The Post-Colonial Condition:

The Fiction of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy

Thesis submitted in accordance with the
requirements of the University of Liverpool
for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy.

by

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November 2001

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to analyse and redefine Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's fiction in terms of their representation of the post-colonial condition. The novels of Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi and Arundhati Roy are considered as neither postcolonial*ist* nor postmodernist, but as 'post-colonial novels' in terms of their historical period. They cannot be regarded as postcolonialist because of their ambivalent political stance. The post-colonial condition is defined as the condition after Independence, when modified pre-colonial concepts create culturally hybrid individuals. The fiction of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy is inevitably hybrid as a result of this hybrid culture. The post-colonial condition, regarded as the source of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's unconventional style and themes, is used in this thesis as a response to Lyotard's postmodern condition.

Contrary to postmodernist assumptions, in which the fiction of these authors is commonly analysed, this thesis presents Rushdie's novels as traditionally Eastern on account of their Persian, Arabic and Central Asian literary and artistic techniques. Roy's linguistic liberties and techniques drawn from magical realism are also presented as the consequences of her post-colonial condition and her ethnic background. Kureishi's fiction also presents post-colonial cultural hybridity. His novels are characteristically post-colonial in terms of their representation of culturally and genealogically hybrid British Asians in London, which is an unfamiliar content for his traditionally Western style.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

First of all, I am indebted to the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey, for awarding me a scholarship. I am grateful to Mr Tony Barley, my supervisor, for his faith in this project, his guidance and his friendship. I also wish to thank: Professor David Seed, Dr Faye Hammill, Dr Ralph Pite for their invaluable suggestions and kind interest in my work; the English Department and Humanities Graduate School for their contribution towards a conference trip to the USA; and Professor Geoff Ward from the University of Dundee for his interest and further suggestions for publishing.

For me, the memory of my parents has been the greatest motivation in all aspects of my life. I want to pay tribute to them for everything they taught me during their numbered years with me.

John and Jacqui Hill are the most special people in Liverpool for my family and me. I cannot thank them enough for patiently listening to the stories about the progress of my thesis and their earnest friendship that made our life in Liverpool a great pleasure. We will never forget them.

I would like to thank Ahmet Saral and Alparslan Babaoğlu, two 'ebru' artists from Turkey, for their kind permission to use their ebrus in this thesis.

I sincerely thank my friends Elliott Attkins, Bennett Huffman, John Soutter, and Jonathan Thorpe for their suggestions, proof reading, support and friendship.

I owe an apology to Ozan, my Liverpool-born son, for obliging him to act like a grown up when I took him to the library with me many times instead of parks or playgrounds. I love him for taking a very early responsibility to leave me alone during hectic periods of my writing.

My final gratitude goes to my wife Hatice whose never-ending love, kindness, understanding and support gave me the strength and determination to complete this work. Thanking her, with all my love, for being with me all through this.

Introduction

A Yoghurt Seller

Some four years ago, in a modern Southwest Turkish city on the Mediterranean where I grew up, a long forgotten sight of a traditional yoghurt seller struck everyone in a crowded inter-city coach station. He was one of those yoghurt sellers in traditional clothes who sold dairy products in two buckets or baskets hanging on each end of a long stick carried across the shoulders. The sight of him was not only surprising in testifying that such wandering trades still existed, but was also appalling and shocking on account of the contents of his twinned baskets. He sold car stereos instead of yoghurt; the containers dangling from his yoke were full of them.

Such juxtapositions are part of daily life in countries where western cultural influence has become dominant through the prevalence of such western products, while people still present eastern cultural forms -- the yoke and panniers -- in juxtaposition with those western products. As an individual from a country bridging the eastern and western worlds in particularly striking contradictions, I do not find Salman Rushdie's

fiction strange and alien. His descriptions of cultural clashes are not solely those of a formerly colonised nation, but also those of sundry developing and underdeveloped countries, which have been taken up under the influence of an aggressive global capitalism. The multiple stories, multiculturalism, multilingual communities, the various religions and belief systems which constitute Rushdie's fragmental structure and apparently individualistic combination of humour and pathos are not necessarily the characteristics of India. They are the characteristics of any country that has a similar variety of landscapes and a complementary diversity of religious and cultural values and practices.

The representation of such conditions produces a fragmental structure, and Rushdie's linguistically free style with its multiple puns seems neither alien nor avant-garde to the consciousness of the writer of this thesis. I always had the sight of that yoghurt seller in my mind while reading Rushdie's novels. What caused such cultural contradictions and juxtapositions and how to define the crumbling episodic stories depicting these situations, particularly when they are written in the English language in the western novel genre, became important to me. That was how this study started.

However, to the western world, Rushdie is a post-modernist writer. If his fiction defies or eschews the conventions of traditional novel forms, it does so in ways that are reminiscent of Joyce, Faulkner, Grass, Borges or Márquez. Clearly, Rushdie is completely au fait with the Anglo-American modernists and his idiosyncratic approach and style do not rely solely on eastern literary forms and traditions. Rushdie's tendencies to use Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Turkic cultural forms are combined in his writing in a hybrid mixture taking as much account of Günter Grass or Gabriel Garcia Marquez as it

does with the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights* which the author always admits his admiration for, and cites as a major influence on his writing.

Rushdie is not only a postmodernist writer, but also, for some, a postcolonialist writer, expressing an opposition to colonial rule. Exploring all of his texts and defining his fiction in relation to the western terms used to describe his work has become the major concern of this thesis. Alongside Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, another prominent British author of Indian origin is included in this study with two of his novels, because he is more or less Rushdie's contemporary. Both of them write *from* the perspective of *post*-Imperial immigrants and their second generations *back* to the Empire *in* the imperial centre itself: London. In other words, they write from and about the same milieux, concerning themselves with middle-class Asians, and they have enjoyed 'the same international acclaim'[1] during the same decade.

For an alternative, yet complementary perspective, another Indian author writing *from* Bombay is examined in this thesis: Arundhati Roy completes the triangle of authors of this study with her as yet only novel *The God of Small Things*, published in 1997 when my present research began. Roy's novel has a unique style; her work was acclaimed critically worldwide. Her apparently Rushdiesque style and linguistic liberties, her post-colonial condition and hybridity immediately justify her inclusion in this work.

These surprisingly contradictory scenes like the yoghurt seller can be observed now, in the lives of post-colonial and economic migrants *in* the Western world. However, I would like to regard the cultural clashes, hybridity and ambivalence in

[1] Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation,* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 150

Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's fiction as consequences of the post-colonial condition because these authors still represent their formerly colonised culture while writing in the coloniser's language. My contention is that we still need the term 'post-colonial' in its periodical sense to point out the historical reasons for the hybridity and ambivalence in the novels in question. On the other hand, in contrast to many critics who study Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy within the assumptions of postcolonial and postmodernist literary theories, postcolonialism, in its stylistic sense, is deemed inaccurate in dealing with these texts, as will be discussed in Part One below.

I use the term 'post-colonial' throughout this thesis only to signify the time following colonial rule in India, and the 'post-colonial condition' to refer to the consequences of the former colonial rule on the colonised land and the impact of post-colonial migration in the imperial centre. It is this post-colonial condition that produces a cultural mixture and ambivalence, although these may also be the issues for any underdeveloped country or even a Western country that attracts economical migrants. The sight of the yoghurt seller, in this respect, is a significant cultural contrast in Turkey, which is not a former colony, but a former coloniser: the imperial Ottoman Empire. The deployment of themes and images which, therefore, attach equally to coloniser and colonised nations cannot make for a postcolonial*ist* stance when that term is understood in its anti-imperialist sense. Indeed, in Rushdie's case, political independence is not unambivalently celebrated; often independence is satirised. The central irony of his novels is that 'independence has damaged Indian spirits'.[2] Rushdie is not a postcolonialist writer, who may be regarded as totally anti-colonialist. He writes that the

[2] Brennan, Ibid., p. 27.

'[India] that had never existed was suddenly "free".'[3] India is a crumbling, deformed body in fragments, much like the body of Saleem in *Midnight's Children* with which Rushdie associates India.

Rushdie is, however, post-colonial in terms of historical period. His cultural mixture is conspicuous in the form as much as in the content of his fiction. Words from several languages including Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Turkish, and literary techniques blended from several cultures constitute his fiction. Timothy Brennan calls this 'Rushdie's linguistic polymorphism'.[4] As well as this form, the cultural mixture, the unexpected clashes between cultures are the major concerns in his novels. On the other hand, the mixture of cultural genres and 'linguistic polymorphism' is not evident in Kureishi's novels. Nonetheless Kureishi's novels represent a multicultural world in London, with Asians who own small businesses and have influential relatives from the home country visiting an England 'that has come to look, as Kureishi once put it, "very much like a Third World country".'[5] His bare descriptions, lacking literary experimentation and stylistic novelty, are striking enough in themselves to surprise the reader by their unexpected combinations, in similar manner to the yoghurt seller's situation. Kureishi's post-colonial condition is London's multicultural society. Roy's post-colonial condition centres on in Kerala, where *The God of Small Things* is set. As opposed to Kureishi's post-colonial London, Roy describes a post-colonial Kerala and in so doing produces a unique style, which has been compared to that of Faulkner.[6]

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[3] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*, (London: Granta Books, 1991) p. 27.
[4] Brennan, Ibid., p. 153.
[5] Quoted in Brennan, op. cit., p. 150
[6] John Updike, 'Mother Tongues: Subduing the Language of the Coloniser.' *The New Yorker*, (23 June 1997), p. 156.

Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy also present substantial allusions and evince intertextual relations to both Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. Kipling and Forster were the first English colonial novelists to write about India and place imperialist ideology, its administration and the people under its rule at the centre of their novels. The same mutual perspective between the coloniser and the colonised culture presented in their fiction is also observed in Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's novels, although they are regarded as post-colonial fiction. Rushdie and Kureishi's ambivalent characterisations and hybrid protagonists, their satirical approach to both cultures, and Roy's critical representation of Anglophilia do not only recall *Kim* and *A Passage to India*'s equally ambivalent and mutual perspectives, but also display direct allusions to these colonial novels. For this reason, both *Kim* and *A Passage to India* have inevitably become the most frequently mentioned novels in comparison to *Midnight's Children*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The God of Small Things*. In both *Kim* and *A Passage to India*, the words borrowed from native languages are used freely within the English text, particularly as in Rushdie's texts. So, Kipling and Forster also acknowledged cultural differences and accepted alien culture as it is, rather than attempting to redefine it in relation to a more dominant culture. Like post-colonial authors, Kipling and Forster, as colonial authors, were influenced by the mode of thinking of both English and colonial language and its culture, which enabled them to depict Indians and the English from a mutual perspective. This has become one of the main reasons to discard the use of the term 'postcolonialism' as a stylistic and an ideological term, since the same ambivalence, hybridity and multiple satire could be observed in colonial writing. The following chapters, therefore, will also present

readings of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's writing in comparison to major colonial texts by Kipling, Forster and Conrad.

Most of the stylistic strategies deployed in Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's novels are within the definitions of postmodernist fiction. The most significant among these techniques are magical realism, 'historiographic metafiction'[7] problematizing and rewriting history in fiction, intertextual allusions, relations and influences, non-linear narratives, oral storytelling and recycling fictional materials among their own texts. These strategies, however, are studied in this thesis in relation to these authors' traditional literary cultures inherited from their cultural origins. Magical realism as the combination of fantastic and realistic elements in fiction, for instance, is a strategy of the Eastern literary traditions, as in *One Thousand and One Nights*. Oral storytelling, a traditional Eastern storytelling device,[8] has little to do with postmodernism, and intertextual relations are an oral storyteller's natural digressions. History is not only a material for the postmodernist writers, but also for the traditional reciters of dastans, a medieval central Asian oral literary genre, which rewrites history. Therefore, these strategies are not studied under the assumptions of postmodernist literary theory here.

There are substantial critical and academic works about Rushdie's fiction. One of the earliest and most important book-length studies on his fiction is Timothy Brennan's *Salman Rushdie and the Third World*. Rushdie had only published four novels and one non-fiction book about his journey to Nicaragua by 1989. Naturally, the only literary works that Brennan's book includes are *Grimus*, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, and *The*

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[7] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1988) p. 105.

[8] Rushdie's oral narrators are very much like the narrators of qissas and dastans, as will be discussed in Part One, also confirmed by himself.

Satanic Verses. He reads Rushdie's fiction in the third world context, relating his fiction to a general third world condition rather than to Rushdie's specifically post-colonial Indian condition.[9]

James Harrison's *Salman Rushdie* is again concerned only with literary texts by Rushdie, excluding *The Jaguar Smile.* Although published in 1992, Harrison's book does not include *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* published in 1990. Harrison gives a biography of Rushdie, devotes the first chapter to history, religion and politics in India so as to understand Rushdie's fiction better, and then deals, like Brennan, with the first four Rushdie novels.[10] Catherine Cundy's *Salman Rushdie*, unlike Harrison and Brennan, presents a chapter length entry on *Haroun*, but *The Jaguar Smile* is not included. Cundy also includes *The Moor's Last Sigh* in her book. Therefore, her book becomes the first to study Rushdie's sixth novel academically.[11]

D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke's *Salman Rushdie* studies all the novels and non-fiction books by Rushdie including *The Jaguar Smile. The Ground Beneath Her Feet* had not yet been published.[12] *Salman Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, a selection of essays edited by D. M. Fletcher, provides various critical perspectives on Rushdie's novels addressing all of his writing up to 1994.[13] *The Rushdie File* edited by Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland offers a selection of newspaper reviews, interviews, essays both in opposition and support of *The Satanic Verses*. Despite its main concern being the notorious *fatwa* and its aftermath, the interviews and articles contained therein

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[9] Brennan, 1989.
[10] James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie*, (ed.) Kinley E. Boby, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992)
[11] Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996)
[12] D. C. R. A. Goonetileke, *Salman Rushdie*, (London: Macmillan, 1998)
[13] D. M. Fletcher (ed.), *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994)

provide a rather helpful insight into the understanding and exploration of Rushdie's fiction.[14]

Feroza Jussawalla's 'Rushdie's *Dastan-e-Dilruba*: *The Satanic Verses* as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam' in *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* is probably the only essay to deny Rushdie's post-British colonial condition, and declare his writing as the continuation of his post-Mughal colonial inheritance of Persian and Arabic literary forms. Jussawalla, in a sense, studies Rushdie as a writer of Persian and Arabic literary traditions such as *qissa* and *dastan*, and she refers to his post-colonial condition not as post-British but as post-Mughal, more Islamic and more eastern.

Kenneth Kaleta's *Hanif Kureishi: Post-colonial Storyteller* deals not only with his novels, but also with his screenwriting and plays. Through exclusive interviews with the author, Kaleta discusses all of his writing including the films and plays.[15] There is, as yet, no book length study on Arundhati Roy. The only criticism available is the reviews of her novel, a limited number of interviews and essays published mainly in *ARIEL*.

This thesis is concerned with these three authors' novels, excluding their short stories, plays, screenplays and non-fiction writing, because it aims to explore the post-colonial Indian identity and its cultural influences on the 'Western novel' genre. Only five novels, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* by Rushdie are included since this is not a study solely devoted to his fiction, excluding *Grimus*, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, *East, West* and his latest novel *Fury*. *Grimus*, his first novel, was not critically acclaimed. It was Rushdie's attempt to create a fantastic-allegorical science fiction novel. *Grimus* does not

[14] Lisa Appignanesi, & S Maitland (ed.), *The Rushdie File*, (London: Fourth Estate, 1989)
[15] Kenneth Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi: Post-colonial Storyteller*, (Austin: Texas University Press, 1998)

represent the post-colonial historical metaphors and alternative histories that would shape his fictional strategies in his future novels. Because it would not be relevant for the purposes of this thesis and also because it does not dovetail with the other authors' texts, it is excluded here. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* is also not included, for similar reasons. This is a children's book, written by Rushdie to fulfil a promise to his son Zafar.[16] Although *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* refers to and utilises *One Thousand and One Nights*, it is otherwise outside the scope of this study. His latest novel *Fury*, set in New York, is published in September 2001, when this thesis was completed. It is the story of a middle aged professor who leaves his wife and young son in London to live with his young girlfriend in New York, and bears strong connections to the author's personal life. Although *Fury* uses many of Rushdie's collaboration of Western genres with those of Eastern literature and Bollywood cinema, and use of magical realism as in his earlier novels, it is not included here since it does not significantly present the post-colonial hybridity of Rushdie's earlier novels. Instead of these, *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses* that constitute a trilogy are the major Rushdie novels studied in this thesis. *The Moor's Last Sigh* is also included, because it is a kind of sequel to *Midnight's Children*. It presents the same hybridity as in *Midnight's Children* and the other two books in the trilogy. However, its hybridity and post-colonial condition are rather strained, and it fails to carry the formerly developed Rushdiesque techniques further. Therefore, the part of the thesis devoted to this novel is shorter than the parts devoted to the three major texts. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is quite a different text among other Rushdie novels, although it still represents many of the

[16] Peter Brigg, 'Salman Rushdie's Novels: The Disorder in Fantastic Order', *World Literature Written In English*, 27:1 (1987), p. 119.

characteristics of his other fiction. It is a novel about rock music. Rushdie attempts to rewrite the history of rock'n'roll. It is also considered in this study due to its thematic resemblance to Kureishi's novels in terms of its employment of pop music references.

