be, in song, a single multitude. Not a cacophony but an orchestra, a choir, a dazzling plural voice" (299). His vision of belonging, or not belonging, is indulgent, consumptive, and ultimately non-enabling, and impacts not only upon himself but also upon the society in which he chooses to reside. Ormus's brand of cosmopolitanism offers nothing substantial or contributive to society, as he feels no moral obligation to participate in any meaningful manner in political, ethical, or civic responsibilities. Even later in the story when Rai describes, somewhat mockingly, the way in which Ormus and Vina "went political" (425), their short-lived causes seem too many and diffuse to constitute earnest commitment. Their activism appears to be more a function of their showmanship than authentic intention. Like the cultural sojourner residing in various metropolises, Ormus is able to "sink, hide, slip away, intoxicate himself, vanish, absent himself, die to everything which is not *his* desire" (Barthes 118, my emphasis). As a result, he exists in a state of limbo, "exempt from time because possessed of all times at once" (118).

Vina too proves to be incapable to creating strength out of multiplicity as she moves across and between cultural boundaries. Echoing Ormus's conviction

that he can enact an endless array of personae, in effect becoming everything to everyone all at once, Vina creates and performs numerous identities, “making herself the exaggerated avatar of [the world’s] jumbled selves” (339). There is,

Professor Vina, and Crystal Vina, Holy Vina and Profane Vina, Junkie Vina and Veggie Vina, Women’s Vina and Vina the Sex Machine, Barren-Childless-Tragic Vina and Traumatized-Childhood-Tragedy Vina, Leader Vina who blazed a trail for a generation of women and Disciple Vina...She was all of these and more, and everything she was, she pitched uncompromisingly high. (339)

She, like Ormus, is drawn into a life of hyperreal extremes and in the assumption of so many fractured and fictitious selves, she loses sight of her essential self – the undeniable and unchangeable self that Rushdie elucidates in *The Satanic Verses* through Ovid’s philosophy of metamorphosis. “Vina is a ground-breaking icon,” Pirbhai contends, “who collapses under the weight of her own unattainable, constantly transforming image” (57). Indeed, Vina’s pain drives her to layer identity upon identity in order to conceal her past, but as Rushdie suggests and as evidenced by the end of the novel, “You must end as you begin. Or lose your soul” (55).

It is in America, in New York, that both she and Ormus finally do lose their souls, are consumed by the cult of celebrity, and become merely postmodern holograms of themselves. For Vina, New York is the ultimate melting pot and her desire to be transfigured anticipates that of Malik Solanka, Rushdie’s anti-hero in *Fury* who expresses a similar wish to have his memory and former self erased and rewritten on the streets of New York. According to Vina, in America, “You’ll say things all wrong but they’ll at once become American ways of saying things.

You won't know shit but it'll right away become an American type of ignorance. Not belonging, that's an old American tradition, see?" (331).

Not only does Vina deny attachment to place or fixed identity, but she also refuses to connect meaningfully at the basic level of human emotion. Even in her relationship to Ormus, who is supposedly the great love of her life, she cannot find a means to anchor herself or establish a rooted locality in the midst of her global bewilderment. It seems that only Rai, whose bed she occasionally shares, is able to see, in brief glimpses, the "real" Vina. His knowledge of her, however, and his ability to penetrate her superficial coverings, renders her vulnerable and impels her to repudiate the idea of forming a lasting attachment to Rai. When Ormus proposes to Vina, her response illustrates her determination to remain an alienated individual: "Yes, she says. I'll marry you, I'll spend the rest of my life with you, and you know I'll love you. But don't ask me for high fidelity. I'm a lo-fi kind of girl" (412). Despite her pledge to rootlessness, and her need to be perpetually shifting and changing, Vina is aware of being a part of the larger order of humanity, what she calls a "larger river" (427). In Rai she witnesses this connection and she tells him, "when I'm with you I feel you're a part of something, some lifestream?...you're a part of something right here and now and what it is, whatever it is, it's good, it's better than just you on your own" (427-428). Clearly, in Vina's and Rushdie's estimations, Rai has achieved something that neither Vina nor Ormus can. That is, he has managed to maintain a connection to his essential self, to a level of self-knowing, while simultaneously

functioning in a global, discontinuous context of fetishized ephemerality and contemporaneity. In addition, he has discovered a means, through his photography, to connect to the universal human condition and enact an ethical and civic responsibility as a world citizen to expose the dark underside of life through his depictions of war, poverty, and human indignity.

At the apogee of VTO's fame and success, when Vina and Ormus have risen to mythological levels of stardom that make them seem more like gods than mere mortals, Vina is sucked down by the unearthly pull of the underworld. Her death in the Mexican earthquake initiates a world-wide mourning and a "Vina phenomenon" (498) of look-alikes and cult-like worshippings. From beyond the grave, Vina exercises a power and influence over the world that exceed that of her living years. Her death, however, proves to be the destruction of Ormus, who, like Orpheus descending into the underworld to retrieve Eurydice, falls into an underworld of drugs and alcohol in the attempt, through "chemically induced visions" (498), to reach Vina. He even decides to tour again with a reborn VTO in a show called *"Into the Underworld"* (557) as a memorial to Vina. In the creation of a fictional underworld, surrounded by his memories of Vina, Ormus lives entirely in his imagination, becoming permanently severed from other human beings and from himself. Having crossed all boundaries, coming loose from all ties, and stepping so far out of the frame, he, like Vina, ceases to exist except as a collection of media-created images and half-truths. Returning to Rai's musings on identity and belonging, we are reminded that

if you are Ormus Cama, if you are Vina Apsara, whose songs could cross all frontiers, even the frontiers of people's hearts, then perhaps you believed all ground could be skipped over, all frontiers would crumble before the sorcery of the tune. Off you'd go, off your turf, beyond family and clan and nation and race, flying untouchably over the minefields of taboo, until you stood at last at the last gateway, the most forbidden of doors. Where your blood sings in your ears, *Don't even think about it*. And you think about it, you cross that final frontier, and perhaps, perhaps...you have finally gone too far, and are destroyed. (55)

Ormus's slaying at the hands of a crazed fan – an obvious allusion to the shooting of John Lennon – completes his inevitable plunge into the underworld and poses, in the final moments of his life, the ironic and rhetorical question: "Ormus, do you know who you are?" (570).