Only two novels by Hanif Kureishi are studied: *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*. *The Buddha of Suburbia* was Kureishi's first novel, published in 1990. It quickly earned him critical acclaim and in 1993, was made into a TV series for the BBC. It is a colourful depiction of the identity problem of the hybrid second-generation immigrants. Although it does not have the structural and stylistic innovations that Rushdie's novels present, it is also an important novel for the purposes of this study because of the cultural clashes and juxtapositions of British and Indian identities. Kureishi's second novel, *The Black Album*, published in 1995, has not been as well received critically as *The Buddha of Suburbia*. It is, however, a colourful and lively depiction of the identity problems of a British-Pakistani youth searching for pleasure in London. Even though it does not represent a new idea in Kureishi's fiction and does not take any of *The Buddha of Suburbia*'s originality further, it has a significant and relevant historical dimension. It rewrites the notorious fanatical protest in which a copy of *The Satanic Verses* was burnt and depicts the agony and annoyance over the 'Rushdie Affair'. Being a fictional history of the events in 1989, *The Black Album* is both an important intertextual allusion to *The Satanic Verses* in support of the 'freedom of speech' and a celebration of the multinational and multiracial cultural scene in contemporary London. *Intimacy*, Kureishi's third novel published in 1998, is too personal and autobiographical to be included here. The multiculturalism and hybridity Kureishi joyfully describes and highlights in his earlier novels have disappeared in this

novel of sexual and intimate account of a petit-bourgeois marriage breakdown. His latest novel, *Gabriel's Gift*, published in late 2000, does not represent Kureishi's talent as a novelist at all. It is largely constructed upon conversations rather than novelistic depictions, making the text look more like a film script. Therefore, *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album* are the two major Kureishi texts dealt with here.

Besides *The God of Small Things* Arundhati Roy has written a non-fiction book, *The Cost of Living* in late 1999, named after the last chapter of her novel. It is a compilation of her writing in opposition to a dam project to be built in Gujarat, which will leave probably thousands of people homeless. With this book, she exhibits the militant political attitude that she is criticised for lacking in *The God of Small Things*.[17]

Due to the fact that this study includes three authors, the thesis is presented in parts, each of which is devoted to one author. Because all of these writers have been studied under the assumptions of mainly postmodernist and post-colonial literary theories, it has become inevitable to define these theories and question their relevance. Part One, therefore, deals with these theories and argues that post-colonial can only be used to refer to a period, rather than a style, because it is more rational to periodise the term than attribute certain stylistic characteristics to it. Since there are and have been many colonialisms and post-colonial periods in different parts of the world, the term in its stylistic sense would not be adequate. It is, therefore, more valid to use the term in a periodical than a stylistic sense. On the other hand, the first chapter argues that postmodernism is not accurate as a stylistic term, because all the stylistic characteristics mentioned in the definitions of the term could be observed in the cultural traditions of

[17] Aijaz Ahmad, 'Reading Arundhati Roy *Politically*', *Frontline* (8 Aug, 1997), p. 103.

Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy, as well as in Western texts of earlier centuries, such as *Tristram Shandy*. Therefore, for present purposes the term postmodernism is regarded as having little stylistic or periodical validity.

Part Two is the section on Rushdie's novels, and it starts with an introductory chapter called 'Traditional and Ethnic Devices in Rushdie's Novels', presenting some visual and literary art forms that may have affected the patterns in Rushdie's writing. Two visual arts, kilim and ebru extending across central Asia, from India as far as Asia Minor, are described in this chapter in relation to Rushdie's fiction in order to indicate that Rushdie's traditional inheritance creates his flamboyant fiction. Kilim is a rug woven by multiple weavers, and ebru is an amalgam of colours patterned on water, as will be described in more detail in Part Two. Both of these visual arts offer a repeated and varied pattern, suggesting an origin for the variety of themes and devices via multiple plots in the fiction of Indian writers in English, who inevitably combine these with Western novelistic strategies. As Feroza Jussawalla puts it, Rushdie is not merely a writer of post-British colonialism, but also post-Mughal colonialism, [18] from which his linguistic polymorphism stems. Mughals, who had also Turkic antecedents, were the Muslim invaders of India, which of course suggests the origins of Rushdie's employment of Arabic, Persian and Turkic linguistic as well as artistic strategies in his fiction.

The subsequent chapters, individually devoted to a particular novel, have sections in them each studying a different literary device in that novel. The variety of material and its diversity in Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's novels refuses linearity in

[18] Feroza Jussawalla, "Rushdie's *Dastan-e-Dilruba*: *The Satanic Verses* as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam', *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism*, (Spring 1996), Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 51

argument and forces this sectional strategy to proceed via discussion of various devices and themes. The sections relate these devices and themes to the authors' post-colonial condition and their inheritance of traditional literary and visual artistic forms.

Part Three is devoted to Kureishi's writing. It has two individual chapters studying *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*. Part Four deals with Roy's *The God of Small Things*. This part studies the Rushdiesque influences on her fiction, and analyses her magical realist and other stylistic techniques provoking an inevitable comparison to Rushdie.

This study attempts to find a new analytic classification for the Indo-Anglian novels by Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy, intending to describe what is a genre of palimpsest, and what is also a kind of writing which is kilim-like in its construction and variety, interweaving multiple strands of Eastern and Western themes and devices. It is also an attempt to argue that the description of the post-colonial condition both in India and Britain allows for the unity of such variety.

Part One

Traditionalism within the Post-Colonial Condition

Since they are all authors of subcontinental origin writing in English after the end of British rule in India, any critical study of Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi and Arundhati Roy immediately invites a consideration of their novels in the light of the assumptions of post-colonial literary theories. I am deliberately using 'theories' in plural form because there are various and numerous post-colonial theories and definitions, all of which may affirmatively be related to any author from a formerly colonised nation. The difficulty of finding specific definitions of the terms related to 'post-colonial' has been prevalent ever since 'post-colonial theory' gained critical currency in academia. All of these definitions, however, have been generalising and one of the main problems has been that they fail to define the term's historical and geographical limitations. Distinguishing the ideological, stylistic and periodical uses has been another important problem. The purpose here is to discuss and interrogate whether or not such generalising definitions are relevant and acceptable in categorising and defining the novels of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy.

Postcolonialism and post-colonial are two different forms of the term used to refer to texts by authors of formerly colonised nations. In its simplest sense, post-

colonial is what comes after colonisation, as in Deepika Bahri's minimal definition, which understands the term as full of 'ideological content,'[1] directly and specifically referring to colonialism and imperialism. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin use the term to refer to all cultures 'affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day,' noting that more than three-quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism.'[2] However, it needs to be remembered that world history is replete with varieties of colonialism, and contemporary debate on 'globalisation' and 'third-world exploitation' suggests that colonialism is not a general 'post' condition but rather a more or less constant phenomenon. Therefore, if the term is meaningful in reference to the period after colonisation, it is necessary to clarify whose colonisation and what post(-)colonial(ism) is in question. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams point out 'early nineteenth-century Latin America and the end of Spanish and Portuguese control'.[3] Aijaz Ahmad stretches the 'post-colonial' to cover a period starting from as early as Arabic, Ottoman and Chinese colonial ventures, to the ongoing British rule in the Falklands and Belize or in Hong Kong until 1997. From Ahmad's point of view, colonialism 'becomes a trans-historical thing, always present and always a process of dissolution in one part of the world or another.'[4]

Stephen Slemon,[5] Childs and Williams,[6] and Bahri[7] find the term and concept useful only when it is not employed in reference to the post-independence period.

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[1] Deepika Bahri, 'Once more with Feeling: What is Postcolonialism?' *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 26:1, (January 1995) p. 51.
[2] B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1989) pp. 1-2.
[3] P. Childs & R. J. P. Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, (London & New York: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997) p. 1.
[4] Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality', *Race and Class*, 36, 3, (1995) p. 9.
[5] Stephen Slemon 'Modernism's Last Post,' in Ian Adam & Helen Tiffin (eds.), *Past the Last Post: Theorising Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) p. 3.
[6] Childs & Williams, Ibid., p. 4.
[7] Bahri, Ibid., p. 53

They all find it more helpful when post-colonial writing functions as specifically anti-colonialist, as a movement with a certain specified stance against colonialism rather than an indicator of a period. Despite the definitions of the critics above, who point out the term's political potential, post-colonial writing obstinately refuses to detach itself from the brute fact of colonisation as such. It cannot help but refer to historical antecedents and to the colonial condition, which is necessarily prior to 'post-colonial'. In short, there are two distinct, if related, uses of the term. One signifies the historical period that comes after colonialism. The other is the style and condition in which 'the colonised peoples seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical subjects' as Elleke Boehmer puts it. Boehmer suggests that postcolonial must be 'distinguished from the more conventional hyphenated term *post-colonial*', which she takes as a period term designating the post-Second World War era.[8] Postcolonialism, in its unhyphenated form, is in this sense, a cultural and political condition designating the aftermath of all experiences of colonisation. Perhaps the term when used in this sense, should be called 'anti-colonialism,' and such a stance could well have existed even in texts written during colonialism by the writers of a colonised culture. Indeed, as Robert J. C. Young points out, anti-colonialism in both eastern and western context is 'as old as colonialism itself.'[9] In this case, anti-colonialism or anti-imperialism is not necessarily a phenomenon of the post-colonial era historically.

If postcolonialism refers to a style when used with an '-ism', then it discards its historical connotations, since such a standpoint against colonialism could well be a standpoint in the literature written within the colonial period. For instance, there are

[8] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 3.
[9] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, (Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 2001) pp. 6, 66.

anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist characters who question the justification of British rule in India in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, although Forster wrote during colonial rule and obviously was not Indian. When the designation is used without an '-ism' and is hyphenated, it becomes merely a periodical term without any stylistic and ideological content, because the post-colonial era does not necessarily produce anti-imperialist texts. In the same way, the mere fact of having been written in the colonial era would not necessarily result in a pro-imperialist text. Therefore, as there may be anti-imperialist texts written during the colonial rule, there may as well be texts longing for the re-establishment of the colonial rule even in post-colonial times. There are also ambivalent texts with mutual satire and criticism against both the coloniser and the colonised cultures not only in the post-colonial era, but also in the colonial era. Thus all the strategies that are included in the definitions of an assumed postcolonial*ist* writing could indeed be perceived also in colonial writing.

Post-colonial without the '-ism', on the other hand, refers only to the historical era after the end of colonial rule. If Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy are called postcolonial*ist* writers, they will then have to be understood as authors with a stance against colonialist discourse. However, there is no need for the prefix 'post' to signify this feature. That sort of counter-discourse could well have been called anti-imperialism or anti-colonialism – a discourse that could also have been used during the colonial rule. It is not convincing to take postcolonialist discourse necessarily as meaning 'anti-imperialism' because the same attitude against imperialism or colonialism can now be found in the literatures of developing or underdeveloped countries, since imperialism and colonialism have changed their shape into global capitalism. For instance, in countries like Turkey, my country of origin, one may find

in literature the same representation of cultural hybridity, anti-Americanisation or an anti-imperialist stance as in any postcolonial*ist* novel, although Turkey has never been colonised in its history.

Therefore, the term postcolonial*ism* is neither sufficient nor correct in identifying the work of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy. The hybridity, anti-imperalist characters, cultural clashes and ambivalence depicted in their fiction are not simply reducible to a postcolonialist stance; indeed such features also characterise key elements in *Kim* and *A Passage to India* from the pre-World War II era and, of course neither Kipling nor Forster claimed to be anti-imperialist authors. Refusing any dogmatic political position, Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy are all significantly ambivalent in their depictions of cultural hybridity and cultural clashes. All decline to attach a single positive significance to the culture of the colonised and to mark the coloniser's culture with a negative. For example, *Midnight's Children* is a history of Indian independence, but it is also satirical about the politics of the independent India. *Shame* can hardly be read as an anti-imperialist novel since its satire is directed against Pakistan and its corruption. *Shame* is more a novel in opposition to corruption in Pakistan rather than a novel about Pakistan written from a 'post-colonial anti-British imperialist' stance.

It would equally be problematic to label Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* as an anti-imperialist novel, in order to be classified as 'postcolonialist'. It is a novel about the *post*-colonial condition in London, with Karim as the representative of the second generation of post-colonial migrants from India. Kureishi in no way clarifies his authorial standpoint in his narrative as to whether his stance is anti-imperialist or not, but he is satirical against both the imperial culture and the migrants' culture. His novels are celebrations of cultural hybridity.

Roy's representation of an Anglophile family in *The God of Small Things*, in the same sense, does not necessarily proceed from a postcolonialist standpoint. Like Rushdie and Kureishi, her representation of Indian culture is another depiction of Indian hybridity and idiosyncratic uses of the English language by her characters in the post-colonial era, which could well have been the material of a story situated within and during colonial rule. Her fiction is thus not postcolonial*ist*. Indeed her depiction of the prejudices and mistrust between the Indians and the English clearly recalls similar tensions in *A Passage to India*.

Therefore, I would like to dismiss the use of the term postcolonial*ism* in reference to Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy. As a stylistic term, it cannot be taken as an inclusive one, since there are and have been many postcolonialisms in history, and thus many styles as such. For this reason, referring to these authors of Indian sub-continental origin in the post-British imperial era of the twentieth century alone as 'postcolonialist' authors would be too general. To avoid such ambiguities and misinterpretations, I opt to call them post-colonial writers, and their fiction post-colonial, only in reference to that part of the history within which they write, separate from the (earlier) pre-colonial and colonial eras. Moreover, the term also needs to be limited geographically since there have been various post-colonial periods, such as in South America after the Spanish and Portuguese rule or in Spain after the Arabic domination in the fifteenth century. I, therefore, designate Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy as Indian post-colonial writers in English. Any more extended sense of periodisation and categorisation would force their fiction into constrained, reductive and misleading frames and ignore the synthesis of Eastern and Western literary traditions which characterise their Indo-Anglian post-colonial texts. They are post-1947 Indian authors, and I use the term post-colonial to refer to this period only.

Although it is not a style, post-colonial writing still suggests a consideration of the colonial period and its aftermath, because the fiction of the post-colonial era deploys cross-cultural conditions. There are certainly legitimate questions to be asked here. Do texts written in other underdeveloped countries not also display cultural clashes and hybridity as in the case of the yoghurt seller? In what way does using post-colonial only to refer to post-1947 India help us to understand and analyse a text? Brennan, for instance, reads Rushdie's fiction as the third world literature, in comparison with various other third world writers. As I have stated earlier, many of the characteristics of postcolonialist literature can also be observed not only in the literature of the colonial era but also in the literatures of underdeveloped and developing countries. However, we still need the term post-colonial to study the Indian authors writing in English to specify their period and historical background, because Márquez for example, despite being a third world writer, does not write in a language other than his own. There are certainly other third world writers taking up as themes the problems of identity of their migrant workers and their cultural clashes. Some contemporary Turkish writers, for instance, such as Dursun Akçam, who writes about the migrant Turkish workers in Germany, or Demirtaş Ceyhun, who writes about migrant villagers in big Turkish metropolises and exiles in Europe, write in Turkish, despite using themes which are reminiscent of post-colonial novels. Nonetheless, regarding the fiction of writers from a formerly colonised culture as 'post-colonial' is still necessary in order to analyse their texts in terms of their linguistic polymorphism, cultural clashes, idiosyncratic usage of the coloniser's language and cultural hybridity, which are all the consequences of a colonial experience. Their fiction inevitably reflects this experience, and cannot be detached from it.

The significant peculiar literary devices observed in Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's fiction, many of which are already existent in the literary traditions of their cultural roots, inevitably evoke postmodernist assumptions because they introduce stylistic and thematic novelties into the Western novel, particularly when they are produced in collaboration with Western styles. Such devices are oral storytelling, magical realism, supernatural, non-linear narratives, deliberate re-writing of history, intertextuality - all of these allow for a multiple collage, something which ostensibly and superficially connotes 'postmodernism'. But are these literary devices new and exclusively postmodernist? Is it accurate to label the post-colonial writers of this thesis postmodernist? Most important of all, what is postmodernism?

In Marguerite Alexander's words, postmodernism is 'used to describe kinds of late-twentieth-century fiction,' but it 'carries a suspicion of trickery, for how can anything already acknowledged as existing, postdate the modern, if we take the "modern" to mean contemporary?'[10] For Brian McHale, the term 'does not even make sense,' because if 'modern' means 'pertaining to the present,' then 'post-modern' can only mean 'pertaining to the future,' in which case 'what could postmodernist fiction be except fiction that has not yet been written?' McHale argues that 'the term is a solecism,' and the prefix 'post' does not 'mean what the dictionary tells us it ought to mean, but only functions as a kind of intensifier.'[11] Postmodernism, according to Linda Hutcheon, 'manifests itself in many fields of cultural endeavour' and it refers to cultural, social and artistic innovations in the late twentieth century.[12]

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[10] Marguerite Alexander, *Flights from Realism: Themes and Strategies in Postmodernist British and American Fiction*, (London & New York: Edward Arnold, 1990) p. 3.
[11] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, (New York & London: Methuen, 1987) p. 4.
[12] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, (London & New York: 1989) p. 1.

Although the purpose here is to explore the major stylistic tropes of postmodernist fiction and how they change conventional frameworks, it is essential to deal with the 'condition' of the period to which postmodernist fiction is attributed in order to find out the term's historical relations. Jean-François Lyotard's description of what he calls the postmodern condition almost defines the environment of a (supposedly) postmodern aesthetic, which he names as eclecticism. He asserts that it is:

> The degree zero of contemporary culture: one listens to reggae, watches a Western, eats McDonald's food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and 'retro' clothes in Hong Kong: Knowledge is a matter for TV games. It is easy to find a public for eclectic works.[13]

Lyotard radically describes the postmodern condition as a new environment for new eclectic aesthetic assumptions, distinct from modernism as an artistic mode. Any artistic representation of this eclectic global culture that Lyotard depicts would be the representation of sudden switches from high culture to low culture or the collision of juxtaposing images – a characteristic of the postmodern condition, which may also be perceived in the post-colonial era. This is a radical break from the conventions of traditional artistic representations. Although such a break would have been present in texts such as Joyce's *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* long before the emergence of the term 'postmodernism', it is also the increasing global eclecticism and wholeness that force traditional aesthetic assumptions to change.