The event of Ormus's death brings to an end the existence of the twin worlds – a phenomenon that Rai too becomes aware of when he begins to photograph double exposures that reveal a parallel universe. While there is no catastrophic collision of the worlds as Ormus predicted, clearly the "otherworld", or a pre-postmodern, pre-global world embodied in the stability of supposed dependable historical and cultural references and identifications, has failed to survive the war of descriptions. Rushdie seems to indicate that the disorienting world that Rai now inhabits, replete with ongoing tremors of physical and psychic bewilderment and discontinuity, is the one that we – that is, humanity at large – are compelled to accept. In other words, in Rushdie's estimation, there can be no return to a time prior to our present age of globalization and consequently we must seek ways to confront and make the best of both the challenges and opportunities afforded by such a circumstance.

Rai, as a rooted cosmopolitan subject, comes to realize that while India will always be a significant aspect of himself and one that should not be forgotten, as “the forgetting of the past...is the wooden horse at the gates of Troy” (441), he accepts that for the time being his locality, or “home,” is in New York, a “home base” from which he can continue his work exposing the injustices of the world. With the monstrously godlike Vina and Ormus gone, Rai is left to imagine a new, ordinary life for himself in the company of other very human and fallible beings. “This, the myths hint, is what a mature civilization is: a place where the gods stop jostling and shoving us...a time when they move back...from the realm of the actual...leaving us free to do our best or worst without their autocratic meddling” (575). As he becomes involved with Mira, Vina’s polar opposite, who insists upon total fidelity and absolute emotional connection, Rai perceives the means by which he can survive in the world and begin to conceive of a future. As he insists, “Here’s goodness, right? The mayhem continues, I don’t deny it, but we’re capable also of this. Goodness drinking o.j. and munching muffins. Here’s ordinary human love beneath my feet” (575).

Rushdie’s cosmopolitan vision, far from endorsing a rootless alienation, suggests that in the mapping of the global experience, humans live best in the many circles narrower than the species. Locality as a lived experience in the global world is to be found in personal relationships and in the ability of people to connect across multiple divides at an intrinsic, human level. As the ground upon

which we stand becomes increasingly unreliable, and postmodern fury and disorientation prevail, Rushdie indicates that the only constant will continue to be human interdependence. This basic need to connect to others is exemplified in his latest work, *Fury*, in which Rushdie details one man's flight from self across cultural boundaries into an underworld of popcultural chaos, and his subsequent return and redemption through human love and the confrontation and acceptance of a troubled past.

NOTES

¹ See Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 92.

² Appadurai defines "ethnoscape" as follows:

By *ethnoscape*, I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to hiterhto unprecedented degree. This is not to say that there are no relatively stable communities and networks of kinship, friendship, work, and leisure, as well as of birth, residence, and other filial forms. But it is to say that the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move or the fantasies of wanting to move. (33-34)

³ See Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) 169-170.

⁴ See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring1986) 25-26. In developing his notion of the heterotopia, which "is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible," (25) Foucault employs the example of the Oriental garden as a heterotopic microcosm of the world - "The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world" (26). The global cityscape is itself a heterotopic space as it, like the garden in which all forms of vegetation come together to be planted in one location, is a compression of the diverse cultures, ethnicities, and nationalities of the world.

⁵ George Ritzer coined this term in his 1993 publication, *The McDonaldization of Society*.

⁶ Frederic Jameson is one such critic who asserts that globalization should not be understood as exclusively a positive course of cultural diversification without considering the troublesome implications of the dominant world position occupied by the United States and the unequal distribution of power and wealth in the deterritorialization of markets and cultural spaces. As he points out,

American mass culture, associated as it is with money and commodities, enjoys a prestige that is perilous for most forms of domestic cultural production, which either find themselves wiped out – as with local film and

television production – or co-opted and transformed beyond recognition, as with local music. (“Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue” 59)

Subramani offers a concrete example of the influence exerted on local “Third World” production by global transnational corporations in an article examining the transnationalization of Fijian culture. Citing analyst Mark Taylor’s work on the relationship between transnational and translocal capital, Subramani describes a system of interchange based on “peripheralization”; that is, foreign-owned multinationals give

the appearance of withdrawing from direct control in the economy, by subcontracting and thereby drawing small local businesses into informal dependent relationships. Peripheralization heightens the vulnerability of the local economy because there is no long-term commitment by the foreign-owned multinationals, the managerial and accounting services are provided from the outside, and the subordinate local business has no representation in the boards of directors of the controlling company. When the foreign company shifts location, the local counterpart remains poorly prepared to generate employment or export. (150)

Chapter Four

Our Coarsest Depths and Finest Heights: The Contradictory Present Moment in *Fury*

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.

Henry David Thoreau (7)

The new millennium brought with it a renewed sense of safety and personal freedom for Rushdie.¹ After years spent in deep hiding in various locations in England, the prospect of a seemingly less restricted way of living in America convinced Rushdie to migrate to New York and take up residence. The move, met with unreasonable criticism, especially from the British press, accusing Rushdie of ingratitude for the protection of British security during the worst of the *fatwa*, signals yet another shift in his narrative consciousness. Having initiated a departure in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* from a literature obsessed with wistful recollections of India, Rushdie turns his attention in his most recent work almost exclusively to the present and to other parts of the globe – especially America – in the attempt to explore the contemporary moment as it is shaped by the heavy hand of mass consumer culture and the search for identity, meaning, and human connection.

Fury, his first novel of the twenty-first century, reads much like a coda to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* in that it revives now-familiar Rushdian themes of postmodern alienation, ever-increasing cultural complexity and destabilization of

historical and cultural identifications, and the encroachment of hyper or virtual reality. Like *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*'s portrayal of the contemporary world, *Fury* articulates a pop-cultural age of simulacra in which there is "a liquidation of all referentials," and a "substituting [of] signs of the real for the real itself" (Baudrillard 170). This is an era dominated by the far-reaching power of American money, media, and "the new ditditdit of the dotcoms" (34), in which fashionable women wear "featherlight shawls made from the chin-fluff of extinct mountain goats" (3), and "well-heeled white youths lounged in baggy garments on roseate stoops, stylishly simulating indigence while they waited for the billionairehood that would surely be along sometime soon" (4). The characters in *Fury* face precisely the same challenge of locating moorings in their unstable surroundings as do their counterparts in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Conspicuously absent from this novel, however, is the element of fantasy or magic realism for which Rushdie's novels are famed. There are no freakish transfigurations, no visions, and no parallel worlds; in short, *Fury* is possibly Rushdie's most "realistic" novel to date. As a result, his reflections on mass consumer culture and the fragmentation of the individual's sense of self are rendered more immediate, profound, and indeed, unnerving. It would seem that the oddities of "real" life have surpassed even Rushdie's capacity to imagine a stranger fiction.