As opposed to Lyotard's perception of the postmodern culture, Fredric Jameson denounces this eclectic culture for challenging the 'high or élite culture' with its 'environment of philistinism of schlock and kitsch.'[14] But, which culture is

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[13] Jean-François Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?' Translated by Régis Durand, in Lyotard, J-F, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Translated from the French by Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) p. 76.
[14] Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in Brooker (ed.), op. cit., p. 165

high culture? In what circumstances and from which perspective is a culture deemed higher than another? How do we decide the level of any culture, in the sense of a way of living, among other human communities? Would it be correct to call the clashes in an eclectic cultural representation as the switches *from high culture to low culture*, instead of switches *from one culture to another*?[15] Rushdie's novels, despite depicting the eclectic culture of post-colonial migrants and the colonised indigenous culture as a challenge to Western culture, cannot be regarded as low taste. On the other hand, Hutcheon's concept of postmodernist representation recognises the cultures of the world rather than a unique culture. Culture '(with a capital C and in the singular) has become cultures (uncapitalised and plural)'. This happens despite 'the homogenising impulse of the consumer society of the late capitalism', which is 'yet another postmodern contradiction.' Therefore, postmodernist culture or cultures have 'a contradictory relationship to what we usually label the dominant ... culture.'[16]

Jameson regards postmodernism as both historical and political rather than a mere style. He believes that 'the emergence of postmodernism is closely related to the emergence of this new moment of late, consumer or multinational capitalism.'[17] As such, Northern American society can be defined as a multinational society, which is the outcome of huge migrations of workers and particularly entrepreneurs wishing to find opportunities in a capitalist economy. The whole Western world, that is the UK, Western Europe and its settler colonies, which are the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand have now become multinational societies because of migrant

[15] These shifts produce collage in the contemporary Indo-Anglian authors who present the post-colonial migrant's cultural clashes and cultural switches.
[16] Linda Hutcheon, 'Beginning to theorise postmodernism,' *Textual Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Spring 1987) pp. 13, 23.
[17] Jameson, Ibid., p. 179

workers and entrepreneurs. However, Jameson's assumption is open to debate, because the eclectic multinational scenes are not only due to the rise of global capitalism, particularly in the case of old imperial powers. Among these countries, Britain and France have multicultural communities not only because of the renewed rise of capitalism but also because of their colonial background.

There is a danger in periodising all literary styles or movements, because it is always possible to perceive the features of a movement in a certain period in history, occurring in another style in another period. While there are postmodernist elements in *Tristram Shandy*, which is an eighteenth-century text, Brenda K. Marshall finds nothing postmodern about *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine despite being contemporary magazines.[18] Marshall's definition of postmodernism starts with a minimal statement:

> Postmodernism is about language. It is about how it controls, how it determines meaning, and how we try to exert control through language. About how language restricts, closes down, insists that it stands for some *thing*. Postmodernism is about how 'we' are defined within that language, and within specific historical, social, cultural matrices. It's about race, class, gender, erotic identity and practice, nationality, age, ethnicity. It's about difference. ... Postmodernism is about history. ... It asks: Whose history gets told? In whose name? For what purpose? Postmodernism is about histories not told, retold, untold.[19]

Marshall's definition of postmodernism sounds more like a description of a multicultural society. Cultural eclecticism inevitably creates pastiche in artistic products. The representation of an eclectic culture and the minimal aesthetic criterion of a consumerist society is not the only basis for ethnic and historiographic narratives. Rushdie's texts, if we are to call them postmodern, do not present a view of a consumerist society as such, and they are hardly representative of the minimal

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[18] Brenda K. Marshall, *Teaching the Postmodern: Fiction and Theory*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1992) p. 5

[19] Marshall, Ibid., p. 4

aesthetic criterion of cultural hybridity. Kureishi's fiction might be regarded as representative of an eclectic capitalist culture, for depicting its characters' low and popular tastes and their desire for designer clothes and brand names. However, it would still be too harsh to call Kureishi a writer lacking high aesthetic criteria for critical acclaim. Such a criticism would mean ignoring his presentations of post-colonial migration and cultural clashes. Therefore, multinational capitalism does not solely constitute an unprecedented aesthetic. It only causes the condition for mass post-colonial migrations and globally capitalistic cultural mixtures and, as a result of this, inevitable eclectic representation as in my example of the yoghurt seller in the Introduction. It is true that the yoghurt seller's situation is an outcome of multinational capitalism, which, in a sense, confirms Jameson's 'consumer logic of late capitalism,' but why should a literary representation of this yoghurt seller in a story be regarded as philistine or low culture?

My main concern here is the representation of that situation in fiction, which would challenge conventional anticipations, and I do not think postmodernist assumptions cover such representations sufficiently. First of all, the term postmodernism is meaningless chronologically. It is not as simple as the term post-colonial to periodise, because there is an official starting as well as an ending date of whichever colonial period in consideration, which makes 'post-colonial' meaningful as a period term. On the other hand, postmodernism cannot offer such a chronological meaning because of the impossibility of pinning down the starting and ending dates of modernism. Stylistically speaking, postmodernism is such an inclusive term that the storytelling devices it is concerned with span centuries and different geographies.

History, according to Hutcheon, is one of the most important materials for the postmodernist authors. Although postmodernism is generally attacked for being ahistorical, postmodernist authors, Hutcheon states, narrate history. The past and history exist for Rushdie, but the problem is: '*how* can we know the past today – and what can we know of it?' In *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, Rushdie acknowledges his reordering and reconstruction of history. Hutcheon calls this historiographic metafiction, which is one of the basics of her theory of postmodernist fiction.[20] Modification of historical records and creation of alternative histories are the major postmodernist strategies of writing history, according to McHale. Postmodernist authors revise the content of history and challenge the official truth in order to create a fictional history for their own purposes. In fact they parody history.[21]

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie's modification of historical truth (e.g. Gandhi's assassination on the wrong date), and Saleem's paralleling of his country's history with his own private history may be perceived as a postmodernist strategy. However, in the Eastern literary traditions that Rushdie clearly inherits, the fictionalisation of history and relating it to personal histories are common strategies. The Persian 'dastan' is one of these genres where the heroes, the protagonists in other words, are the ones who create the history of their country. They are a part of history and they, individually, have the powers to change it. Dastans rewrite history, modifying and interpreting it for the good of their country. Dastanic heroes are supernatural and fabulous, capable of miracles. Rushdie's heroes, like Saleem, are, however, alternative heroes. They are disfigured. Despite their imperfect bodies, they have telepathic powers, and change history for their own personal purposes. Rushdie

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[20] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, (New York & London: Routledge, 1998) pp. 87, 92.
[21] McHale, Ibid., p. 90.

clearly not only challenges the historical fiction in Western terms, but also the Eastern traditional discourse of history writing. The use of history is hardly a postmodernist strategy from this perspective, since it stems from a centuries-old tradition in Rushdie's case.

The next prominent strategic theme in Rushdie and Roy's novels is the telepathic powers of the characters. The telepathy between one thousand and one midnight's children in *Midnight's Children*, the triple motherhood and the magical birth of Omar Khayyam Shakil in *Shame*, the telepathic messages Ormus Cama receives from his stillborn twin brother from 'the other side' in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and yet another telepathic communication of the twins in Roy's *The God of Small Things* are strongly the reminiscent of the magical realist genre. This oxymoronic term can be defined in the simplest terms as a mixture of reality and fantasy or supernatural. Magical realism is known and appreciated worldwide as a major Latin American literary strategy. David K. Danow relates Mikhail Bakhtin's unexpectedness of the fabulous and supernatural, the coexistence of seriousness and laughter and the new order of things[22] to Latin American magical realism, which is a 'cheerful representation of the utterly unexpected.'[23] As in Indian subcontinental reality within the primarily Eastern reality, in Latin American reality too, the landscape is full of contrasts, and the population of the continent allows for the coexistence of unexpected humour and seriousness. McHale suggests that even a straightforward 'realistic' representation of South America would have to take the multiplicity of the continent into account. This 'straight reality' would be grotesque, as it would be the representation of many different belief systems and social

[22] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. By Hélène Iswolsky, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) p. 34.
[23] David K. Danow, *Magical Realism and the Grotesque*, (Kentucky: The University of Kentucky, 1995) p. 34.

structures.[24] The same idea can be applied to the Indian subcontinent. Because the land is full of myths where the supernatural dominates reality, the fantastic and fabulous are the norms of aesthetic criteria.

Theo L. D'haen argues that magical realist writing achieves an ex-centric subversive discourse by appropriating the realist techniques of the central line and then using these to create an alternative reality.[25] Fantastic elements challenge the conventional paradigms of novelistic realism. Magical realist discourse immediately switches from reality to magic. They are sudden switches that force the conventional paradigms to change, and thus make magical realism into a postmodernist mode. Wendy B. Faris argues that postmodernist authors need magic, and turns magical realism into a postmodernist mode, relating the magic in *One Thousand and One Nights* to postmodernism as well,[26] just like D'haen, who finds the magical realist technique a typical mode of postmodernism.[27] However, magic has always been a conspicuous material for the Eastern literary tradition. Coming from a culture of magic lamps and flying carpets, the magic in *One Thousand and One Nights* as well as in texts of Rushdie and Roy is, again, more of a traditional mode than a postmodernist one. This is simply the use of storytelling devices inherited from the writers' respective cultural roots. In Rushdie's words, such writers become '[post]modernist authors by becoming traditional' ones.[28] In this sense, the tradition becomes a challenge to conventions when it is deployed in the language of another culture. This amounts more to a post-colonial condition than a postmodernist

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[24] McHale, op. cit., p. 52.
[25] Theo L. D'haen, 'Magical Realism and Postmodernism: Decentring Privileged Centers,' in L. P. Zamora and W. B. Faris (ed.), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995) p. 195.
[26] Wendy B. Faris, 'Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction,' in Zamora & Faris, Ibid., pp. 163-4.
[27] D'haen, Ibid., p. 195
[28] 'Salman Rushdie: Interview', in *Kunapipi*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1982) p. 20.

practice. The writers of a formerly colonised culture write in and from their own culture, which is hybridised with the coloniser's, in the coloniser's language.

The most influential traditional storytelling device that Rushdie uses concerns oral storytelling techniques which conspicuously modify Western linear narrative conventions. The oral storytellers' style is digressive, episodic and non-linear. Oral stories are continuous and proliferating as in the anonymous *One Thousand and One Nights*. Sheherazade, the storyteller-heroine of *One Thousand and One Nights*, is newly married to King Shahriyar, who intends to have her beheaded after their first night together. In an attempt to postpone her fate (sex followed by death), Sheherazade tells him a story that comes to include many other stories, so prolonging her life, over one thousand and one nights. Oral storytelling and its techniques are prevalent in written Arabic culture, which itself becomes dominant in the Muslim world via the spread of Islam. In the Middle Ages in central Asia, however, the influence of oral storytelling did not occur via Arabic-Islamic culture alone: the rulers of the Arab lands in the Middle Ages were Turks, 'who had grown in a culture of the steppes in which legends and histories circulated orally.'[29] Oral storytelling and the fantastic, therefore, were elements introduced by nomadic Turkic culture into the oral tales of Central Asia and Near East in the Middle Ages when *One Thousand and One Nights* emerged.

Oral storytellers *improvise* and *tell* their story, they do not *write*. Therefore, while telling a long, continuous story, oral storytellers remember something related to their story, comment on it, and then come back to the point. These digressions function as authorial interventions to warn the listeners of proliferating stories inset

[29] Robert Irwin, *The One Thousand and One Nights: A Companion*, (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1994) p. 114

within each other, and to pull them into the story. Digressions in oral stories seem to make them inevitably intertextual. Such intertextual relations are not due to the influences of other authors. They are the connotations of storytellers who jump from one fictional universe to another one. I would like to call this 'grasshopper narration.' Oral storytelling is what makes Rushdie's writing digressive, full of dashes, parentheses, full of authorial interventions, flashbacks, and even comments on his own storytelling. Saleem warns us of his deliberate mistakes. Padma becomes the auditor of his stories, providing the oral storyteller with an audience. This also helps Rushdie to fill the text with multiple voices. Padma talks back to Saleem. In a sense, the audience reacts to the storyteller. A storyteller/listener relation is thus created in writing. While the grasshopper narrator digresses and multiplies stories, the audience asks questions and gives the text multiple perspectives and voices. The peculiar rhythm created by the grasshopper narrator and narrator/listener interaction produces an unconventional text in writing, and thus becomes noticed (and colonised!) by Western adherents of 'postmodernism'.

My purpose here is, therefore, not to read the major texts of this thesis as postmodernist, since they exhibit more traditional stylistic tropes than postmodernist devices. Although numerous critics, as discussed so far, mention these traditional literary strategies of particularly Rushdie's novels in the light of various definitions of postmodernist fiction, there are centuries-old traditional genres where these strategies are far better located and confirmed. Once again, Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy are Indo-Anglian authors who write in English. The themes and strategies in their novels cannot be regarded without taking this reality into account. Their common themes are hybridity, problems of identity and cultural clashes as a result of the post-colonial migrations. When stories of this nature are written in English, they

inevitably exhibit the post-colonial individuals' linguistic and cultural hybridity and cultural clashes. Rushdie's use of various traditional styles, Kureishi's bare descriptions of the scenery of multicultural post-colonial London, and Roy's Anglophile family in Kerala in *The God of Small Things* are all the consequences of the post-colonial condition. I am, therefore, using the term post-colonial condition as opposed to Lyotard's postmodern condition in order to describe the situation in which the cultural roots of the authors inevitably affect their writing both in their themes and styles. Their novels are hybrid, or in Bakhtinian terms, 'carnival-grotesque' and flamboyant. Rushdie clearly deploys traditional styles, whereas Kureishi, although not using any cultural forms in his writing, writes about the post-colonial migrants in London and their cultural clashes in his novels. Roy's characters are not migrants in London, but are still the representatives of the post-colonial cultural hybrids in India. They still speak English in an idiosyncratic Indian way, which is yet another aspect of the post-colonial condition. In this respect, the post-colonial condition is dialogic and heteroglossic in terms of the 'naïve and stubborn co-existence of "languages" within a given national language', which leads to a problematic co-existence of 'literary languages, generic languages within literary languages, epochs in language and so on.'[30] Rushdie exhibits, in Bakhtinian terms, heteroglossia, because he is familiar with Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Hindi, Sanskrit, Indian English and also some European languages. This polyglotism also recalls John Barth's 'intermedia art'.[31] The artist in the post-colonial condition is in between distinct traditions and languages, and constantly challenges them.

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[30] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel', in Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (eds.), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981) p. 12.
[31] John Barth, 'The Literature of Exhaustion', in Raymond Federman (ed.), *Surfiction: Fiction Now... and Tomorrow*, (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1981) p. 20.

The writers in question deploy their ethnocentric perspective in a language other than their own and they foreground hybridity. I am using the concept of ethnicity to refer to a culturally homogeneous group of people speaking the same language, having the same cultural roots with common social codes. It is most useful and meaningful when it is used to refer to a specific culture. 'Ethnic' should be used to point out Indo-Anglian writers' cultural peculiarities rather than referring to their 'otherness'. However, in Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's condition, their ethnicity has been inevitably hybridised due to their own post-colonial condition. Their fiction, written in the English language instead of their ethnic language, is inevitably a hybrid literature. It is inevitably a colourful amalgam of Eastern and Western ethnicity, Eastern and Western forms of literature.

I do not intend to list many similar definitions of the term hybridity here, but I wish to explore its meaning and importance in the post-colonial condition. Literally, a hybrid is the offspring of two different species of plants or animals, or the child of parents from two different races. This most basic definition of hybridity, in actual fact, suggests more than in its surface meaning. Robert Young points out that it was first used in reference to humans in 1813 in order to mean 'the crossing of people of different races'. Young relates the term to the concept of race in its early uses, when it unavoidably evoked political connotations.[32] Monika Fludernik specifically points out the example for the usage of the term from Boswell Smith given in the Oxford English Dictionary's 1878 publication: 'Negroes from the Soudan, not such sickly [...] hybrids as you see in Oxford Street [...] but real down-

[32] Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, (London: Routledge, 1995) p. 6

right Negroes, halfnaked, black as ebony.' Fludernik rightly argues that hybridity, in this usage, 'is connoted as racial impurity'.[33]

The purpose here is in no way to use the term in such a sense. It is an important and unavoidable term when speaking about colonialism and the post-colonial migration in its aftermath. This mass migration created hybrid characters inevitably, both genealogically and culturally. I am adopting Homi K. Bhabha's term 'cultural hybridity' here. Bhabha asserts that post-colonial discourses depict dislocated cultural values, and this location is inevitably hybrid.[34] It is also useful to view cultural hybridity in parallel with genealogical hybridity, because all the protagonists are also genealogically hybrid in the Kureishi and Rushdie novels studied in this thesis. Saleem in *Midnight's Children* is not only the son of an English father and an Indian mother, but he is also a cultural hybrid: the product and expression of an Indian culture hybridised by the English language and imperial rule. Saladin Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* is not genealogically hybrid, but he is culturally hybridised, perhaps more than Saleem, because of the English education he has had since he was a teenager. Kureishi's Karim in *The Buddha of Suburbia* is the son of an Indian father and an English mother, but his identity is significantly English despite his genealogical mixture.

These characters are strongly reminiscent of their author/creators with autobiographical similarities to Rushdie and Kureishi. Therefore, their hybridity is not coincidental. Kureishi is genealogically hybrid. His father is Pakistani and his mother is English. He has, like Karim, English identity culturally, because he was born and brought up in England. Rushdie is not genealogically hybrid, but his

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[33] Monika Fludernik, 'Introduction' in Fludernik, M. (ed.), *Hybridity and Postcolonialism: Twentieth-Century Indian Literature*, (Tübingen, Germany: Stauffenburg/Verlag, 1998) p. 10

[34] Bhabha centres his postcolonial theory on cultural hybridity. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 173.

English education from a very young age has made him a cultural hybrid. His English life-style, English accent and English literary taste are mixed with his Muslim Indian cultural origins. Arundhati Roy is the child of a marriage between a Christian woman from Kerala and a Bengali Hindu tea planter. Although her genealogy and cultural identity are not hybridised by an English-Indian marriage, she is still as hybrid as an Indo-Anglian hybrid character culturally when the diversity of the Indian subcontinent is taken into consideration. With this cultural diversity and its influence in her cultural background, she writes, like other post-colonial writers, in English.

Hybridity is the post-colonial condition and the source of cultural eclecticism in the post-colonial discourse. Hybrid post-colonial authors' cultural multiplicity, as the result of the imposed culture upon their ethnic identities, enables them to transfer the traditional literary and artistic forms they are already familiar with into the imperial language and its literary forms. These traditional forms force the Western literary forms to change, to have new dimensions, to move away from their conventional characteristics.

The following chapters will provide a close reading of the novels of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy, each chapter being in separate sections, in compliance with the fragmental structure of the novels. This close reading will present and analyse hybridity, cultural clashes, ambivalence, Anglophilia and the elements of anti-imperialism as the outcomes of colonial and post-colonial conditions. Oral storytelling techniques, magic realism, intertextuality, fragmental structures, non-linear narratives will be presented as traditional influences separate and independent of postmodernist and post-colonial theories. In context, such literary devices and

themes, and the circumstances which give rise to them, embody 'the post-colonial condition.'

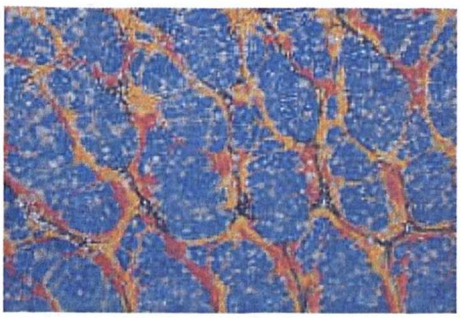
Part Two

Traditional and Ethnic Devices in Rushdie's Novels

Many of the literary devices in Rushdie's fiction are intrinsically traditional in Persian, Arabic, Central Asian and Urdu cultures. This chapter aims to deal with some of the most important traditional artistic forms that have possibly influenced Rushdie's fiction. The traditional Eastern literary genres that have influenced the style and structure of his novels are 'dastan' from Persian and Central Asian literature, and 'qissa' from Arabic literature, as well as oral storytelling from all of these genres. These forms of literature also utilise magical realism, historiography, intertextuality, a religious framework and even poetic constructs. However, before going on to define these forms to point out their significance in Rushdie's post-colonial fiction, it is useful, here, to examine two ancient forms of visual arts demonstrating the cultural background that shaped non-linear and fragmental structure in Eastern literatures.

Non-literary Traditions

Ebru:



Battal (35 x 50 cm), by Alparslan Babaoglu, http://geleneksel-ebru.com/

Simply, Ebru is an amalgam of colours. It is the art of watercolour painting on paper, with one distinct characteristic: the painting is first made on water, and then transferred onto paper. The origin of this unusual style is not exactly known. However, A. Gokcen states that its origin may be Chinese. A document from the T'ang dynasty (618-907) mentions a process of colouring paper on water with five hues.[1] According to Cuneyt Taylaner it 'originated in the city of Bukhara in Turkistan, and from here spread via the Silk Road to Persia, India and Anatolia.'[2] Paper marbling is the best way to describe this art in English. The technique of ebru is simply 'sprinkling colours containing a few drops of ox-gall on to the surface of the bath sized with kitre in a trough.'[3] Working with bristles on the surface of the water, a floating picture is created. The picture is then delicately transferred to paper, which has been gently laid upon the water surface: thus each ebru is a kind of print. After the 1550's, as Gokcen points out, book lovers in Europe prized ebru, which came to be known as 'Turkish papers.'[4]

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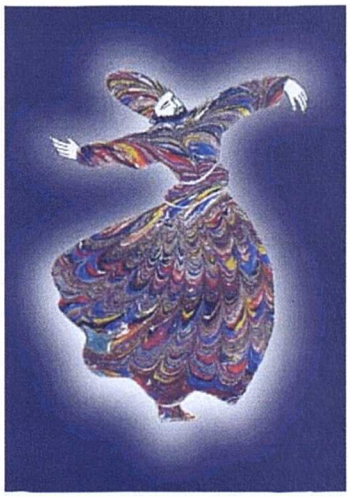
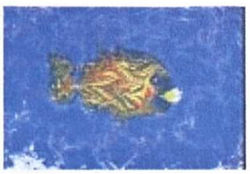
[1] A. Gokcen, 'Ebru: Turkish Marbling' http://www.uoguelph.ca/~agokcen/ebruli/, (09/03/2001)
[2] Cuneyt Taylaner, 'Ebru – A Turkish Art Going Back Five Centuries and the Art Works of Ahmet Saral' http://members.teleweb.at/ahmet.saral/menu.htm, (09/03/2001)
[3] Gokcen, Ibid.
[4] Gokcen, op. cit.

Ahmet Saral, a distinguished contemporary Turkish ebru artist, writes that the first European who introduced ebru to the Western world was a young traveller from Wertheim named Hans Schumacher. He visited Istanbul in 1587 to see the small famous street called 'Kağıtçılar (*papermakers*)' and bought numerous 'unsigned' ebru collections from an elderly 'unknown' ebru master to take them to Europe. From then on, his collection of ebrus, known as 'Schumacher's Album,' became famous in Europe and the technique was used in book binding particularly to make covers for books.[5] Today, ebru is appreciated as an acclaimed visual art, and it is not just an amalgam of colours. Saral developed the traditional techniques of ebru and has created paintings on water as sophisticated and beautiful as any painting on paper:



Dervish, by Ahmet Saral



Marbled Fish 1 (17 x 24 cm) by Ahmet Saral

http://members.teleweb.at/ahmet.saral/

[5] Ahmet Saral, 'Eski Ustaların İzinde (*Following the Old Masters*), http://members.teleweb.at/ahmet.saral/eskiustalar.html, (12/03/2001)

Ethem Efendi, one of the most important Turkish traditional ebru masters, used to say that 'Ebru is like magic, sometimes it works and sometimes not.'[6] What Ethem Efendi stated centuries ago is, in fact, the best description of ebru. Even the idea of making a picture on water sounds magical. When the oil colour melts and starts floating on water, the picture fashioned by a brush with hard bristles is not permanent. The paper has to be superimposed within only a few seconds of achieving the desired picture in order for the transfer to be successful. Otherwise, the fugitive picture on water disappears, colours are mixed, and the image is blurred. In a sense, it is like a dream. Because it is on water, one can never hope to create the same picture again. It is half real, half dream. In other words, it is at a 'slight angle to reality', like Rushdie's fiction. This stance of Rushdie and the supernatural motifs in his narrative technique are reminiscent of ebru that spread across Central Asia as far as the Indian subcontinent. His amalgamated fiction is a mixture of colours. His use of various materials reflects a culture encompassing visual arts like ebru. His fictional universe is always unreal. It is not of the material world on which we stand. It seems to be, like ebru, on water, where no object can be as still and permanent as it can be on the solid 'ground beneath our feet'.

Kilim:

A kilim is an ordinary, traditional rug used since ancient times in a large geographical region from Afghanistan, Iran, through Anatolia, reaching as far as the Balkans. It was introduced into Asia Minor in the 11th century by the nomadic Turkish tribes who brought the weaving techniques they learned in Central Asia with

[6] Taylaner, Ibid.

them.[7] What makes kilims noteworthy and important here is the fact that they are hand-woven by women in the villages in Anatolia. They are woven on wool strings stretched on a frame usually by a group of women working together on the same kilim. Each woman weaves a different part of the rug and each rug contains a combination of many different motifs and symbols worked by individual women. Each of these motifs and symbols has a significant and particular meaning or story, because each woman creates her own motifs and symbols to tell her story on her part of the rug. Some certain fixed motifs are also used. Therefore, a whole kilim, which takes a *long* time to complete, contains many stories on its surface. The whole rug, having 'swallowed'[8] all the stories told by its weavers, is a celebratory mixture of different stories in different colours, but it is, as a whole, still a representation of a *long*-winded story comprised of many short stories.

The best way to understand this combination of many – sometimes countless - stories constituting a whole on a simple rug is to see a kilim. But first, I would like to present some of the motifs and symbols used in kilims with their meanings:

BOND symbolises the unity of people and the desire to retain that link.

BIRD Herald of love, wisdom and strength.

[7] Peter Davies, 'The Origins of Kilim: A Survey of Current Thinking', *Oriental Rug Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 3, (February/March, 1993) p. 20

[8] Rushdie invites his readers to swallow the multiple stories and lives he is going to tell in the beginning of *Midnight's Children*.

EARTH MOTHER (Elibelinde) Mother Goddess, fertility, and the wish to bear children.

EARRING expresses the weaver's desire to marry.

EVIL EYE Looks can say it all; this motif protects against the power of the evil eye.

CROSS Another symbol, which guards against the power of the evil eye.

HUMAN FIGURE the desire to create life, and to have children.

RAMS HORN Symbol of fertility, gives power to the male.

RUNNING WATER The significance of water is that it is the essence of life.

SCORPION derived from the dragon motif, which is guardian of the Tree of Life and secrets of the Universe.

http://www.kilim-warehouse.co.uk/index.html

Each weaver puts any of these symbols in any colour and combination she wants on a kilim. Sometimes, the women may decide on a certain theme before commencing weaving, thus, prearranging the whole story before they start; but sometimes there is no prearranging, which makes the whole outcome reminiscent of an oral and improvised story.

Rushdie's many-stranded novels are similar to kilims, presenting numerous tales, each of which appears to have no relation to the others at first, but constituting a whole novel when they are viewed together. Ebru and kilim, as two of the traditional visual arts from the Eastern world, can hypothetically be interrelated to the written forms of art in the Eastern cultures. The relationship between them is, as will be seen below, inevitable since they share characteristics that eclipse each other.

Literary Traditions

Dastan:

Dastan is a genre that originated in Persian culture. However, as the neighbouring Altaic/Turk, Indian and Persian literary genres came into contact and influenced each other over millennia, it is best called a Central Asian genre. It is characteristically an ornate oral history. H. B. Paksoy defines dastans as the 'repositories of ethnic identity and history.'[9] This is often the history of the fight for the independence of a polity, or group of polities. Dastans are immortalised by 'reciters known as the ozan'[10] some of whom even composed them.[11] Often, the dastans are about fearless people with supernatural powers that strengthen heroes magically. Dastanic heroes are unusually talented and praiseworthy. They are capable of being omniscient, and omnipresent.

Dastans are long oral epics about the heroes and wars, but love is one of the important themes in all dastans, reflecting the relationship between the people and their literature. All dastanic heroes have a loveable and unmatchable spouse, and this loved one is often abducted by the enemy 'only to be rescued by his or her mate after much searching, fighting and sacrifice' despite the attempts to 'extort favours from the lovers' by the foes and traitors.[12]

Although dastans refer to heroic historical events and liberation struggles, they are not always the stories of success. If a dastan tells of a defeat of its own people, 'it serves to illustrate mistakes made and suggest remedies.'[13] Feroza

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[9] H. B. Paksoy, 'Central Asia's New Dastans', *Central Asian Survey*, (Oxford) Vol. 6, No. 1, (1987) p. 75

[10] 'Ozan' is an ancient Turkish word for specifically 'reciters and composer of poetry' rather than the writer of poetry. In modern Turkish, the word is used to refer to the poets along with a more commonly used Arabic word 'şair'.

[11] H. B. Paksoy 'Dastan Genre in Central Asia', http://www.ukans.edu/~ibetext/texts/paksoy-6/cae05.html, (23/02/2001)

[12] Paksoy, Ibid., 1987, p. 75

[13] Paksoy, op. cit., p. 76

Jussawalla defines dastan as a long-winded stream-of-consciousness tale in Urdu and Persian literature incorporating many related and 'loosely strung-together frame tales', like Chinese boxes.[14]

In many ways, Rushdie's fiction resembles all the definitions of dastan presented so far. History is an important part of his fiction. His novels are the stories of liberation struggles, political histories, cultural and ethnic peculiarities. *Midnight's Children* is the history of the Indian independence struggle. *Shame* is the political struggle in Pakistan to make the country a more prosperous place. *The Satanic Verses* is the struggle of a hero who is in search of his long lost lover in London. However, these are not the stories of triumph. In Rushdie's ambivalent style, we never know who the winner is in *Midnight's Children*, although the country and the people are liberated, there are still conflicts, and problems within the country where people still suffer. *Shame* is a story of total defeat. Pakistan is depicted as a country with an unfortunate beginning. Its liberation and political struggles fail.

To comply with the dastanic characteristics, we have a hero in each Rushdie novel. In some of them the heroes are the reciter/narrator/oral storyteller of the story. However, all these heroes are anti-heroes who are the main sufferers of Rushdie's dastans, rather than being the rescuers or the miracle makers of their country. Their bodies are deformed. Saleem in *Midnight's Children* has an 'overused, crumbling' body. Omar Khayyam in *Shame* is a fat, alcoholic 'dizzying' hero with no divine approval and Saladin in *The Satanic Verses* is metamorphosed into a non-human form with a satanic tail and horns. As for the stylistic similarities to dastans, Rushdie's novels are presented as oral narratives. He functions as a reciter of a

[14] Feroza Jussawalla, 'Rushdie's *Dastan-e-Dilruba*: *The Satanic Verses* as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam', *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism*, (Spring 1996) Vol. 26, No. 1, p. 66

dastan, and as a reciter would do, he interrupts his narrative to comment on what happens in his story, to suggest remedies. Yet, unlike a dastan in which the reciter always distinguishes the attacker enemy and the innocent 'attacked', his narrative is not full of praise for the land in which the dastan is set, but is rather full of satirical criticism directed against both the villainous enemy and the sufferer. Rushdie's fiction is reminiscent of dastans in all senses. Nevertheless, he forces the conventions, as he manipulates all of the artistic techniques he uses. Thus, the dastan we read from Rushdie is full of 'dastanic anti-heroes' and full of 'dastanic satire'.

Qissa:

The word 'qissa' is defined in dictionaries as 'manner of cutting' or 'cut'. In its plural form, which is 'qissas', it is a 'narrative,' a 'story'. Another form of the word, 'qasas' means 'narrative literature'.[15] Denoting here a story, the 'qissa' form of the word will be used for the consistency of the concept between the word's Arabic and Turkish spellings. In Turkish, it is spelled as 'kıssa'.[16] Kıssa in Turkish is usually used to refer to short stories and anecdotes recited to teach a lesson.

Jussawalla describes qissa as the Arabic counterpart of dastan. Qissas are suspenseful, short and sharp stories full of excitement.[17] *One Thousand and One Nights*, one of the most famous texts of Arabian literature in the Western world, is made up of qissas. Each qissa in *One Thousand and One Nights* tells a different story, and the end of each story is in the next one. Qissas in *One Thousand and One Nights* are satirical and full of eroticism. All of the qissas are narrated by the same narrator who is central to the main story. The narrator starts telling the qissas. The

[15] Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1979) p. 896
[16] Coincidentally and interestingly, when it is spelled as 'kısa' with one 's' in Turkish, the word means 'short', one of the characteristics of 'qissa', according to Jussawalla, is being short.
[17] Jussawalla, Ibid., p. 67

reader, or more correctly the listener, has to read/listen to all of the qissas to understand and 'save' the narrator's life. At the outset of *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie pays his tribute to *One Thousand and One Nights*. The similarity of Rushdie's style to qissas is most obvious in his construction of novels in many chapters, narrating various stories. Further similarities and influences of qissas are seen in *Midnight's Children* where he dutifully acknowledges his debt to the tale of *One Thousand and One Nights* by confessing Saleem's similarity to Scheherazade.

Therefore, without dealing further with the traditional literary and non-literary forms that may have influenced Rushdie's fiction, I would like to start analysing his novels where these influences are more apparent. In the light of these styles and their apparent influences on Rushdie's fiction, I would like to read his novels as extended forms of Eastern literary traditions combined with Western influences in the post-colonial condition.

Midnight's Children

Midnight's Children is Salman Rushdie's first critically acclaimed novel after the failure of *Grimus*, his first published work. Rushdie presents the history of modern India through the lives of one thousand and one children born during the first hour of the independence of India from the British Empire. Saleem Sinai, the narrator of the novel, is one of these children. He is gifted with the ability to communicate telepathically with others. Rushdie allies himself to the 'non-realist, alternative tradition in Western fiction' in *Midnight's Children,*[1] where he accomplishes a 'successful fusion of east and west in terms of both form and content'.[2] This is not just an alliance with Western forms, but also with Eastern literary forms such as *Arabian Nights*.

Midnight's Children stands as an inclusive novel, the plot of which is difficult to summarise owing to its range and variety.[3] It is a *bildungsroman*; the story of Saleem Sinai told in the first person with its story line starting from the date of his birth. His date

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[1] D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, *Salman Rushdie*, (London: Macmillan, 1998) p. 17
[2] Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996) p. 28
[3] James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie*, (ed.) Kinley E. Boby, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992) p. 48

of birth significantly connects his life story to that of modern India. At a simple level, it is the story of Saleem Sinai, and at a deeper level, it is the story of his country.[4] This multi-layered construction is strongly reminiscent of kilim as a visual art. The palimpsest of multiple stories constitutes a fictional fabric that represents the patterns of multiple motifs superimposed on a traditional rug.

Saleem and the Independent India share the same moment of birth. The connection of Saleem's multiple identities with the multiple stories he recounts provides the unity of the novel, although it appears to be a combination of many stories that are difficult to unite. The double birthday also marks a unity with the author himself, who was born mere days before Independence. Thus, the (hi)story of India, Saleem Sinai, and Salman Rushdie are intertwined. Rushdie dedicates the work to his son, Zafar, whom he sees as the inheritor of Independent India. It is also noteworthy that Zafar is a distinctively Muslim name, although Rushdie settled in Britain and married a British woman who gave birth to Zafar. In a way, he marks his ties with his roots by the name he gives his son. Apart from this unity, the novel is as fragmented as the country in which it is set. In this context, Rushdie constructs his text in fragments, presenting it through 'holes', as will be described below, and, to shift the metaphor, also making it a mirror of India. This mirror is inevitably filled with broken images and identities that, at first glance, seem to bear no relation to each other.

Various literary styles and forms used in *Midnight's Children* constitute the novel's extraordinary unconventionality in terms of both Eastern and Western genres. I propose to examine the novel's inherent structural characteristics by presenting

[4] Goonetilleke, Ibid., p. 21

subsections for each stylistic device and citing significant examples of each device's use from the text.