Fury is largely an examination of the urban centre as what Mary Louise Pratt refers to as a cultural "contact zone" (6), where, through the ongoing

process of transculturation, “subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other” (6). The novel reflects Rushdie’s enduring desire to imagine the cityscape as a space of hybridity and potential new belongings. After immortalizing Bombay and London in his previous novels, Rushdie turns to narrate the story of another world city at the turn of the millennium, articulating an interest in New York – previously evidenced by Ormus, Vina, and Rai’s migratory journey to the metropolis in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* – as one city in a network of global cities (Sassen 1998, 2001) that, much like Bombay and London, is “home” to a gathering of displaced, culturally incongruous peoples. In an interview, Rushdie describes New York as

an immigrant city, a city made up not only by immigrants from the rest of the world, but also by immigrants from the rest of America. It’s the city to which everyone comes, from both inside and outside America and so the character of the city is created by the people who come here, not by the people who are born here...Here the culture of migration is the culture of New York. (Kreye 1)

It is into this culture of migration and virtual reality that erstwhile academic and sometime doll-maker Malik “Solly” Solanka enters upon abandoning his wife Eleanor and son Asmaan in London, journeying abroad to escape the reality of a grievous past and the grip of an undefined yet unrelenting internal rage stemming, in part, from the suppression of that past. Rage that has been escalating inside him for some time, finally manifests itself in a bizarre episode in which Malik finds himself about to murder his wife with a carving knife. Fleeing to New York for fear of causing injury to those he loves, Malik seeks refuge from himself in a place known for its anonymity and indifference. “Everyone was here

to lose themselves,” the narrator informs us, “and these days losing himself was just about Professor Solanka’s only purpose in life” (7).

While Malik suspects, to the extent that he believes he may be responsible for a rash of murders in New York, that his violent impulses are symptomatic of a developing and ungovernable psychosis particular to him, Rushdie indicates that Malik’s fury is indicative of a global postmodern condition, and that his experiences are those of the Everyman immersed in a perplexing twenty-first-century angst. Malik is, indeed, far from alone in his feelings of estrangement and disquiet, as he gradually comes to understand that “The whole world was burning on a shorter fuse. There was a knife turning in every gut, a scourge for every back” (129). The ubiquity of this undercurrent of angst is made apparent to Malik when, prior to his departure from London, he is reunited with Dubdub, a friend from his days as a student and later a professor at Cambridge University, whose nervous breakdown and attempted suicide appear to be the results of his suffering from a mysterious malaise similar to that of Malik:

‘It’s to do with suffering,’ he said flatly. ‘Why do we all suffer so. Why is there so much of it. Why can’t you ever stop it. You can build dikes, but it always comes oozing through, and then one day the dikes just give way. And it’s not just me. I mean, it is me, but it’s everyone. It’s you too. Why does it go on and on? It’s killing us.’ (26)

In his inquiry into the postmodern condition, Jameson theorizes the emergence of “a whole new type of emotional ground tone” (“Postmodernism, Or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” 58) that he refers to as “‘intensities’” (58), or the “‘hysterical’ sublime” (77), eventuating from an age of simulation and

cultural “depthlessness” (58). Jameson suggests that at the limits of human physical experience, when the body enters a space of disorientation, such as the Bonaventura Hotel, in which it can no longer map itself within its surroundings, and reality is transformed into a series of incomprehensible surface representations, the individual enters a state akin to delirium. “The world...momentarily loses its depth and threatens to become a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density” (76-77) and, as Jameson establishes, the individual, abandoned to this hyperreal hall of mirrors, experiences simultaneously the conflicting emotions of terror and exhilaration.

This is precisely the type of hysterical response that Dubdub articulates when he answers Malik’s plea for an explanation as to his destructive behaviour:

‘That’s the worst part...There’s nothing to tell. No direct or proximate cause. You just wake up one day and you aren’t a part of your life. You know this. Your life doesn’t belong to you. Your body is not...*yours*. There’s just life, living itself. You don’t have it. You don’t have anything to do with it. That’s all. (27)

Dubdub first experiences this strange sense of disembodiment after years of living in America, immersed in an environment in which the industry of culture and the new religion of celebrity characterize the superficial limits of contemporary significance. Working out of Princeton University, he acquires a bizarre quasi-celebrity status as an intercontinental guru of fashionable literary criticism, a Polish-born Englishman taken for the French theorist, Jacques Derrida. Losing touch with his essential self, Dubdub realizes, in a moment of existential crisis, that “(t)he more he became a Personality, the less like a person

he felt" (27). His chosen method of combating his unnamed fury is to retreat into an isolated world of scholarship and attempt to recover some measure of a "normal" life.

In contrast to *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, however, in which Rai manages to surmount the confusion of postmodern existence and its cult of celebrity, through his determination to enact the ordinariness of everyday life, the empty, soulless, and antagonistic environment that Rushdie portrays in *Fury* is seemingly not as easily reckoned with. The possibility of finding goodness, or ordinary human love beneath one's feet, as Rai does, seems even more remote for the likes of Dubdub and Malik who, Rushdie suggests, are the unwitting victims of an external, all-pervading force – the furies – that alienates them from themselves and others and renders them powerless to control their lives. As the narrator suggests, in the new millennium, in order to "fulfill the darker requirements of the new faith, there were occasional human sacrifices" (24). One such sacrifice is Dubdub who, despite his efforts to create stability in the face of uncertainty, is unable to contend psychically or physically with the "intensities" of the postmodern condition and dies, ironically and symbolically, after multiple suicide attempts, of heart failure.

While Dubdub elects to return to a sheltered life in academia in the attempt to evade, though unsuccessfully, his deep-seated and all-consuming anxiety, Malik opts to journey straight to Rushdie's imagined epicentre of furor to be absorbed into "its magic, invisible, hybrid heart" (86). Here he anticipates the

complete erasure of his pain, anger, and fear, as his past, or “back-story,” (50) is unwritten. “Eat me,” he pleads, “Eat me, America, and give me peace” (44). Yet peace is not what Malik finds upon arriving in New York. Rather, he is engulfed in the commercialism of American mass culture, awed by its potency and admittedly seduced by its brilliance. Turning on the TV or walking down a street in Manhattan, Malik is exposed to the omnipresent sounds and images of a metropolitan consumer culture of excess, ephemerality, and tokenism. He experiences “all Elián, all the time” (37) on CNN, witnesses the “eternal confessional booth of Ricki and Oprah and Jerry” (87), and despairs at the popular and desperate obsession with the advertising of commodities promising to soothe “the agony of the howling void within each watching, semiconscious self” (34). He is overwhelmed by the “everywhereness of life, but its bloody minded refusal to back off, by the sheer godamn unbearable head-bursting volume of the third millennium” (47). Malik finds himself at the limits of his physical and sensory experience, unable to map the coordinates of his life. Clearly, the fury that drives him to nearly murder his family and from which he seeks to escape by separating himself from life, is everywhere and, as Dubdub has discovered, cannot be disregarded for fear of its overtaking and ultimately destroying the individual.