Oral Storytelling:

The most important reason for the fragmented structure in *Midnight's Children* is Rushdie's deliberate borrowing from Eastern oral narrative techniques. In the novel, which is a Western genre, he uses these oral storytelling techniques in English, the language of his adopted country. However, his Muslim Indian background and his upbringing in Urdu[5] culture prior to his education in English schools enable him to modulate between Eastern and Western styles. Rushdie asserts that if a story is told orally, from morning to night, 'it probably contains roughly as many words as a novel.' The storyteller interrupts to 'chat about it', to 'comment on the tale', and naturally digresses 'because the tale reminds him of something, and then comes back to the point.' Rushdie, using this traditional technique in writing indicates that when this is used as a basis of a novel, one becomes a 'modernist writer by becoming a very traditional one.'[6] Saleem, representing the voice of Rushdie, is, therefore, an oral storyteller *in* writing. He jumps from one story to another, from one fictional world to a totally different one, much like a 'grasshopper'.

The fact that Saleem, the narrator, lets Padma, a pickle maker who acts as his wife in the factory where Saleem takes refuge, interfere with the story adds another fragment to the novel, as well as many digressions. However, Padma's interventions

[5] Urdu language is a mixture of several languages including Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit and Turkish, originating the inherited hybridity in Rushdie's fiction.
[6] 'Salman Rushdie: Interview', in *Kunapipi*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1982) p. 20

work positively: although illiterate, she is not unintelligent. She makes this novel a fiction about fiction. It is an allegory about writing and a deconstruction of the text. If she is not a reader, she is a listener, and Saleem relates the story to Padma. In this context, narrating the story to a native non-intellectual but not unintelligent woman gives the sense of an oral transmission throughout the text. Besides, as Goonetilleke points out, Padma's judgements are 'comments not to be accepted as valid assessments, but sometimes they serve as a critique of Saleem's views and actions.' Her presence as an opposition to Saleem 'keeps the actual reader of the novel alert.'[7]

There is plainly more than one story in *Midnight's Children*. Saleem, as Rushdie's oral storyteller in *Midnight's Children* starts talking in the opening sentence of the novel. Throughout the novel, he intervenes in the story, comments on what happens, reveals his own errors, and talks to Padma, explains the story to her, just as oral storytellers would do for their listeners. The opening sentence of the novel not only resembles the opening of an orally told *bildungsroman*, but also reads like a fairy tale:

> I was born in the city of Bombay ... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more ... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence ... *(p. 9)*

The range and variety of the contents inevitably affect the form of the novel. The first sentence is traditionally observed in the beginning of the oral tales. The narrator's self-consciousness starts interrupting the flow of sentences. Despite starting with the traditional opening clause, the narrator cannot sustain it. The three dots, indicating a

[7] Goonetilleke, Ibid., p. 41

pause, expose the doubt in the narrator's mind. He silently represses the traditional tale-like 'once upon a time', but after a doubtful ellipsis that renders the text silent, he is forced back to complete the sentence.

In this undecided style, the narrator's voice interrupts again in order to give the exact date of his birth. He then realises that the time matters, too. Saleem is at first reluctant to write about the historical coincidence of his birth and, switching back to a traditional symbolism, he employs the utterance 'Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came.' The joining of clock-hands at midnight refers to Hindu form of greeting – a salutation to his birth. However, he cannot resist the temptation to 'spell it out' and feels obliged to announce it: 'at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence'. Goonetilleke sees the use of the opening clause 'once upon a time' as a leitmotif in the novel. It gives the text the sense of a fairy tale, 'suggesting the level of fantasy, but this is rejected in favour of historical dates and facts, suggesting a responsibility to history.'[8] In many parts of the novel, there are paragraphs that start with the same utterance. The following are only two examples:

> Once upon a time there was a mother who, in order to become a mother, had agreed to change her name ... *(p. 213)*

> Once upon a time there was an underground husband who fled, leaving loving messages of divorce, a poet whose verses didn't even rhyme ... *(p. 216)*

Clearly, this style is the reminiscent of the opening of *The Arabian Nights*:

> Once upon a time, in the city of Basrah, there lived a prosperous tailor who was fond of sport and merriment. *(Arabian Nights, p. 24)*

As a characteristic of oral storytelling, the story does not go from the beginning to the middle and then to the end. The narrator jumps, like a grasshopper, from the

[8] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 21

beginning to the end and from the end back to the middle, sometimes leaving gaps in the story line. Saleem's conversations with Padma are the most obvious references to oral literature. Not only do these conversations subvert the conventional storytelling techniques and give a sense of Eastern tales, but they also voice the reader's confusion. Oral storytelling technique allows the narrator to interrupt the flow of events as much as he wants, and thus tell proliferating stories. The proliferation of stories in this contemporary novel, written by an Indo-Anglian post-colonial author, is strongly reminiscent of *Arabian Nights* to which the author acknowledges his indebtedness at the outset of the novel where Saleem points out his resemblance to Sheherazade, the heroine of the *Arabian Nights*:

> Now, however, time (having no further use for me) is running out. I will soon be thirty-one years old. Perhaps. If my crumbling, over-used body permits. But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand nights and a night. I must work fast, faster than Sheherazade, if I am to end up meaning -- yes, meaning -- something. I admit it: above all things, I fear absurdity. *(p. 9)*

Although he admits that he has no hope of saving his life, he has to work faster than Sheherazade, who has to tell King Shahriyar stories perpetually to save her life. The stories in the original manuscripts of *The Arabian Nights* are

> interrupted every five pages or so by narrative breaks along the lines of 'But morning overtook Sheherazade, and she lapsed into silence. Then her sister said, "Sister, what an entertaining story!" Sheherazade replied, "What is this compared with what I shall tell you tomorrow night!"'[9]

This strategy in *The Arabian Nights* also alerts the reader, or more strictly listener, to new stories to come. Saleem's narration is interrupted by Padma in *Midnight's Children.* Nancy E. Batty states that Padma, Saleem's listener, 'not only serves as an index for

[9] Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*, (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1994), p. 3

Saleem's successes and failures as an autobiographer but also plays an important role in the creation of his story,' which takes 'shape from the demands of Padma as an explicit audience,' although Saleem's story has little to do with her.[10] So, both narrators of *Midnight's Children* and *Arabian Nights* 'employ a suspense strategy to defer the end of the narrative act that may provide a more telling comparison between the goals of Sheherazade and [Saleem].'[11] *Midnight's Children* is genealogically related to *The Arabian Nights*.

Despite their different premises and goals, both narrators are obliged to tell proliferating stories. Saleem says he is a swallower of lives. Being a swallower of lives indicates the range and variety of his stories. Having many stories, he closely resembles Sheherazade. Batty states that this resemblance is where *Arabian Nights*, as 'one of the earliest of all metafictions, provides Rushdie with both the precept and the organising principle of his narrative: *Midnight's Children* both begins and ends with explicit reference to these ancient tales.'[12] One thousand and one children born at the independence hour is an obvious reference to *Arabian Nights* and each child has or is a story. Marguerite Alexander notes that Rushdie draws on the 'deviant strand in the European tradition,' and his fiction is 'only part of the mixed ancestry of a novel which, in a highly idiosyncratic way, tells the story of India since winning Independence from the British'.[13] Rushdie's ancestry is mixed with Mughal-Muslim, Indian-Hindu and British cultures, which enables him to produce a hybrid fiction.

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[10] Nancy E. Batty, 'The Art of Suspense: Rushdie's 1001 (Mid-) Nights', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 18:3, (1987) p. 53
[11] Batty, op. cit., p. 51
[12] Batty, op. cit., p. 50
[13] Marguerite Alexander, *Flights from Realism: Themes and Strategies in Postmodernist British and American Fiction*, (London & New York: Edward Arnold, 1990) p. 138

Proliferating Stories:

In *Midnight's Children*, the story meanders between Saleem's own life and his country's history. Saleem is a magically timeless, omniscient narrator and starts by recounting the story of Aadam Aziz, his grandfather, educated as a doctor in Germany. Dr Aziz is involved in India's independence struggle, and this is how the story is intermingled with history. Through the story of his grandfather, an enforced oppositionist, Saleem presents the reader with a significant, family-related fragment of India's struggle for self-determination. Jean M. Kane suggests that 'Aziz introduces the corporate, somatic basis of Indian identity', and his anatomy is 'the novel's central conceit, the fusion of an individual body with the subcontinent and a personal biography with its political history.'[14]

Aziz's return to India is the point at which Saleem's life really began, from which he must begin to remake his life, because he defines himself by his relation to India's history. Aziz is his chosen ancestor, because, as we shall discover further in the novel, he is not his biological grandfather. Until Saleem reveals his real parentage, we are made to believe that Aadam Aziz is Saleem's grandfather, and his daughter Amina is his mother. However, his biological mother is Vanita, the wife of a street vaudevillian Wee Willie Winkie, also the name of a Western nursery rhyme character, another orphan. His biological father is William Methwold, a retiring colonial officer who sells his estate to Ahmad and Amina Sinai while Amina is pregnant. Methwold seduces poor Wee Willie Winkie's wife, Vanita who dies while giving birth to a son at the same

[14] Jean M. Kane, 'The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History: Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (April 1995), p. 95

moment when Amina gives birth to a son in the same nursing home. Mary Pereira, an Anglo-Indian nurse, changes the nametags of the two babies to satisfy her revolutionary lover Joseph, to condemn the rich child to a motherless life in poverty. And she gives the poor child a life of privilege, because Joseph believes that there is no Hindu-Muslim fight in India, but a fight between rich and poor. Mary is significant because she becomes the only woman to mother Saleem and his son at the end of the novel. Ahmed and Amina Sinai brought up Saleem in the house they bought from William Methwold. Therefore, Saleem grows up in the house built by his natural father. His alter ego, Shiva, who is the biological son of the Sinais, takes up violence and destruction as a career, and wins a high rank in the Indian army when he grows up.

As Saleem goes back to his own roots, he goes back to India's roots, too. He commences to remake his life from the incident of his grandfather's loss of faith. When his grandfather returned from Germany with his educated European views, the community where he had been brought up resented his changed opinions about his own land and nation. He was still under the influence of his anarchist friends in Germany who thought India, Aziz's own land had been 'discovered' by the Europeans, 'like radium' (11). On the first days of his return, preoccupied with his changed views, he lost his faith in God:

> One Kashmiri morning in the early spring of 1915, my grandfather Aadam Aziz hit his nose against a frost-hardened tussock of earth while attempting to pray. Three drops of blood plopped out of his left nostril, hardened instantly in the brittle air and lay before his eyes on the prayer-mat, transformed into rubies. Lurching back until he knelt with his head once more upright, he found that the tears which had sprung to his eyes had solidified, too; and at that moment, as he brushed diamonds contemptuously from his lashes, he resolved never again to kiss earth for any god or man. *(p. 10)*

After this decision, he had a 'hole in him' that stayed with him all his life 'leaving him vulnerable to women and history' (10). Dr Aziz became a secular nationalist, because he could not break away from his inevitable ties with the history of his country. He witnessed the colonial empire and its breakdown, and was educated by the opportunities provided by that Empire.

The first chapter, metaphorically called 'The perforated sheet,' ends when Dr Aziz meets his future wife for the first time through a hole. In the early years of his return from Germany, Dr. Aziz lives with his parents. Their blind landlord Mr Ghani wants him to look after his daughter. From the very beginning, and over a period of three years, he has to examine her through a hole in a sheet behind which she hides. Both of them start having an interest in each other. Finally, when she has a headache, an ailment which Dr. Aziz has wished upon her for three years, they see each other's face for the first time, but still her whole body is not visible. This serves as an introduction to Rushdie's fragmented style:

> 'Ah, I see your confusion,' Ghani said, his poisonous smile broadening. 'You Europe-returned chappies forget certain things. Doctor Sahib, my daughter is a decent girl, it goes without saying. She does not flaunt her body under the noses of strange men. You will understand that you cannot be permitted to see her, no, not in any circumstances; accordingly I have required her to be positioned behind that sheet. She stands there, like a good girl.'
>
> ...
>
> 'You will kindly specify which portion of my daughter it is necessary to inspect. I will then issue her with my instructions to place the required segment against that hole which you see there. And so, in this fashion the thing may be achieved.' *(p. 23)*

Among the 1001 children born in the first hour of Independence, 420 die within the first ten years. Shortly after his tenth birthday, Saleem, with his telepathic gift, starts communicating with the other children. The Midnight's Children Conference, which is

referred to as MCC henceforth in the novel, takes place. Kane points out that he uses his talent to 'convene the intelligences of the other children of midnight in his head, in an ad hoc "parliament" that represents the utopian promise of a just, democratic, and unified government.' This alludes to 'the dream of romantic nationalism,'[15] and it coincides with the tenth anniversary of the new independent nation. MCC, also the initials of the Metro Cub Club in the novel, is an ironic allusion to the imperial emblem of the Marylebone Cricket Club,[16] and is an alternative parliament.[17] Saleem, therefore, never breaks his ties with his contemporaries, particularly with Shiva, his alter ego. He lives his life with the fear of meeting Shiva, who has lived in extreme poverty and becomes a henchman of Indira Gandhi, as a major in the Indian Army.

There is a connection between history and the biology of his body and its developments. His nose, for instance, is linked with his chosen grandfather, Aadam Aziz's nose. Dr Aziz always felt an itching on his large nose before all major historical events:

> On April 13th, many thousands of Indians are crowding through this alleyway. 'It is peaceful protest,' someone tells Doctor Aziz. ... He is, I know, feeling very scared, because his nose is itching worse than it ever has; but he is a trained doctor, he puts it out of his mind, he enters the compound. *(p. 35)*

Aadam's receptivity to history 'foreshadows Saleem's telepathic sinuses', and 'both grandfather and grandson are preternaturally sensitive to historical currents.'[18] The Indo-Pakistani War is central both to the character development of Saleem, and to the novel's

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[15] Kane, Ibid., p. 100

[16] Rushdie's playful irony of course alludes to that most traditional of British institutions. MCC wryly indicates the pre-eminence of post-colonial India and Pakistan in the practice of the greatest colonial gift to the sub-continent: cricket!

[17] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 33

[18] Neil Ten Kortenaar, '*Midnight's Children* and the Allegory of History', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (April 1995) p. 53

plot. When he loses his telepathic powers, his extraordinarily gifted nose is used by the Pakistan army for tracking. Saleem takes part in the atrocities at the time of the partition of Bangladesh, before he learns 'ancestral wisdom and personal responsibility in place of the blind obedience [he has] given to the army'.[19] He moves away from military power when he finds his childhood friends among the dead bodies that were said to be the 'enemy'. He goes back to India to join a group of Communist street magicians.

History is re-written not only alongside Saleem's life, but also with the other children of midnight. Saleem finds out a secret plan to destroy all the surviving midnight's children, while staying with his uncle before joining the street magicians. Shiva, his alter ego, has now become a high-ranking officer in the Indian army. He is now ironically richer than Saleem. In a sense, Shiva is getting back his wealthy life from Saleem. He has many illegitimate babies from rich women particularly, in order to take revenge on the lives of the rich. Parvati-the-witch, another midnight's child, gives birth to one of Shiva's sons. Saleem, despite now being impotent, marries her in order to adopt Shiva's baby. He names him Aadam, the name of the natural grandfather of the baby. The State of Emergency is declared by Mrs Gandhi, referred to as the Widow in the novel, over the accusations of malpractice committed by her government during the elections. Behind the State of Emergency, Saleem sees a hidden intention to destroy the midnight's children and *himself* along with them. Shiva commands a raid on the magicians' ghetto to arrest Saleem. Parvati dies during the raid while Saleem is captured. He is imprisoned, tortured and asked for the names of the other midnight's children. As he is 'handcuffed to history', he provides all the names and the locations.

[19] Alexander, op. cit., p. 141

They are sterilised and deprived of their magical powers. This is a reference to Mrs Gandhi's sterilisation programme, one of her most controversial acts.

The novel ends when Saleem is united with Mary Pereira and her sister Alice in Bombay. They run a pickle factory. The chapters of the novel are likened to pickle jars in the last passages of the novel, another reference to its heterogeneous structure. Each chapter is presented as a different container, embodying the same content with different flavours. At the conclusion, Mary Pereira becomes the only person to mother Saleem and his adopted son, who is actually Shiva's natural child. It is ironic that Mary takes charge of Saleem, the baby she swapped with Shiva, and Shiva's son. She again gets the chance to conduct the fate of Saleem and Shiva's descendant. In a sense, Mary, representing Christianity, Shiva, representing Hinduism and Saleem from Islam come together. This unification is also the reminiscent of the palimpsest of a traditional rug, presenting multiple stories on the same surface. The proliferation of stories in such range and variety resembles *Arabian Nights* in that the end of each story is in the next one, and the endings are always open. What happens at the conclusion of *Midnight's Children* is ambiguous and open.

Fragments and Holes:

Holes are strong metaphoric images in *Midnight's Children*. Goonetilleke notes that, 'India can be seen, and understood, only in fragments,' and when 'Aadam examined Naseem in her role as patient, he was permitted to see the supposedly afflicted parts of her body through a perforated sheet.' This implies that 'woman cannot be, at first, seen whole, but a more serious point emerges as Naseem appears to represent

Bharat-Mata (Mother India)'.[20] The reader is presented with the story in holes, too. To get the whole picture, all of the fragmented stories have to be read, and it is only then that the whole surface of the novel, like a kilim, can be viewed. In other words, it can be understood after 'swallow[ing] the lot.'

Saleem's sister Jamila sings through a hole in a veil behind which she hides when she becomes a singer as an adolescent girl. The metaphoric function of these holes adds to the fragmented structure of the novel. 'Hole' also represents Saleem's lack of origin and genetic parentage. The absence of his biological parents leaves a hole, a gap in his life. He knows his lineage only in fragments. In order to fill this gap, he has to choose his own line of descent. Therefore, he chooses not reality but metaphor itself. Until the truth is revealed about his real parentage, it is already imposed in the novel that his parents are Ahmed and Amina Sinai. What seems literal is, thus, 'revealed to be metaphorical.' There is no truth in Rushdie's literal level which 'is always a metaphor,' and 'the truth lies in this metaphor.'[21]

Historiography and Language:

Rushdie brings his ethnic origins to centre by using vernacular words within the English text. *Midnight's Children* acknowledges difference and ethnicity as opposed to the imposed Western culture. Combining the Indian variety of English with oral storytelling, he breaks up the language to 'put it back together in a different way.' Naturally, he has 'to punctuate it in a very peculiar way' and 'destroy the rhythms of the

[20] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 22
[21] Kortenaar, Ibid., p. 52

English language,' use 'dashes too much, keep exclaiming,' and 'put three dots.' This helps Rushdie 'to dislocate the English and let other things into it.'[22]

At times, his style exhibits modernist techniques like Joyce's stream of consciousness, as well as traditional techniques:

> No colours except green and black the walls are green the sky is black (there is no roof) the stars are green the Widow is green but her hair is black as black. The Widow sits on a high high chair the chair is green the seat is black the Widow's hair has a centre-parting it is green on the left and on the right black. High as the sky the chair is green the seat is black the Widow's arm is long as death its skin is green the fingernails are long and sharp and black. *(pp. 207-8)*

Rushdie problematizes his traditional techniques by combining them with modernist devices as seen above. The oral storyteller's narrative, which is already hybridised when written in English, is even more hybridised in a context such as that above with its lack of punctuation which is reminiscent of the modernist stream of consciousness technique.

It is not only the use of language that Rushdie problematizes. Saleem's, and at the same time Rushdie's, version of history is different from the traditional logical concept of history. His handling of history resembles the use of history in Central Asian dastans where history is always about an independence struggle, or a heroic attempt to rescue a country, a lover or a friend. However, Rushdie challenges these dastanic concepts, as well as Western historical fiction, because although his country is liberated, it is not rescued or saved. His heroes are far from being heroic. They are, more precisely, the victims of history. Unlike dastans that fictionalise a true history, which reciters manipulate for their own purposes, Rushdie creates his own history of modern India in

[22] 'Salman Rushdie: Interview', in *Kunapipi*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (1982) pp. 19-20

place of the imposed official truth. He deliberately makes mistakes and then acknowledges them:

> Re-reading my work, I have discovered an error in chronology. The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi occurs, in these pages, on the wrong date. But I cannot say, now, what the actual sequence of events might have been; in my India, Gandhi will continue to die at the wrong time.
>
> Does one error invalidate the entire fabric? *(p. 166)*

This inevitably alludes to the postmodernist strategy of writing history, which violates 'the constraints on "classical" historical fiction' and visibly contradicts 'the public record of "official" history'.[23] Rushdie chooses to create a new history, to resist the official version, and he insists that 'Gandhi dies at the wrong time', as a leitmotif in the novel to underline 'regret and loss'.[24] Saleem creates his own world and centres it. Linda Hutcheon calls this metafictional self-consciousness.[25] He rejects any damage it may cause to the entire fabric. Here, the whole story is labelled as a fabric, evoking a 'kilim' once again. Important historical events are depicted from the perspective of individual characters. The link between national or world history and personal history is strongly drawn in Saleem's depiction of his sister's 'curious habit':

> In the summer of 1956, when most things in the world were still larger than myself, my sister the Brass Monkey developed the curious habit of setting fire to shoes. While Nasser sank ships at Suez, thus slowing down the movements of the world by obliging it to travel around the Cape of Good Hope, my sister was also trying to impede our progress. *(p. 150)*

A personal memory coincides with a historical event. It is also a childish connotation of happenings at home affecting world history. The fictionalisation of history is presented with humour in some parts. Diverse violent and painful historical realities are depicted

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[23] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, (New York & London: Methuen, 1987) p. 90
[24] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 24
[25] Linda Hutcheon, 'Discourse, Power, Ideology: Humanism and Postmodernism', in Smyth, Edmund J., (ed.), *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1991) p. 109

through the characters' humorous encounters. This helps to individualise the effects of historical events. Saleem's grandfather is present during the protests a week before the massacre. He helps the wounded by daubing them with Mercurochrome, but spills some on his shirt. When he returns home, his wife Naseem thinks the Mercurochrome spills on his shirt are bloodstains. In her traditional role as a wife, she tries to help and clean him, while accusing him of being an irresponsible husband:

> 'Let me help, let me help, Allah what a man I've married, who goes into gullies to fight with goondas!' She is all over him with water on wads of cotton wool. 'I don't know why you can't be a respectable doctor like ordinary people are just cure important illnesses and all? O God you've got blood everywhere! Sit, sit now, let me wash you at least!'
>
> 'It isn't blood, wife.'
>
> 'You think I can't see for my own eyes? Why must you make a fool of me even when you're hurt? Must your wife not look after you, even?'
>
> 'It's Mercurochrome, Naseem. Red medicine.'
>
> Naseem – who had become a whirlwind of activity, seizing clothes, running taps – freezes. 'You do it on purpose,' she says, 'to make me look stupid. I am not stupid. I have read several books.' *(p. 35)*

It is, in fact, Naseem's sense of insecurity that makes her reaction worthwhile. She is not happy with the fact that her husband, who wants her to be a modern woman involved in reading and politics, joins the protests. On the day of the Amritsar massacre, however, when Aadam Aziz comes back home, he has real bloodstains on his shirt, although he is not hurt. She thinks the bloodstains are the stains of Mercurochrome. Then a harsh reality comes as a shock: 'It is blood':

> When my grandfather got home that night, my grandmother was trying hard to be a modern woman, to please him, and so she did not turn a hair at his appearance. 'I see you've been spilling the Mercurochrome again, clumsy,' she said, appeasingly.
>
> 'It's blood,' he replied, and she fainted. When he brought her round with the help of a little sal volatile, she said, 'Are you hurt?'
>
> 'No,' he said.
>
> 'But *where* have you *been*, my *God*?'

'Nowhere on earth,' he said, and began to shake in her arms. *(p. 36)*

The humorous description of an uneducated, traditional woman acting out her traditional role as wife is used to describe the Amritsar massacre. The amusing reactions of a traditional woman coincide with a brutal and serious historical fact which creates in the reader a response of rueful sadness. The reason Rushdie describes the situations preceding and following the massacre but not the massacre itself is that a naturalistic or documentary account is implicitly unavailable to Naseem. Rushdie also wishes to focus on the subjective experience of the massacre in retrospect. A strong political opposition to imperialism is sensed through a disturbed wife's humorous image. Rushdie deliberately pushes the reader into sudden disturbing reality while claiming to be 'unrealistic'. Mercurochrome is, as Kortenaar argues, a metaphor. The blood in *Midnight's Children* is labelled as 'mercurochrome' which 'looks like blood.'[26] The non-metaphorical blood is never seen on human bodies in the novel. Saleem prefers to mention it only metaphorically.

Magical Realism and Intertextuality:

Alexander reads *Midnight's Children* as a 'fine example of magical realism', a mode of writing 'which has had less impact on British fiction than on fiction in parts of the world less bound by the conventions of realism'.[27] *Midnight's Children* is produced by an author of Indian origin who inherits the tradition of, firstly, oral narrative, and secondly, the tales of the magic flying carpets. For this reason it is, like his earlier and later novels, full of metaphors and allegorical images. The reality exists only when it is

[26] Kortenaar, op. cit., p. 47
[27] Alexander, op. cit., p. 143

rewritten, only when it is deprived of its real sense. Kortenaar argues that the narration in *Midnight's Children* 'seems significantly like the magic realism of Gabriel García Márquez', but Rushdie has 'patterned his own storytelling on narration and deployed fantasy in order to be faithful to the reality of India, where millions believe in the worlds of spirits.' Therefore, Rushdie's technique, much closer to that of Günter Grass and Pynchon, 'is best called allegory in order to distinguish it from Márquezan magic realism.'[28]

In James Harrison's view, India seems to be as fertile a ground for magical realism as the Latin American countries, with 'its many languages, its variety of religions together with enormous variations of practice and belief within Hinduism, and its hierarchy of castes.' However, Harrison rightly points out the difference between them. India was possessed 'by an ancient and unifying Hindu culture [long before] the Spaniards and Portuguese gave Latin America its superimposed linguistic and religious unity.' Therefore, the 'paradoxes and incongruities of India have in most cases been part of the texture of Hinduism for far longer than those of Latin America have been incorporated into that of Catholicism.'[29]

Midnight's Children depicts the Indian sub-continent and its people for whom life is bound by magical and spiritual worlds. This is why it seems quite alien to the Western reader who is much more bound by the conventions of realism. Although Rushdie combines his fiction with that of non-realistic Western and Latin American literature, to which magical realism is mostly attributed, he still inherits the tradition of magic lamps and flying carpets from the Middle Eastern and Central Asian literary

[28] Kortenaar, op. cit., pp. 58-59
[29] Harrison, op. cit., p. 56

traditions that surround the Indian culture, which is yet another home of non-realistic traditions. Brennan argues that the influence of Márquez passed through Rushdie's Nicaraguan journey, and he Anglicised magical realism.[30] What he Anglicises, however, is the Eastern sense of magical realism, as in Persian, Arabic and Central Asian literary traditions.

Midnight's Children is woven with intertextual connotations. Dr Aziz is a character clearly borrowed from E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, perhaps to subvert 'that considerable body of novels about India by English novelists'.[31] Rushdie makes him Saleem's grandfather. This could well be possible, considering the periods they live in, if they were real characters, because Saleem sets himself in 1978 on the very first page of the novel, as he was born on 15 August 1947, and will be thirty-one soon. They may easily be related genealogically. Forster's Aziz is a Muslim doctor in India in the 1910s. He is a bilingual, multicultural character, but still does not represent the whole India, because he is Muslim. Rushdie's Aziz, however, represents India more inclusively. Although he is Muslim, like Forster's Aziz, his floppy ears and enormously big nose symbolise the elephant god Ganesh in Hindu mythology.

The ideological softness of Forster's Aziz becomes stronger in *Midnight's Children*. While Forster's Aziz feels betrayed after being accused by the English people he trusts, Rushdie's Aziz feels betrayed, firstly by his religion after hitting his nose against the frozen earth while praying, and secondly by the occupiers of India at the Amritsar Massacre. He detaches himself from his religion first, and then devotes himself to the political struggle in the belief that India and Britain cannot live together. The

[30] Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*, (London: Macmillan, 1989) p. 65.
[31] Alexander, Ibid., p. 139

sudden shift in the attitudes of both Azizes is ignited by unexpected incidents in their lives, though Rushdie's Aziz lives through bloody ones. However, in both novels, colonial rule is neither condemned nor idealised. While Fielding, as the main English character in *A Passage to India*, is disinclined to offer political insight and comment on the British presence in India, he admits personal pleasure in being there only because he needed a job (112), Rushdie's Mr Methwold is arrogantly defensive of colonial rule:

> '... Hundreds of years of decent government, then suddenly, up and off. You'll admit we weren't all bad: built your roads. Schools, railway trains, parliamentary system, all worthwhile things. Taj Mahal was falling down until an Englishman bothered to see to it. And now, suddenly, independence. *(p. 96)*

Methwold provides the ambivalence in *Midnight's Children*, a novel, which is identified with anti-imperialism in its earlier sections. Rushdie's employment of explicit support for colonial rule, along with massacres, riots against imperial rule and a humorous depiction of uneducated Indians makes it a novel of more ambivalence and impartiality than *A Passage to India*. It is difficult to identify *Midnight's Children* as either an Indian nationalist text or an Anglophile one, as it supports both views in different parts of the novel. However, both of these are presented in extremes. While Fielding in *A Passage to India* quietly leaves India, withdrawing himself from argument about his own presence there, like Forster who ends the novel ambiguously without suggesting a standpoint; Mr Methwold leaves his genealogy with Saleem before leaving in *Midnight's Children*. Saleem becomes his descendant representing the ongoing British impact after independence in India.

Richard Cronin points out the significant resemblance between Rudyard Kipling's Kim and Rushdie's Saleem who both have a mysterious parentage. Kim is 'a

drunken Irish soldier's son', but 'brought up by a half-caste woman who pretends to be his aunt.' Saleem, very similarly, 'is born to an Englishman and a low-caste Hindu, but he is brought up in a Muslim family.' They both have 'a series of substitute parents.' The Lama and Colonel Creighton are 'all surrogate fathers' for Kim. Saleem finds alternative parents for himself 'in his uncle and aunt.'[32] They both have Anglo origins, making them white without being pure white and also Indian origins without being pure Indian. Saleem is Rushdie's Kim, acting as both Anglo and Indian. He provides the mutual perspectives in *Midnight's Children*, being conversant and observant in both cultures. He has multiple father figures to choose from, and adopts Ahmed Sinai as his father, because he acts out the role as a protective and caring father to him, as the lama does to Kim. Like Kim, therefore, he prefers his Indian origins. His position between cultures enables him to speak and understand the vernacular.

Patricia Merivale opines that *Midnight's Children* 'owes its "magic" ... to García Márquez and its "realism" to Günter Grass.'[33] *Midnight's Children* is an imitation and a rewriting of history. It creates its own version of history. In a similar manner, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* measures time 'not by dates but by generations of unlikely length; ... the connections to key elements of Latin American history in general or to Colombian history' are deliberately 'stylised and abstracted', thus the book is 'more about History than it is about the history of Colombia'.[34] In *Midnight's Children,* historical events are only referred to through metaphors. They are both the history of

[32] Richard Cronin, 'The Indian English Novel: *Kim* and *Midnight's Children*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 2, (Summer, 1987) pp. 202-203
[33] Patricia Merivale, 'Saleem Fathered by Oscar: *Midnight's Children*, Magic Realism, and *The Tin Drum*' in Parkinson, Zamora & Faris (eds.), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995) p. 329
[34] Merivale, Ibid., p. 330

their countries, but they are the rewritten histories as opposed to those created by the historians.

Merivale reads *Midnight's Children* also in relation with Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*. Both Saleem and *The Tin Drum*'s Oskar have 'grotesque physical deformities', and 'by the end of the book they are both impotent and suffering the excruciating pains of physical dissolution.' Rushdie does not hide his indebtedness to either Márquez or Grass, and even pays tribute to Grass 'in his account of the German connections of Saleem's supposed grandfather, Aadam Aziz.' The intertextuality between *The Tin Drum* and *Midnight's Children* can also be observed in the problematic parentage of their protagonists who are both thirty-year-olds. They are both *Bildungsromanen*, and they both start before the hero's birth. Both heroes are concerned with finding their origins. Oskar knows who his father is, and has a choice of two fathers. On the other hand, Saleem finds a collection of fathers throughout the book, and has a choice of three mothers, one is his biological mother, the other is his adopted mother and the final one is Mary Pereira.[35]

Rushdie also alludes to non-literary context, such as painting. The most significant of such allusions is John Everett Millais's painting *The Boyhood of Raleigh* (1870) hung on Saleem's bedroom wall. 'Book Two' of *Midnight's Children* starts with the chapter called 'The Fisherman's Pointing Finger' referring to the painting:

> This fisherman's pointing finger: unforgettable focal point of the picture which hung on a sky-blue wall in Buckingham Villa, directly above the sky-blue crib in which, as Baby Saleem, midnight's child, I spent my earliest days. The young Raleigh – and who else? – sat, framed in teak, at the feet of an old, gnarled, net-mending sailor – did he have a walrus moustache? – whose right

[35] Merivale, op. cit., p. 332

> arm, fully extended, stretched out towards a watery horizon, while his liquid tales rippled around the fascinated ears of Raleigh – and who else? Because there was certainly another boy in the picture, sitting cross-legged in frilly collar and button-down tunic … and now another memory comes back to me: of a birthday party in which a proud mother and an equally proud ayah dressed a child with a gargantuan nose in just such a collar, just such a tunic. *(p. 122)*

The picture itself tells a story, but this unspoken story is the fisherman's, who points at the side of Millais's constructed frame. It should be noted how the narrator digresses from the plot when a picture on the wall reminds him of one of his birthdays when he was dressed like the child in the painting. One cannot help imagining the same painting hung in Rushdie's study while he wrote *Midnight's Children.* It reminds the narrator of something, and migrates from a non-textual world into the oral storyteller's text. Oral storytelling, therefore, causes intertextual relations as well. At the same time the dislocation via reminiscence serves another wryly-ironic narrative function: the display of a sentimental Victorian painting in post-independence Bombay and an Indian boy absurdly dressed in Elizabethan costume.[36]

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[36] Neil Ten Kortenaar, 'Postcolonial Ekphrasis: Salman Rushdie Gives the Finger Back to the Empire', *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 38, No. 2, (Summer 1997) p. 235

Cinematography and a Mixture of Genres:

Rushdie employs cinematographic language in *Midnight's Children* referring to the Bollywood effects in a discourse set in Bombay:

> In short: my father was holding a pamphlet. It had been inserted into his hand (we cut to a long-shot – nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary) as he entered the hotel foyer. *(p. 33)*

Similar film vocabulary is deployed throughout the book: 'A bag from Heildelberg is in his right hand. (No close-up is necessary.)' (35). This sort of discourse not only produces a collage but also significantly, displays his affinity to cinema as a Bombayite. Rushdie, in these examples, both refers to the story's connections to Bombay and produces an eclectic discourse. He creates a cinematographic language in a literary text, which he also attempts in *The Satanic Verses* where the cinematic discourse has intertextual connotations.

Midnight's Children is a mixture of genres. It is an autobiography, as well as a history book, though not reliable. It is a fantasised version of India's history and a magical realist novel. Kortenaar points out its detective novel characteristics as well. There are 'suspicious telephone conversations, a secret rendezvous at the Pioneer Café, a cryptic anonymous warning, and a final confession.'[37] This mixture of genres and various styles reflects the text's hybridity. It is useful here to analyse the hybridity of the characters in the text in order to understand how textual hybridity becomes inevitable in Rushdie's post-colonial condition.