Malik’s observations on the condition of the American self that lead him to wonder, “is this all there is? What, this is *it*? *This is it*?” (184), speak to Rushdie’s concerns with the mechanization of contemporary human life.

America, in his estimation, is the epitome of the Prozac nation, its citizens – regarded as mere machines to be repaired when malfunctioning – dependent on a variety of mood-altering pharmaceuticals (“*I pledge allegiance to the American drug*” (182)) in order to mask the desperation of the impoverished self.

Happiness is now to be found in “better food, wiser furniture orientation, deeper breathing technique” (183), and a host of other superficial, “self-help” solutions. While the physical self can be, at a price, maintained, what American culture, with its material excess, cannot account for are the incalculable needs of the human soul, “for the real problem was damage not to the machine but to the desirous heart, and the language of the heart was being lost” (184).

For Malik, who comes to New York to be “Ellis Islanded” (51), to heal, to join the ranks of the non-belongers, to cancel out his old self, and to rid himself of the “useless baggage of blood and tribe” (51), disappointment is profound. Rather than encountering the promised land of American multicultural acceptance and hybridity, Malik enters a contact zone in which the fury, alienation, and fear engendered by the postmodern condition and the loss of the language of the heart have worked only to intensify issues of identity and tribal allegiance. Ghettoized racial, ethnic, and cultural differences co-exist in escalating opposition and seething hostility. Rushdie’s vision of New York in *Fury*, in effect, mocks Vina’s naïve assurances to Ormus in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* that “you get to be an American just by wanting, and by becoming an American you add to the kinds of American it’s possible to be” (331). In truth,

behind the façade of plenty and the image of the world's greatest melting pot in which everyone is united in their American-ness, lies the reality that the "American dream," offering wealth and happiness to all, is a destructive illusion.

While Rushdie is quick to celebrate spaces of hybridity in which divergent peoples interface and binaristic thinking is undermined, he understands that the primary cause of the anger and alienation felt by "Americanized" immigrants is their intense disappointment in the inevitable realization that imagined America does not live up to its inhabitants' expectations: "This was the Jitter Bug that made people mad: excess not of commodities but of their dashed and thwarted hopes" (184).

In her examination of the new global city as a site of economic, political, and cultural deterritorialization, Saskia Sassen points to the contradictory nature of cities like New York which, in our contemporary era of globalization,

concentrate a disproportionate share of global corporate power and are one of the key sites for its valorization. But they also concentrate a disproportionate share of the disadvantaged and are one of the key sites for their devalorization...This joint presence is...brought into focus by the increasing disparities between the two. (*Globalization and Its Discontents* xxxiv)

In other words, global cities are increasingly characterized by the dichotomy of extreme concentrations of wealth and power in the hands of an elite "transnational professional workforce" (xxxiii), and an undeniable impoverishment and disadvantage experienced by "the new immigrant workforce" (xx). According to Sassen, the rapid growth of the service sector in America since the 1970s has brought about "an increasing polarization of income distribution" (46). As middle-

income jobs in the metropolis have sharply declined, there has been a widening of the gap between high-paid service professionals and low-paid service labourers. Sassen's concern is that this polarization of income-earning and the resulting expansion of socioeconomic disparity between groups are harmful to immigrants and minorities, as these are the groups most likely to be exploited and employed for low wages in service positions that are deemed less important or valuable than professional occupations.

This dynamic is amply illustrated in *Fury*. As Malik moves about New York, he encounters numerous other immigrants who have come to the city, not financially privileged as Malik is, in search of some aspect of the "American dream". In contrast to Milla Milo's troop of American-born high-tech "webspyders" (211), who make their living as high-paid professionals designing web sites for celebrities, or Malik's property-owning landlords the Jays, "wealthy organic farmers who spent summers upstate with their fruits and vegetables" (46), most of Malik's fellow immigrants are employed in traditionally low-paid service jobs. There is the "Hispanic counter staff" (45) in the café Malik frequents, the "Punjabi construction workers" (47) labouring outside his flat, the German-Jew plumber, Joseph Schlink (47), and the Polish cleaning lady, Wislawa (48). Malik even takes his shirts to the "good Chinese laundry" (50).

The irony is that clearly not everyone is benefiting from the assurances of "this America with the twenty-two million new jobs and the highest home-owning rate in history, this balanced-budget, low-deficit, stock-owning Mall America"

(115). Sarcastically and metaphorically, Malik notes that “Paradise...was a place to which only the coolest and highest in New York possessed the secret number” (50), while the likes of Wislawa, “the laws of supply and demand being what they were” (50) are doomed to a less felicitous fate. While both Sassen and Rushdie advance the notion of the global city as a plausible space in which marginalized peoples are afforded the opportunity to enunciate their presence and find their voice, they maintain an awareness of the material realities of the globalization of capital as a process that is often injurious, disempowering, and disillusioning for certain disadvantaged segments of society.

The revelation of the promise of an American style of happiness as an exclusionary “in-club” results, as Rushdie suggests, in the exacerbation of a feeling of marginality, inequality, and segregation on the part of immigrants and minorities, leading to a retreat in anger and frustration into the protective narratives of authenticity and tribalism. Malik muses, “While the greenback was all-powerful and America bestrode the world, psychological disorders and aberrations of all sorts were having a field day back home” (115). He witnesses, in an episode in a taxicab, one example of the enmity between divergent groups smoldering beneath the surface of supposed American unity and brotherhood. The young Muslim driver of the cab, reacting to the ongoing Middle East peace process, releases a string of obscenities in Urdu directed at a passing fellow driver – a Jew: “Unclean offspring of a shit-eating pig, try that again and the victorious jihad will crush your balls in its unforgiving fist” (65). When he realizes

that Malik comprehends his words, the driver exclaims, "God bless America, okay? It's just words" (66).

While Malik concedes that words are not deeds, Rushdie expresses an eerily prophetic anxiety – in light of the events of September 11, 2001 – that "words can become deeds. If said in the right place and at the right time, they can move mountains [or towers?] and change the world" (66).² While Rushdie obviously does not condone aggression arising from ethnic or national fundamentalism, he recognizes the source of the fury that drives such fundamentalism and attempts to convey the prospective danger inherent in ignoring or denying the anger, disappointment, and frustration of the oppressed "other".

For those who aspire to the elusive Paradise of membership in the all-American club, the price of admission, Rushdie indicates, is nothing less than the entirety of one's self. Contrary to Vina's convictions, in order to become American, more than mere desire is required for such a transformation. Rather, one must submit, as Malik initially wishes, to a complete obliteration of one's personal historical trajectory, abandoning all personal identifications that are not, strictly speaking, "American." One's "back-story," "our little storehouse of anecdote and what-happened-next, our private once-upon-a-time" (51), is an irritating impediment to a necessary cultural assimilation.

Mila Milo(sevic), with whom Malik has a brief affair and who longs to belong fully to New York but whose Serbian past intrudes uncomfortably upon her fabricated American life, is unable to escape the “old European demons...screeching in her ears” (176). Like Malik, she is a victim of child abuse and she too attempts to expunge the pain of her past by immersing herself in “the ways of her age, this age of simulacra and counterfeits” (232). Ultimately, the rage that develops out of her inability to confront her demons, make peace with her history, and meaningfully connect to others – a process she initiates in her short-lived relationship with Malik – intensifies, manifesting itself in escalating self-hatred and self-destructive behaviour; she begins to drink heavily and agrees out of desperation to marry “slow, resentful Eddie” (186), a violent, controlling man for whom she feels little more than a sense of charity.

Perhaps the most palpable example of Rushdie’s admission, “You can’t throw the past away” (119), is that of Malik’s best friend, Jack Rhinehart. In a particularly scathing commentary on American race consciousness, Rushdie presents the tragic figure of Jack, once “a noted young radical journalist of color with a distinguished record of investigating American racism” (56-57), to illustrate the often-unfortunate outcome of denying one’s past and losing touch with one’s sense of self. After witnessing and experiencing the ingrained animus between divergent groups resulting from ethnic and racial solidarity in America – the same alarming ill will that Malik encounters on his taxi cab ride – Jack, who like Mila desires the keys to the kingdom of American acceptance, chooses to repudiate

his African-American heritage. "Somewhere in those years he became capable of close friendships with his white colleagues from the U.S.A. His label changed. He stopped hyphenating himself and became, simply, an American" (57).

Adopting a cosmopolitan ethic – to the extent that he refuses to be defined or classified by racial or ethnic category – Jack travels the world, marries a white woman, and determines to socialize only in "*bien-pensant* circles in which race was 'not an issue': that is, almost everyone was white" (57). Initially, Jack's refusal to participate in narratives of particularism appears commendable; however, similar to Ormus and Vina in their unqualified rejection of their origins and belief that they can cross all frontiers, Jack, Malik contends, "had crossed a line" (57). In this crossing lie the source of a growing self-hatred in Jack, with which Malik identifies, and the seeds of his destruction. It becomes apparent that Jack

had been seduced, and his desire to be accepted into this white man's club was the dark secret he could not confess to anyone, perhaps not even to himself. And these are the secrets from which the anger comes. In this dark bed the seeds of fury grow. (58)

Having forsaken his African-American self, in favour of a more rootless, colourless persona, Jack attempts to forge a purely American identity that is itself dangerously fundamental and exclusionary. The rage that ensues both from his loss of self-knowledge and the realization that he is, among his white acquaintances, little more than the "house nigger...a sort of pet" (57-58), drives Jack to ever-greater measures to gain acceptance from a world he loathes. Unable to connect not only to himself, but also to others, he embarks on a series

of depthless relationships, entering an underworld of bizarre sexual encounters that lead him to an invitation to join an exclusive S&M club. In his overwhelming desire for approval, ("*You made it, man. You're in*" (203)), Jack seals his fate through his weakness, becoming a pawn in a plan devised by three white youths to frame him for the rash of murders they have committed in the city.

The need to disown his personal history that Jack so desperately feels, in the end, proves to be his demise. Ironically, even in death, Jack cannot sever himself from his past. Interred "in the depths of Queens, thirty-five minutes' drive from the bungalow he'd bought his mother and still-unmarried sister in Douglaston...his own view would forever be of urban blight" (200). The return of Jack to an ethnically diverse location like Queens after his efforts to erase his difference signifies Rushdie's conviction that the past, especially one that is not resolved, cannot be elided or disregarded, as it will inevitably return for reckoning. Jack's tragic misfortune is prefigured by the downfall of Vina and Ormus, for as Rushdie affirms in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, "At the frontier of the skin mad dogs patrol. At the frontier of the skin. Where they kill to keep you in. Where you must not slip your skin. Or change your role. You can't pass out I can't pass in. You must end as you begin. Or lose your soul" (55).

Malik comes to understand that Jack's self-loathing and suppressed fury are the mirror of his own. His expectations of finding peace and wholeness in New York are unreasonable and his determination to "unself" the self only perpetuates his feelings of anger and alienation. In a moment of clarity, Malik

decides to take charge of his environment, having observed the ruin of his friends in a city,

where wealth was mistaken for riches and the joy of possession for happiness, where people lived such polished lives that the great rough truths of raw existence had been rubbed and buffed away, and in which human souls had wandered so separately for so long that they barely remembered how to touch. (86)

Knowing that the fury of postmodern life is an indisputable fact and that the noise of the twenty-first-century is here to stay, Malik begins to discover a power within him that allows him to control the rage and move on with his life.

A change of direction was required. The story you finished was perhaps never the one you began. Yes! He would take charge of his life anew, binding his breaking selves together. Those changes in himself that he sought, he himself would initiate and make them. No more of this miasmic, absent drift. (86)

Fortunate to have the resources with which to effect changes in his circumstances, Malik commences to learn, in a way that Ormus never did, to make strength rather than weakness out of multiplicity. Like Mila and Jack, Malik does not wish to be defined exclusively by national, ethnic, or cultural ties and, in this way, he performs a cosmopolitan citizenship. Yet he also realizes the importance of finding moorings in an age and space of uncertainty and disorientation. Following Mila's lead, Malik delves into the virtual world of cyberspace, "swept off his feet by the possibilities offered by the new technology" (186). In so doing, he transforms the destructive aspect of postmodern fury into a creative force, acknowledging the duality of fury as an energy that not only reveals "our coarsest depths" (30), but also "drives us to our finest heights" (30).

Survival in the contemporary environment of New York City and elsewhere, Rushdie suggests, depends entirely upon the way in which one makes use of and directs the pervasive power of fury. Malik chooses to channel his anger into a more productive form of energy as he rediscovers an interest in artistic pursuits. Long fascinated with dolls as a miniaturized representation of the “real” world, Malik embarks, with the help of Mila and her webspyders, on a new website project, PlanetGalileo.com, based on the adventures of Malik’s Puppet Kings (187). In inventing characters, scenarios, and storylines, Malik becomes absorbed in his work and experiences a sense of regained control and reinvigoration: “The blood seemed to pump harder through his veins. This, he thought, wondering at his undeserved good fortune, was renewal. Life had unexpectedly dealt him a strong hand, and he would make the most of it” (186). Rooting himself in his work and fashioning a refuge of locality within the turmoil of the global city, Malik begins to heal as the fury abates, and he is able to conceive of the possibility of confronting and releasing his forbidden past – the “back-story” he has sought to unwrite.