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[37] Kortenaar, op. cit., p. 46

Hybridity:

Saleem is actually Anglo-Indian whose identity is metaphorically related to the country's identity. Significantly, his 'foster parents are from the middle and working classes', the union of which is 'desirable, and necessary, for India's welfare and progress.'[38] Saleem's surname is also significant in that 'Moses saw the Promised Land from Mount *Sinai*, but Moses was told that *he* would never enter the promised land himself – only show the way', which is the case for Saleem, because he shows the way 'he himself cannot go.'[39]

His hybridity is a metaphoric image of India's hybridised culture. A native Indian woman is seduced by an English colonial officer, and therefore fathers a hybrid child. It is the author's choice to have the narrator select Aziz as his ancestor although he does not have his genes. Saleem is more like India, because he is a child of a seduced mother, does not live with his real parents, and is made to live away from his real identity. Despite his Anglo genes, he resists the idea that his real father is English. As Aruna Srivastava says, he hopes to defend his country's death and decay as well as his own, by writing his autobiography, because he is India.[40] Contradictorily, Rushdie himself resists the idea that he has anything common with India.[41]

Saleem's choice of his ancestral line is not coincidental. Aziz's strong ties with history mark Saleem's own relations to the history of modern India. Aadam Aziz

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[38] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 42
[39] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p 42
[40] Aruna Srivastava, '"The Empire Writes Back": Language and History in *Shame* and *Midnight's Children*', in Ian Adam & Helen Tiffin (ed.), *Past the Last Post: Theorising Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism*, (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1993) p. 65
[41] Cronin, Ibid., p. 202

represents Nehru, because both are from Kashmiri families; 'both have been educated in Europe, have lost the faith of their fathers, and uphold a secular ideal', and finally and most importantly both were 'at Amritsar at the time of the massacre.'[42] Apart from these relationships to history, *Midnight's Children* significantly refers to colonial literature to mark its ties with the colonial Empire, just as the characters of the story are strongly connected to history to fictionalise and re-write it. As Aadam Aziz is named after Dr Aziz in *A Passage to India*, Wee Willie Winkie, 'the legal father in Saleem's alternate genealogy, bears the name of the English boy-hero in a story by Kipling.'[43]

The story, connected to the history of India, is as grotesque as Saleem. That midnight, the thing that never existed for 'nobody ever managed to rule the whole place' as one nation, was suddenly 'free.' 'What on earth was it?' asks Rushdie, for whom India 'has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity'.[44] For Rushdie, India has never been seen in whole. It is natural for him to depict his own history of India on fragments. In such a place, the English language exists as an essential language for the simple reason that two Indians from different religions and different languages communicate in English.[45] The fact that the English language is the only glue to keep all the nations in India together brings more hybridity to Indian culture. It is of course ironic that the official language of Independent India is English. When the inherited culture of the British and the effects of an indispensable English language are added to the contradictions of a created nation consisting of conflicted peoples of

[42] Kortenaar, op. cit., p. 48
[43] Kortenaar, op. cit., p. 52
[44] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, (London: Granta Books, 1991) pp. 27, 32
[45] Rushdie, Ibid., p. 65

different religions and sects, it would be inevitable that such a culture encompasses multi-formity rather than uniformity.

Anti-Imperialism:

Midnight's Children is a post-colonial novel in all senses, especially as Salman Rushdie, an author of sub-continental origin living in a metropolitan centre, wrote it in the post-colonial period of India. It is a novel that brings colonialised marginal voices to the imperial centre of the Western novel. Contrary to the colonialist novel, in which the colonial subject is described as the other to be redefined, to be understood by the central imperial character possessing the central point of view, *Midnight's Children* does the opposite. It subverts the colonialist discourse. The colonial subject's point of view comes to the centre, and the coloniser becomes the other to be redefined and understood. The concepts of alienation are turned upside-down. The most significant example of the subversion of the colonialist discourse into an anti-colonialist one is the account of Amina Sinai's, Saleem's mother, reaction to the dirt and untidiness in William Methwold's house which they are about to buy:

> '... And look at the stains on the carpets, janum; for two months we must live like those Britishers? You've looked in the bathrooms? No water near the pot. I never believed, but it's true, my God, they wipe their bottoms with paper only!...' *(p. 96)*

In the above passage, there is a remarkable similarity to a scene in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. When Mr Fielding enters the house where Dr Aziz, the main Indian character of the novel, lives, the depiction of the room is the reflection of 'alien' Indian culture in the imperial eyes:

> Aziz said 'Sit down' coldly. What a room! What a meeting! Squalor and ugly talk, the floor strewn with fragments of cane and nuts, and spotted with ink, the pictures crooked upon dirty walls, no punkah! He hadn't meant to live like this among these third-rate people. *(A Passage to India, p. 111)*

Rushdie's account of Amina Sinai's reaction to the untidiness in Methwold's house functions as a conversion of the discourse in Forster's text, although both of them are written in a 'tongue-in-cheek' manner in order to display the mutual prejudices between the coloniser and the colonised.

Midnight's Children functions as a post-colonial novel, because it has the characteristics of the Indian narrative techniques. Rushdie deliberately uses vernacular words. An undisguised idiosyncratic use of English is deployed throughout the novel in native characters' dialogues. It also presents cultural clashes. Rushdie simply puts the east and west together, and presents them in the same context. Ethnic cultural concepts become the centre of a novel written in English. One step away, he adds some magic to the text. Not only does he use magic realism because of his affinity to the literature of Latin American authors such as Márquez, but also employs it due to his inheritance of the Eastern tradition of magical tales. Among these *Arabian Nights*, which is also known widely to the Western reader, presents magic in its description of magic flying carpets and genies living in magic lamps.

The strong anti-imperialist sense of the novel is most significantly felt in Rushdie's depiction of William Methwold's desire for the continuity of colonial customs in his house even after it is owned by the Sinais. He asks them to keep everything as it is until colonial rule ends officially. Methwold 'is named after the East India Company officer who in 1633 was the first to envision Bombay as a British stronghold'.[46] This

[46] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 25

reference clearly indicates what ideological intentions are applied to Methwold. He wants to select 'suitable persons' to transfer his assets to in order to keep things in an order he would like to see, which clearly reflects the imperial idea of colonialism:

> 'Lock, stock and barrel,' Methwold said, 'Those are my terms. A whim, Mr Sinai ... you'll permit a departing colonial his little game? We don't have much left to do, we British, except to play our games.' *(p. 95)*

> 'My notion,' Mr Methwold explains, staring at the setting sun, 'is to stage my own transfer of assets. Leave behind everything you see? Select suitable persons – such as yourself, Mr Sinai! – hand everything over absolutely intact: in tiptop working order. *(p. 97)*

Methwold's sale of his assets is a symbolic transfer of political power. The symbolic transfer of power is given to the élite of post-Independence India. This, Goonetilleke argues, indicates an attempt to 'control India through imposing Western patterns of culture.' The suitable persons, in Methwold's view, were

> 'Ahmed Sinai, a representative of the world of business; Homi Catrack, film magnate and race-horse owner, a representative of the world of entertainment; Ibrahim Ibrahim, one of the "idle rich"; Dubash, the physicist, a representative of the professional classes; and Commander Sabarmati, a high-flyer in the navy, a representative of the armed forces.[47]

Midnight's Children is shaped by forms and characteristics, all of which foreshadow and influence all of Rushdie's novels both stylistically and thematically. It is a satirical modification of India's history. Saleem, whose body is crumbling, is paralleled to history. They are both in fragments and cannot be hold together, but must all be swallowed to be understood. *Midnight's Children* depicts the post-colonial condition in India. All the characters are culturally hybrid. The variety of English they speak is idiosyncratic. By depicting a land replete with various languages, belief systems and its historical condition with a centuries-old colonial past and mixture of languages

[47] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 26

and hybrid –both genealogical and cultural- characters, Rushdie produces *Midnight's Children*, a novel holding distinct genres and literary techniques together, while still remaining Indian.

In the following chapters, we will also have a comparison with *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses*, *The Moor's Last Sigh* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. As will be seen, they are all interrelated and endowed with the very techniques studied in this chapter.

Shame

After the academic and popular success of *Midnight's Children* worldwide -- the novel was quickly translated into a dozen languages -- Salman Rushdie established his reputation as a major international novelist. His third novel *Shame*, published in 1983, elicited less attention. In *Shame*, he is more determined to use a decided style. It is a novel with a firm and confident narrative. Its form invites an inevitable comparison with *Midnight's Children*. It has a more closed construction and the narrative is not as digressive as the preceding *Midnight's Children*. Although Rushdie thinks it is 'wrong to see *Midnight's Children* as the India book and *Shame* as the Pakistani book,' [1] there is a general tendency to read *Shame* as a novel about Pakistan, another country founded in the same year, at the same moment as India.

Yet, the general tendency is not totally wrong. The settings of *Midnight's Children* go beyond India into Pakistan and Bangladesh. In a sense it is more about the sub-continent as a whole, while *Shame* is largely set in Pakistan before and after the

[1] John Haffenden (ed.), 'Salman Rushdie', *Novelists in Interview*, (London: Methuen, 1985) p. 253

secession of Bangladesh, although the journeys from India to Pakistan or the other way round are also of concern in the novel. *Shame* is more directly satirical about Pakistan, than *Midnight's Children* is about India. It appears to owe more to the conventions of realism, and is more directly involved with political satire than *Midnight's Children*. The differences between both novels 'are based on a continuity and a contradiction: namely, that in *Midnight's Children* the masses speak in a written form through an epic scribe,' whereas in *Shame* 'it is the Pakistani élite who speak in an oral form through a matriarchal storyteller.'[2]

As well as these differences, there are substantial similarities, too, between the two novels. Both of them deal with the history of India and Pakistan. They are written 'in the magic realist mode', and both 'have narrators who do not hesitate to comment on the story they tell.' They 'treat temporal sequence cavalierly and include extensive metafictional foreshadowing', and both employ a 'flexibly informal ... prose style that on occasion runs to unusually long sentences.'[3] Nevertheless, there are differences as well. *Midnight's Children* is narrated by its protagonist in the first person. Rushdie blends his voice with that of Saleem who has Padma as the listener. The story is told to her and she is the persona acting as an audience for the narrator to talk to. *Shame*, on the other hand, is narrated by an omniscient third person narrator who makes himself heard frequently in the first person. This narrator is not the protagonist of the novel, but freely interrupts the narration to comment on and interpret the story. Yet again, the narrator is an oral storyteller whose audience is the reader-auditor. The narrator simply turns his face to the reader, to whom he is telling his story. The narrator of *Shame* overlaps more

[2] Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nations*, (London: Macmillan, 1989) p. 118
[3] James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie*, (ed.) Kinley E. Boby, (New York: Twayne Publishers) 1992 p. 69

clearly with the author himself than does Saleem in *Midnight's Children*. *Shame*'s narrator is clearly Rushdie. By isolating himself from the story with authorial interruptions, he asserts sharply that it *is* a fictional story. The reader is made aware that it is the author's voice, whenever a first person narrator interrupts the flow of the story. All this tends to move the text away from realist fiction, including those realist narratives which utilise a first person narrator who conventionally does not call attention to the fiction as such. As a Rushdie novel, *Shame* also transgresses the boundaries of the past and present, fact and fiction, reality and unreality. Though not as complicated and lengthy as *Midnight's Children*, its style and themes allow for multiple collage. It is shorter but as dense as his earlier and later novels. The modes that give the novel prominent Rushdiesque characteristics will again be discussed, like *Midnight's Children*, in separate sections.

Style and Language:

As in *Midnight's Children*, unusually long sentences and an informal and even colloquial prose style are employed in *Shame*. The much longer sentences are more carefully and tightly structured than those in *Midnight's Children*. The longest sentence in the book describing Rani Harappa's eighteen embroidered shawls starts on page 191 and ends on 195. Rani locks the shawls in a trunk to send them to her 'newly powerful daughter', putting a piece of paper inside the trunk. She writes on this piece of paper: 'The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great'. The account of what these shawls depict becomes the longest sentence in the narrative:

> Locked in their trunk, they said unspeakable things which nobody wanted to hear: the badminton shawl, on which, against a lime-green background and within a delicate border of overlapping racquets and shuttlecocks and frilly underpants, the great man lay unclothed, while all about him the pink-skinned concubines cavorted, their sporting outfits falling lightly from their bodies; how brilliantly the folds of breeze-caught garments were portrayed, how subtle the felicities of light and shade! - ... *(pp. 191-192)*

> ... and the election shawls, one for the day of suffrage that began his reign, one for the day that led to his downfall, shawls swarming with figures, each one a breathtakingly lifelike portrait of a member of the Front, figures breaking seals, stuffing ballot-boxes, smashing heads, figures swaggering into polling booths to watch the peasants vote ... *(p. 193)*

Harrison notes the cohesion 'achieved by "... shawls, one for the day of ... one for the day of ... shawls ... figures ... figures ... figures ... figures"'.[4] As a consequence of oral storytelling in writing, there are many dashes and many punctuation marks as well. Cundy observes that within the general framework of the narrative, 'the stories of the individual protagonists assert their right to be told and to leave their imprint on the shape of the collective narrative'. This results, as Cundy suggests, in gaps and holes 'which help to delineate the pattern of the textual fabric.'[5] Rushdie confesses within the narration that '[a]ll stories are haunted by the ghosts of the stories they might have been' (116). So, there are countless alternative stories for every story being told in *Shame*. Where Cundy regards this as the argument of a deconstructionist,[6] the present writer would want to draw attention to the kilim-type resemblances of the 'shawls swarming with figures'.

The narrator/author emphasises the cultural gap between the language and the universe of the novel. For this reason, vernacular words are openly used in order to

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[4] Harrison, Ibid., p. 70
[5] Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996) pp. 51-52
[6] Cundy, Ibid., p. 52

portray the novel's lively universe and its true meaning. The word 'shame', for example, does not carry the meaning of the concept in English as heavily as in its native Urdu:

> This word: shame. No, I must write it in its original form, not in this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and the accumulated detritus of its owners' unprecedented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write, and so for ever alter what is written ...
>
> *Sharam*, that's the word. For which this paltry 'shame' is a wholly inadequate translation. Three letters, *shìn rè mìm* (written, naturally, from right to left); plus *zabar* accents indicating the short vowel sounds. A short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance. It was not only shame that his mothers forbade Omar Khayyam to feel, but also embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world, and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts. *(pp. 38-39)*

In his critical and controversial reading of *Shame*, Aijaz Ahmad finds it a banal statement about 'the East' as many 'banalities' foregrounded in the novel as if they are solely of 'the East'. Ahmad rejects Rushdie's suggestion that the word 'shame' 'falls short' of its Urdu counterpart as the word '*sharam*' refers to sentiment which is characteristically Eastern.[7]

The blend of fairy-tale and modern story in *Shame* is not foregrounded as vigorously as in *Midnight's Children*. The narrative does not intermingle with the style of a tale and the style of a realistic story. This interplay is more pointed at by the author than reflected in style. Although the narrative does not digress between various styles, there is an intermixture of stylistic devices. This is because the text is filled with authorial interventions, the transgressions between past and present, and fact and fiction. The opening sentence of *Midnight's Children* inevitably reflects the indecisiveness of the style, and the narration combines the style of a fairy-tale and realistic narration with

[7] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, (London and New York: Verso, 1994) p. 136

full calendar details. On the other hand, *Shame* opens with a more determined and firm style:

> In the remote border town of Q., which when seen from the air resembles nothing so much as an ill-proportioned dumb-bell, there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters. Their names ... but their real names were never used, like the best household china, which was locked away after the night of their joint tragedy in a cupboard whose location was eventually forgotten, so that the great thousand-piece service from the Gardner potteries in Tsarist Russia became a family myth in whose factuality they almost ceased to believe ... the three sisters, I should state without further delay, bore the family name of Shakil, and were universally known (in descending order of age) as Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny. *(p. 11)*

The initially determined style is interrupted by the narrator's consciousness in order to avoid spelling out the real names of the sisters. This interruption, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is indicative of oral story telling tradition where the narrator starts telling a story, then remembers something else, comments on it and comes back to the point. The narrator, that is the author, interrupts the flow of the story and likens the reservation of their real names to the 'best household china' that the family locked away in order to preserve its value. This is the oral storyteller's inevitable modulation towards the connotations of the story being told rather than the indecisive stylistic track changes at the opening of *Midnight's Children*. The tone of the opening of *Shame* is determinedly the tone of oral fairy tales, allowing the narrator to remember something else to relate to the story. However, even this traditional narrative device has unconventional connotations. A traditional oral storyteller would not comment on the appearance of land from the air. This is a technological connotation only possible in the twentieth century.

Shame is a so-called 'realist' story constructed around a family consisting of 'important' people who rule the novel's 'imaginary country'. Rushdie shows the ruling class 'as members of a single family' and 'even places a family tree at the beginning of his novel' which is, however, an unconventional one 'with details such as "many illegitimate offspring", "11 legitimate sons", "32 boys", "27 children", as grotesque as the politics.'[8] According to one's prior understanding of a realist novel as telling the story of a large family spanning several generations as in the nineteenth century classic realist novels of the Russian literary tradition, a family tree is helpful in order to make connections between many characters with names unfamiliar to a Western readership. However, these expectations are satirised by the ludicrous number of illegitimate children whose names are of no importance to the plot.