The painful process of re-opening the events of Malik’s childhood, a necessary step in his establishing an adult relationship with the world and reconnecting with his family, especially his son, is facilitated by his grounding relationship with Neela Mahendra. Neela is, in effect, a re-visioning of Zeeny Vakil in *The Satanic Verses*. Similar to Zeeny’s efforts with Saladin, Neela challenges Malik to examine his life and to acknowledge his personal history as a

vital aspect of himself and an essential element in his progression toward wholeness. Only by knowing where you come from, she insists, can you know your present self. Convinced of the need for basic human connection in order to counter the fragmentation and alienation of the individual, she encourages Malik to communicate with her his memories:

Malik, I think you've been in more accidents than me, and maybe you were even more badly hurt somewhere along the line. But if you don't talk, what can I do? I have nothing to say to you. I can only say, here I am, and if human beings can't save you then nothing can. (160)

In the company of Neela, with her "heart-wisdom" (220), Malik feels, for the first time, safe to reveal the reality of his childhood and adolescence in Bombay.

Whereas with Mila, Malik experiences "the sickly allure of the unmentionable, the unallowed" (205), with Neela, "everything became mentionable and was mentioned, everything was allowable and allowed. This was no child-woman, and what he was discovering with her was the adult joy of unforbidden love...this new bond felt like strength" (205).

While it is somewhat unusually predictable and formulaic of Rushdie to assert that love conquers all, that in this case, "Neela's love was the philosopher's stone that made possible the transmuting alchemy" (206) of Malik's rage, he attempts to convey, as in *The Satanic Verses* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the critical importance of finding stability in the ordinary possibilities of human life. In the context of a world of simulations and limit experiences, in which the individual can easily become detached from all points of reference and be consumed by the chaos, preserving and maintaining pockets of locality in day-

to-day relationships and pursuits is crucial. Rootlessness, Rushdie contends, breeds confusion, anxiety, and, of course, fury.

Neela's ability to enact a rooted cosmopolitan citizenship that allows her to navigate the global city as an international broadcast journalist while maintaining close ties to her place of origin – Rushdie's fictional South Pacific island, the Swiftian Lilliput-Blefuscu³ – serves as an example to Malik in the same manner in which Zeeny's cosmopolitanism does for Saladin. As a fourth-generation Indo-Lilly, Neela is a member of the Indian diaspora settled on Lilliput-Blefuscu. At an early age she migrates to America but she carries her heritage with her, as evidenced by her New York apartment where "India was insisted upon everywhere...the *filmi* music, the candles and incense, the Krishna-and-milkmaids calendar, the dhurries on the floor, the Company School painting, the hookah coiled atop a bookcase" (208). Neela clearly has a sentimental fondness for her roots, but she also remains conscious of her social and political responsibilities as an Indo-Lilly to care for the land she once considered "home." Her attitude speaks to Appiah's vision of a new kind of global belonging comprised of cosmopolitan patriots who "would accept the citizen's responsibility to nurture the culture and politics of their homes" (176), as multiple and diverse as they may be.

When news of an Indo-Lilly uprising protesting restrictions established by the indigenous Elbees to limit Indo-Lilly participation in the government of Lilliput-Blefuscu reaches Neela, she takes immediate action. She marches in a protest

in New York's Washington Square and initiates a documentary film of the growing resistance movement. She declares to Malik, 'If it comes to it I'll go back. I'll fight alongside them if I have to, shoulder to shoulder. I'm not kidding, I really will' (159). When a full-blown revolution commences and the Indo-Lilly "Fremen" (226) orchestrate a coup to overthrow the Elbee government, Neela acts upon her vow and returns to the island. Malik recognizes and appreciates her commitment, even confessing that his own rage seems, in the context of the significance of the Indo-Lilliputians' battle for equality and democracy, paltry. Nevertheless, he has reservations about the Indo-Lilly initiative when he arrives on the island, in essence entering the realm of his own fantastical creation, to find the revolutionaries disguised as members of the fictional Puppet Kings.

The fact that the Indo-Lilly revolution is performed in masks portraying characters from Malik's pop-cultural, mass-marketed fantasy world of dolls and puppets points to a number of issues. Most immediately it speaks to Rushdie's previously-articulated concerns regarding the awesome reach, influence, and homogenizing power of American mass consumer culture, exporting its goods to all corners of the world – even to the South Pacific island of Lilliput-Blefuscu. In addition, the masking of the revolutionaries as fictional characters implies a trivialization of genuine claims of oppressed peoples to freedom and equality of rights. The movement is, in effect, rendered ridiculous and untenable as a superficial, simulated, and commercialized parody of what should be an authentic, purposeful political initiative. In this way, Rushdie expresses his own

skepticism about the validity of nationalist projects, like that of the Indo-Lilliputians, which are founded in narratives of ethnic particularism and insularity. Finally, there is the notion of the mask itself, which suggests a retreat behind constructed identities and an unwillingness to negotiate or communicate with others. In the face of ethnic, racial, and nationalist divide, Rushdie emphasizes the need for intercultural exchange and the creation of hybrid spaces in which divergent groups interface and are “set against each other dialogically” (Bakhtin 360). In “this dialogized view of hybridity,” Jaina Sanga asserts, “different voices are pitted against each other, and each has the potential to ‘unmask’ the other” (85). In order for tensions to be resolved on Lilliput-Blefuscu, therefore, the opposing sides must “unmask” each other, move beyond the façade of the immutable “I,” and enter into productive dialogue.

As the revolutionaries progressively gain control of Lilliput-Blefuscu, demanding a free and sovereign Filbistan, Malik detects that the leader of the operation, Babur, and his officials are becoming increasingly despotic. The movement has crossed a line, and the initial objectives of nation building – the securing of democracy, sovereignty, and progress for all – have been obscured by the dictates of an increasingly fundamentalist regime led by “a little Napoleon who,” Malik informs Neela, “will oppress ‘your people’ if he comes out of this on top, even more than the ethnic Elbees...Or he’ll oppress them just as much but in a different way” (248). Malik’s earlier musings regarding one of his Puppet Kings storylines become particularly pertinent, as he questions, “How far, in the pursuit

of right, could we go before we crossed a line, arrived at the antipodes of ourselves, and became wrong?" (188).

Rushdie is clearly articulating his concerns with the postcolonial nationalist endeavour. His fear is that projects of nation building, while commendable and necessary to the rehabilitation of oppressed peoples, have historically often resulted in the removal of one tyrannical colonialist regime and the replacement of it with another different yet equally severe, authoritarian form of governance – Pakistan (from which the name Filbistan originates) being the obvious example. The danger inherent in narratives of nationalism, as Amitava Kumar notes, occurs when "the 'soft' emotion of nostalgia...is turned into the 'hard' emotion of fundamentalism" (30), driving groups to extremes in order to secure an imagined and idealized vision of the "homeland". In an ironic invocation of the unofficial slogan of the British Empire, Babur, addressing Malik, asserts, "You, too, will witness these first bright hours of our beloved Filbistan, upon which the sun never sets" (245). The implication is that postcolonial national governments like that led by Babur and his followers are, if not properly conceived, potentially as dangerous and oppressive as any of the European empires at the height of imperialism.

Malik confronts Neela, challenging her to resist being consumed by the hypocrisy of the Filbistani movement and to stand by her own cosmopolitan belief in the capacity of ordinary human love, rather than exclusionary narratives of authenticity, to settle seemingly irreconcilable differences. "Here it is, Neela,

your Galileo moment” (249), Malik declares, “When life asked the living whether they would dangerously stand by the truth or prudently recant it” (188). The truth is that the Indo-Lilliputian coup betrays Neela’s cosmopolitan ideals, falling back on a destructive extremism. Taking advantage of her Galileo moment, she stands by her own truth while recanting that of Babur and his revolutionaries. Torn between doing what she knows to be right and supporting unconditionally “her people,” Neela decides to put an end to the revolution by turning Babur over to the Elbee authorities. She opts, however, to stay on the island and is killed in her determination to not desert the Indo-Lilliputians in their defeat. Her death, paradoxically, signifies both an admirable commitment and a sense of responsibility as a cosmopolitan patriot to her “homeland” and the senseless loss that results from ethnic and national absolutism.

Through his connections to Dubdub, Mila, Jack, and most especially Neela, Malik learns to value the places and people who have been instrumental in shaping him, while maintaining a cosmopolitan vision of belonging that does not confine him to categories of race, ethnicity, or nationality. He understands that in order to survive the fury of postmodernity, he must move not away from but toward himself, his past, and others. With his Bombay childhood no longer the paralyzing, unmentionable dark secret that it was, Malik can conceive of a future in which he and his son, Asmaan, can be together. Malik’s return to England at the end of the novel to re-establish a relationship with Asmaan suggests a promising time to come for Malik. Reaffirming the youthful hope and

optimism of his son, Malik imitates Asmaan's joyful playfulness by climbing onto a bouncy castle in the park and yelling, in the attempt to attract his son's attention, "Look at me!...Look at me, Asmaan! I'm bouncing very well! I'm bouncing higher and higher!" (259). Like Rai in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, it seems likely that Malik will find stability, rebirth, and perhaps even happiness in the simple, ordinary features of daily life; however, Rushdie offers no guarantees.

Fury may be a testament to the need for human connection in a constantly shifting world, but by the novel's end Malik is still very much alone. With Neela gone and Eleanor filing for divorce, Malik does not have the ready-made family that Rai has. There are no "o.j and muffins", no sense of a definite or satisfactory conclusion for Malik. In this way, Rushdie remains true to the more "realistic" tone that *Fury* evokes, as a novel that reflects the contradictory, present moment of hopeful apprehension.

NOTES

¹ In 1998 the Iranian government attempted to revoke the *fatwa* by stating that it would no longer encourage Muslims to kill Rushdie. Muslim fundamentalists, however, refused to comply with the unofficial decree and continued to offer a sizable bounty on Rushdie's life. Remaining aware of the threat to his person, Rushdie, by the turn of the millennium was gradually emerging from hiding, making more appearances, and giving interviews. In April of 2000 he traveled to India for the first time since the banning of *The Satanic Verses* and the pronouncement of the *fatwa* with his son, Zafar. Reportedly he has been living in New York City since early 2000.

² As a result of the events of September 11th, *Fury* has been relegated to the obsolete pile by many critics, including the author himself, who assert that the present moment that the book attempts to articulate has, in effect, passed, "So that now, the book which was written as a satirical novel about America, turns into a historical novel almost overnight because if you read it now it's like writing about another world" (Kreye 1). Interestingly, in the aftermath of the tragedy, Rushdie has been vocal about defending America against the proliferation of anti-American sentiment: "Let's be clear about why this *bien-pensant* anti-American onslaught is such appalling rubbish. Terrorism is the murder of the innocent; this time, it was mass murder. To excuse such an atrocity by blaming U.S. government policies is to deny the basic idea of all morality: that individuals are responsible for their actions" ("Fighting the Forces of Invisibility" A25). Despite his concerns with the culturally and economically homogenizing tendencies of America articulated in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, and the superficial simulacra of American mass consumer culture that leads to disappointment and exacerbated hostilities between divergent groups depicted in *Fury*, Rushdie sings the praises of America, asserting that the nation remains a bastion of civil liberties: "freedom of speech, a multi-party political system, universal adult suffrage, accountable government, Jews, homosexuals, women's rights, pluralism, secularism, short skirts, dancing, beardlessness, evolution theory, sex" ("Fighting the Forces of Invisibility" A25). Evidently, Rushdie remains torn, like his protagonists Rai and Malik, between a dream-America, where he leads his "well-off, green-carded life" (*The Ground Beneath Her Feet* 419), and the reality of a nation that does not always exercise its power and economic might responsibly.

³ Though Rushdie denies any connection, there has been critical speculation that Lilliput-Blefuscu is an allegorical construction of the Fijian islands. Following independence from the British Empire in 1970, ethnic tensions between Indian-born Fijians (initially brought from India under British control to work as indentured labourers in Fiji), and indigenous Fijians have escalated over issues

of governmental participation and civil rights. The tension resulted in two armed coups in 1987 led by indigenous Fijians determined to overthrow a coalition government dominated by ethnic Indians. The result was a rewriting of the constitution giving preferential treatment to indigenous Fijians. Since that time, there have been instances of ongoing ethnic persecution and terrorism. See Michael C. Howard, *Fiji: Race and Politics in an Island State* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1991).

Conclusion

Rushdie's Interim Report

...speculations about utopia are everyone's prerogative.

Arjun Appadurai (65)

For the most part, I have attempted to examine the positive, enabling aspects of Rushdie's cosmopolitanism as a vision of belonging that subverts fundamentalist binaristic thinking, emphasizes the creation of alternative hybrid contact zones of transculturation, and foregrounds the need, in an ever-changing world, to constantly re-imagine personal and collective identities and the meaning of "home". I have argued, furthermore, that Rushdie's work calls for an establishment of a global citizenship that charges the dislocated individual with the responsibility of creating and caring for multiple and diverse local affiliations while simultaneously remaining loyal to the global human community.

Rushdie is, however, not without his share of critics, and while my reading focuses primarily on the strengths of his narrative vision as it has progressed over the last decade or so, it is important to note also the criticisms to which he has been subjected for the limitations, or silences, in his work. He has frequently come under attack, by the likes of Timothy Brennan especially, for being a member of an elite group of "Third World" intellectuals, "who have been elevated by global media-markets and metropolitan academies as the pre-eminent

interpreters of postcolonial realities to postmodern audiences” (Krishnaswamy 127). In Brennan’s estimation, Rushdie’s work is exemplary of “a trend of cosmopolitan commentators on the Third World, who offer an *inside view* of formerly submerged peoples for target reading publics in Europe and North America in novels that comply with metropolitan literary tastes” (*Salman Rushdie and the Third World* 26). Obscured in the translation to a Western readership in Rushdie’s novels, according to Brennan, is the reality of the ongoing, crucial struggle of “Third World” countries to achieve a national culture, as “their collective visions are often foreshortened in the personal filter of Rushdie’s fiction” (166). As Rushdie recognizes, this argument is one among several broader debates about the role of Indian authors in the West who choose to write about South Asia in English rather than their “mother tongues,” and who practise what he calls the “new literature” of postcolonialism. He observes that these new cosmopolitan writers, including Bharati Mukherjee, Hanif Kureishi, and Anita Desai, among others

are denigrated for being too upper-middle-class; for lacking diversity in their choice of themes and techniques; for being less popular in India than outside India; for possessing inflated reputations on account of the international power of the English language,...for living, in many cases, outside India; for being deracinated to the point that their work lacks the spiritual dimension essential for a ‘true’ understanding of the soul of India; for being insufficiently grounded in the ancient literary traditions of India; for being the literary equivalent of MTV culture, of globalising Coca-Colonisation; even, I’m sorry to report, for suffering from a condition [called] ‘Rushdie-it is’. (*The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* xiii)

While Brennan’s criticisms may indeed be justified, his understanding of cosmopolitanism is itself limited and does not, I suggest, provide a useful means

of examining Rushdie's contemporary work. The brand of cosmopolitanism that Brennan mistrusts and regards as evident in Rushdie's narratives, more closely resembles Stoical and Enlightenment notions of an abstract universalism that refuses to address issues of cultural, ethnic, or national difference, and supports the wanderings of the detached expatriate who promiscuously embraces everything and, therefore, nothing. In the words of Ross Posnock,

Painting the cosmopolitan as the morally and politically arrogant enemy of difference, Brennan provides little or no sense of other dimensions of the subject, including cosmopolitanism as a force for egalitarian inclusion. Feeling morally obliged to celebrate difference at the expense of the universal, Brennan ignores that the two are symbiotically entwined. (816)

Rushdie's cosmopolitanism, akin to the "new" cosmopolitanisms described by Homi Bhabha, James Clifford, and Anthony Appiah, manages to celebrate difference, insisting upon the creation of hybrid realities, while maintaining a sense of the significance of global human interconnectivity.

In addition to charges of "Third World" intellectual elitism and cosmopolitan celebrity, Rushdie has also been criticized, and legitimately so, for presenting an incomplete articulation of the migrant experience that frequently neglects to differentiate between various kinds of migrancy. Rushdie has been accused of universalizing the migrant condition, presenting a romanticized, almost heroic image of the displaced individual. Revathi Krishnaswamy argues persuasively that

any mythology of migrancy that fails to differentiate rigorously between diverse modalities of postcolonial diaspora, such as migrant intellectuals, migrant labour, economic refugees, political exile, and self-exile, exploits the subordinate position of the 'Third World,' suppresses the class/gender

differentiated histories of immigration, robs the oppressed of the vocabulary of protest, and blunts the edges of a much-needed oppositional discourse. (130)

Krishnaswamy suggests, in other words, that Rushdie tends to dematerialize the figure of the migrant into an abstract notion that does not always adequately consider pertinent issues of class and gender. As Rushdie has himself acknowledged in his essay, "Outside the Whale," literature is not an activity that occurs inside a cultural vacuum. Rather, "in this world without quiet corners, there can be no easy escapes from history, from hullabaloo, from terrible, unquiet fuss" (101). Literature necessarily engages with the social, political, and economic realities of the world. Sabrina Hassumani notes that Rushdie "has been critiqued for not always acknowledging his own subjective investment in the narrative he produces, and to borrow a phrase from Spivak, for not unlearning his privilege" (22). Admittedly, much of Rushdie's work articulates the migrant experience of exclusively urban, upper-middle-class, educated, and economically privileged individuals like Saladin, Rai, and Malik, and does not always express the experiences of a broader immigrant community such as the one in which the Sufyans reside in London in *The Satanic Verses*. On issues of class discrimination and the status of women in immigrant communities Rushdie's work is often disappointingly silent, suggesting, wrongly, that the experiences of Saladin, Rai, and Malik are characteristic of all immigrants.

The obvious danger in equating all forms of migrancy and belonging is the fallacious assumption that there is an existing global community of equals, and

clearly this is not the case. Inequality and injustice proliferate, breeding resentment, discrimination, and escalating tribalism. With the world becoming increasingly integrated, issues of identity and difference become more critical as we attempt to envision and articulate our global future. I invoke the term “we” here and in Chapter One hesitatingly, for questions arise as to who constitutes the “we”; that is, who will be included in the envisioning and articulation of the future, as unquestionably the contemporary world is, as Saskia Sassen notes, far from “the terrain of a balanced playing field” (*Globalization and Its Discontents* xxxiv). I believe, however, that Rushdie is fully aware of the disparities that exist in our increasingly globalized world and, in this regard, *Fury* signifies a shift in his writing that recognizes the need to account more than ever for multiple perspectives on immigration and the ways in which newness enters the world. His most recent work indicates an increased desire to give voice to the anxieties and frustrations of a less-privileged migrant and to explore the vast contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in the twenty-first-century experience of migration and the enactment of a global citizenship.

Rushdie’s narrative vision is undoubtedly and self-consciously flawed. “Literature,” as he says, “is an interim report from the consciousness of the artist, and so it can never be ‘finished’ or ‘perfect’” (“Is Nothing Sacred?” 427). Nevertheless, his work continues to contribute to the vital and growing body of world texts that celebrate some of our finest ideas and challenge some of our

coarsest beliefs. Never one to be silenced, Rushdie will likely, and hopefully, persist in doing that which he knows best how to do: provoke.

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