Despite its definitive style, *Shame* is a parody of oral tradition and fairy tales because the narrator belongs to the twentieth century. He isolates himself from his 'irrational' story, and suggests reasons for this irrationality:

> All this happened in the fourteenth century. I'm using the Hegiran calendar, naturally: don't imagine that stories of this type always take place longlong ago. Time cannot be homogenised as easily as milk, and in those parts, until quite recently, the thirteenth-hundreds were still in full swing. *(p. 13)*

In *Midnight's Children*, the first person narration by Saleem was 'a kind of apprenticeship during which Rushdie tested both the potential and the limitations' of his narration. It is all clear in *Shame* 'what is being satirised, who and what are we to disapprove of.'[9] The reasoning above alerts the reader to the fact that however irrational these stories may seem, they are real and they take place in the twentieth century,

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[8] D. C. R. A. Goonetilleteke, *Salman Rushdie*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1998) p. 62
[9] Harrison, op. cit., p. 81

although they look like the stories of the fourteenth century. He states that he uses the Hegiran calendar, in other words, the Muslim calendar, based solely on the moon's changes. It was brought into use in 622 AD, the year of the migration – known as the *hijra* – of the Prophet Mohammed from Makka to Madina, which marks its beginning. Therefore, the fourteenth century of the Hegiran calendar is the same century as the twentieth century of the Christian calendar. The use of the Muslim calendar permits the narrator 'to suggest [that] two periods and cultures' could exist 'simultaneously' and 'the medieval hangover and outdatedness' exist alongside the modern twentieth century.'[10]

The oral storytelling devices directly addressing the reader are consciously employed to indicate that the story is fictional because the story being told begins with the irrational birth of an 'unconventional' hero Omar Khayyam Shakil, as in medieval fairy tales of the east. The three Shakil sisters live in the large house they inherit from their father Old Mr Shakil after his death. The setting is in the border town of Q., which suggests a slightly fantasised setting although it can be identified with Quetta in Pakistan. Omar Khayyam Shakil, a name intentionally chosen to recall the Persian poet Omar Khayyam, is born of three mothers in a mythologized way. After Old Mr Shakil's death, the three sisters never leave home and no male is seen to enter the property after a certain party to which only the 'white inhabitants' were invited. The food is delivered through the 'dumb-bell', also the name of the first chapter, and whatever happens in the Shakil sisters' house remains a mystery. Even the house cleaners and *ayahs* working in the house never find out which one of the three sisters is impregnated and who the father

[10] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 50

is. All of the three sisters share the business of motherhood even after the birth. Omar Khayyam Shakil never discovers his real mother, not to mention the absent and unknown father. This fantasy in medieval fashion is the background of the novel's hero who grows up to be 'Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this?' (25).

The miraculous birth, witnessed by no one, takes place in the bed in which Old Mr Shakil dies -'Born in a death-bed' (21) -, which implies a juxtaposition of life and death, a peripheral condition that never leaves him throughout his life and that makes him a peripheral hero:

> No outside eyes witnessed the passage of the three labours, two phantom one genuine; or the moment when empty balloons subsided, while between a third pair of thighs, as if in an alleyway, there appeared the illegitimate child; or when hands lifted Omar Khayyam Shakil by the ankles, held him upside-down, and thumped him on the back. *(p. 20)*

The story opens in such a magical way, with its quite consciously employed multiple narrative techniques that allow for a stylistic pastiche. The history of Pakistan is rewritten. Historiography, magic realism and intertextuality work together.

Magical Realism:

Shame, right at the beginning, exhibits a characteristically magical realist theme by describing multiple motherhood for Omar Khayyam, its anti-hero. Cundy states that magical realism 'may be the ideal form for representing the fragmented histories of post-colonial societies but it may also, by its lack of specificity, allow its (particularly Western) readers to abdicate from any responsibility for changing realities.'[11] For

[11] Cundy, op. cit., p. 50

Rushdie, however, the reason for standing at a slight distance from reality is a matter of convenience, rather than being an ideal storytelling device. He deliberatcly gives his narrative the sense of a fairy-tale, and acknowledges that he is telling 'a sort of modern fairy-tale' (72), explaining that 'the country in this story is not Pakistan, or not quite. There are two countries, real and fictional, occupying the same space, or almost the same space. My story, my fictional country exists, like myself, at a slight angle to reality' (29). This instance of an escape from reality implies an escape from being held responsible for attacking certain realities. It is made clear that this is a fairy-tale, which saves the author from being persecuted for the explosive nature of his material. When it comes to speaking of certain historical 'facts', the story ceases to be realistic:

> I have not given the country a name. And Q. is not Quetta at all. But I don't want to be precious about this: when I arrive at the big city, I shall call it Karachi. And it will contain a 'Defence'. *(p. 29)*

By claiming to be telling a magical fairy tale but not a realistic one, the narrator goes on to list some of the historical facts about Pakistan – the facts that would legitimately be the subject of a realistic novel. He universalises his story by declaring that he is 'not writing *only* about Pakistan' (29, my emphasis), which implies that it is *still* about Pakistan, but *not only* about it. Rushdie, despite all its hazardous potential makes a list of what he would write if *Shame* were a 'realistic' novel about Pakistan:

> ... suppose this were a realistic novel! Just think what else I might have to put in. The business, for instance, the illegal installation, by the richest inhabitants of 'Defence', of covert, subterranean water pumps that steal water from their neighbours' mains – so that you can always tell the people with the most pull by the greenness of their lawns (such clues are not confined to the Cantonment of Q.). *(p. 69)*

The continuing list goes on to accuse all the officials of Pakistan of corruption while also giving many of their real names. However, merely by saying *Shame* is not a realistic novel, he saves himself from being accused of interfering with the internal 'affairs' of the country. The anticipation of what would happen if he had written in a realistic mode comes immediately after a lengthy corruption list:

> By now, if I had been writing a book of this nature, it would have done me no good to protest that I was writing universally, not only about Pakistan. The book would have been banned, dumped in the rubbish bin, burned. All that effort for nothing! Realism can break a writer's heart. *(p. 70)*

To make the book less about Pakistan, the book's controversial political motivation is undercut. The escape from realism makes him espouse the universal anti-realist or magical realist forms. However, even by espousing these forms, Rushdie makes an implicit criticism of this stance:[12]

> Fortunately, however, I am only telling a sort of modern fairy-tale, so that's all right; nobody need get upset, or take anything I say too seriously. No drastic action need be taken, either.
> What a relief! *(p. 70)*

These ironic criticisms and escapisms from both realism and magic realism confirm Rushdie's stance at a slight angle to reality. In a sense, Rushdie does not want these to be ignored, but, ironically, does not want them to be taken seriously.

Omar Khayyam Shakil's ability to hypnotise women for sexual purposes is another connotation of magical realism in the novel. It is also a reminder of Saleem's ability to communicate telepathically with his nose. This is undoubtedly a representation of male dominance and the manipulation of women. The women in the novel are all oppressed characters, which refers to the oppressed and silenced society of Pakistan.

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[12] Cundy, op. cit., 50

Anuradha Dingwaney Needham celebrates 'the complex ways in which *women* and their *histories* are recovered and inserted into the "alternate" history of Pakistan' (original emphasis).[13]

Magical realism in *Shame* moves the text away from realism in order to avoid referring directly to the real certainties and oppressions of Pakistan. Rushdie plays ironically on the concept of fairy-tale in the novel's construction. The ironic fairy-tales come into being 'by his treatment of the central "historical" figures in the text' and those historical figures are given fictive names, such as 'Virgin Ironpants', who appears to represent Benazir Bhutto and 'Old Razor Guts' presumably referring to her brother. These also recall the 'Black Widow', the persona representing Indhira Gandhi in *Midnight's Children*, and Mrs Torture representing Mrs Thatcher in *The Satanic Verses*.[14]

Intertextuality:

A couple of pages into the novel, Old Mr Shakil lies on his deathbed looking out of the window over the town of Q., and sees the golden dome of the Hotel Flashman. Perhaps in an ironic memory of his years at Rugby School, says Harrison, Rushdie 'has named the hotel after Harry Flashman, the bad boy of Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays*', although Flashman in Hughes's story 'boasts no connection with India.'[15] Contrary to the intertextuality that Harrison observes, Goonetilleke points out that Hotel

[13] Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, 'The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie', *Massachusetts Review*, 29:4 (1988/9), p. 624
[14] Cundy, op. cit., p. 50
[15] Harrison, op. cit., p. 69

Flashman is a reminder of the 'decaying imperial Hotel Majestic in which Major Brendan stays in J. G. Farrell's *Troubles* (1970).'[16]

The name Omar Khayyam Shakil suggests a direct relationship to the Persian poet Omar Khayyam. The name is openly intended to remind us of the Persian poet who is known in the West for his *Rubaiyyat* - or quatrains - translated by Edward Fitzgerald in the nineteenth century. Omar Khayyam was never popular in his native Persia. He was a marginal character as a poet and a man of science. Omar Khayyam Shakil is a man of science, and not a popular character in the 'imaginary' country of the novel. This doubtless connection is also confirmed by the name of the house in which Omar Khayyam Shakil was born. Old Mr Shakil, Omar's dead grandfather's house is called 'Nishapur', which means, in Sanskrit, 'dark city' and it directly recalls 'Naishapur' the Persian poet's hometown in Iran, although the meaning 'the city of Shapur' does not denote a relation.'[17]

The intertextual relations of *Shame* to *Midnight's Children* are genealogical. *Shame* is also narrated in fragments. The narrator/author admits that he has lived in Pakistan 'for no longer than six months at a stretch':

> Once I went for just two weeks. Between these sixmonthses and fortnights there have been gaps of varying duration. I have learned Pakistan in slices ... I am forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors ... I must reconcile myself to the inevitability of the missing bits. *(p. 69)*

When Omar Khayyam Shakil visits Farah Zoroaster at her home on the frontier between Pakistan and Iran, there are broken pieces of mirrors tied to posts, and 'as Farah approaches each fragment she sees shards of herself reflected in the glass' (52). The

[16] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 50
[17] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 52

images on these broken mirrors symbolise the fragments of story in the novel. Similarly Aadam Aziz first sees his future wife through a perforated sheet, and the hole in that sheet indicates metaphorically that the story can only be seen through holes, not as a whole. The broken mirror recalls *Midnight's Children*'s perforated sheet. With all of the stories recounted through holes in each of the two books, the whole picture can be seen. In other words, a cohesive whole can be gained by putting the fragments together.

Omar Khayyam's multiple mothers in *Shame* reveal another connection to *Midnight's Children*, as Saleem Sinai has multiple fathers. This multiple motherhood also alludes to Rudyard Kipling's Mowgli; a wolf-child brought up by a pack of mothers.[18] Omar Khayyam exhibits his genealogical relationship to Saleem in that they are both peripheral characters with a slight difference. Saleem thinks he is the central character until towards the ending of *Midnight's Children*, whereas Omar Khayyam is marginal from the very beginning of *Shame*. Saleem and Omar have almost the same genealogy. The ambiguity in their ancestral lines remains intact. Saleem has Angrez blood, because his real father is an Englishman. Omar also probably has an Angrez father, since, although not revealed in the novel, the Shakil sisters conceive Omar when they give a party after their father's death in reaction to their bankruptcy, which is an allusion to Pakistan's bankruptcy. It is also a satirical representation of the lavishness of privileged and ruling classes that contradicts the poverty in economically unstable countries. The only people invited to that party are the white inhabitants. Omar Khayyam inevitably inherits colonial strains from his father and native strains from his mothers. Omar Khayyam, being a peripheral man both in the novel and in the society he

[18] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 53

lives in, is also a secular man, because he 'entered life without the benefit of mutilation, barbery or divine approval' (21). Saleem, too, is a secular man, like Omar, as the grandfather he adopts concluded, a generation ago, never to kiss earth again for any God.

Sufiya Zinobia, a twelve year-old-girl 'with a three-year-old mind' whom Dr. Omar Khayyam Shakil falls in love with while trying to save her from an infectious attack on her immune system, sleeps next to the room in which Omar and Shahbanou sleep together. After hearing voices from the next room made by Shahbanou performing her 'wifely functions,' she escapes 'leaving, like a cartoon character, a Sufiya-shaped hole behind her in bricked-up window.' The image of the hole recalls the 'holes' in *Midnight's Children*, and Rushdie's real life God-shaped hole in himself after losing his faith.[19]

Another significant similarity between the two novels is that Ahmed Sinai buys a whole house intact, in 'tip top working order' from a British colonial officer in *Midnight's Children*, while Mr Shakil buys the whole library from a British colonel in *Shame*:

> ...Mr Shakil's air of great learning had been a sham, just like his supposed business acumen; because his books all bore the *ex libris* plates of a certain Colonel Arthur Greenfield, and many of their pages were uncut. It was a gentleman's library, bought *in toto* from the unknown Colonel, and it had remained unused throughout its residence in the Shakil household. *(p. 33)*

However, the intertextual allusions are not limited to these two novels. Timothy Brennan argues that 'the *Qur'an* is also an important model and intertext for *Shame*', because it has implications for the narrative structure of the text, and it is invoked many

[19] Salman Rushdie, 'Choice between light and dark', in Appignanesi, Lisa & Maitland, S. (ed.), *The Rushdie File*, (London: Fourth Estate, 1989) p. 75

times in *Shame*. For example, 'the novel's run-on-words ('wentwithoutsaying', 'whichwhichwhich', 'nothing-that-you-will-be-unwilling-to-do') probably mimic the Arabic calligraphers, who often connected adjacent letters when copying the Arabic in order to create a pleasing visual effect from the continuously patterned line.[20]

It is true that the *Qur'an* is invoked directly not only in *Shame* but in other Rushdie texts as well. Yet, the structure of *Shame* is not solely modelled on the *Qur'an*, because the fragmented structure and the multiplicity of stories are examples of qissas in Arabic literary tradition, in which the *Qur'an* was also written. The style of writing run-on-words is not the only allusion to Arabic writing. Rushdie's circular structure in all of his novels evokes the circularity of Arabic calligraphy, which displays no straight lines and no sharp corners. Written from right to left, the Arabic calligraphy is the central form of Islam's arts and 'is the foremost of its characteristic modes of visual expression.' It presents 'descending curves, and temperate horizontals, achieving a measured balance between static perfection of individual form and paced rhythmic movement' and words can be 'compacted to a dense knot or drawn out to a great length.'[21] In a sense, the script itself is visual and tells a story. It is possible in Arabic calligraphy to have pictographic remnants to visually represent the meaning of a word[22] as in Chinese.

Arabic script and calligraphy are inevitably prevalent in the Muslim world and the visual form of this calligraphy displaying circles represents eternity. It is Islamic belief that one comes from the earth, and will go back to earth, in other words, to the

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[20] Brennan, Ibid., p. 125.
[21] Anthony Welch, *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World*, (Kent: Dawson, 1979), pp. 22, 24.
[22] Khatibi &Sijelmassi, *The Splendor of Islamic Calligraphy*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p. 7.

point one starts life. Rushdie's circular narration is a reflection of his post-Mughal Muslim culture shaped by the circular calligraphy that represents this belief. The Arabic art of writing stems from the pre-Islamic period. The basis of this art is oral. The *Qur'an* was recited orally when first revealed. However, these recitations were not honoured in the Arabic deserts unless they 'conformed to the sense denoted by similar words and expressions of the [oral] desert poetry'.[23] The forms and styles pointed at by Brennan in Rushdie's fiction, therefore, originate from pre-Islamic oral Arabic literature. They stretched as far as central Asia and India via spread of Islam, because Arabic literature and art represented Islam.

Brennan also indicates that there are casual similarities between *Shame* and Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude.* As third-world writers, they both 'set out to describe the transformation of traditional societies,' and have 'saga structures'.[24] These influences establish Rushdie –an essentially English educated writer- as a characteristically post-colonial Indo-Anglian writer, mixing his inherited traditional techniques with those of the west to forge all of them into new forms. All these new forms are unconventional in both cultures. This is how post-colonial writers intrinsically construct their narratives, which are not necessarily intended to be 'postmodernist'. What Rushdie amalgamates from his Muslim/Urdu inheritance and English education inevitably leads to his definition as such in the West. This is not to say that this is solely because of Rushdie's Eastern inheritance, but the influence is unavoidable, and labelling his fiction 'postmodernist' is not a sufficient definition of his texts and their traditional connotations.

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[23] K. A. Fariq, *History of Arabic Literature*, (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1972), p. 30.
[24] Brennan, op. cit., p. 66.

Historiography:

History in *Shame* only occurs outside the novel's universe. It is frequently asserted that it is not a realistic novel. The real world is only 'referred to' ironically. Rushdie outlines some of the historical facts that he would write if it were a realistic novel. With a tactic seminal to *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, too, deals with its own alternative history, which is neither the exact truth, nor a fabrication of it. The country is 'Peccavistan', which is *not only* Pakistan, but, implicitly, *also* Pakistan. The name is significant here, because 'peccavi' means 'I have sinned' in Latin – a reference to the title. The town is 'Q.', which is easily related to Quetta, but is not 'quite Quetta'. The narrator highlights President Ayub Khan's alleged Swiss bank account, genocide in Baluchistan and other corruption and problems of Pakistan with the real names of those involved in one long sentence (69-70); and expresses his will to analyse the logic of 'an industrial programme that builds nuclear reactors but cannot develop a refrigerator' (69), only in the subtext in which he expresses his difficulty in writing a realistic novel.

Although he moves away from realism by creating his own history and realities, the reader is always made aware that the main political and historical motive in the subtext is true. The novel is an allegory of history as in *Midnight's Children*. The text's shifts between 'reality/unreality; Pakistan/Peccavistan; fiction and factual narrative interventions' point up the strong representational or allegorical function of the narrative. In this case, if Saleem's argument that 'India could not exist except by virtue of an enormous act of collective imagining' is accepted, then the argument in *Shame* is

acceptable, too:[25] Pakistan is a country 'so improbable that it could almost exist' (31). The narrator/author states that Pakistan is a country whose past is rewritten, and the country itself is engineered abroad by the immigrants in England:

> Who commandeered the job of rewriting history? – The immigrants, the *mohajirs*. In what languages? – Urdu and English, both imported tongues, although one travelled less distance than the other. It is possible to see subsequent history of Pakistan as a duel between two layers of time, the obscured world forcing its way back through what-had-been-imposed. It is the true desire of every artist to impose his or her vision on the world; and Pakistan, the peeling, fragmenting palimpsest, increasingly at war with itself, may be described as a failure of the dreaming mind. ... As for me: I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. *(p. 87)*

Not to mention the unconventionality of such interventions in the narration, there is no other way to write about it than to create an imaginary reality, one's own version. History is actually a construct like fiction. Indeed, it *is* fiction. V. S. Naipaul asserts that the citizens of the fundamentalist Muslim state of Pakistan are asked to forget about the past to disconnect their ties with India. This is also because the period before Islam is 'a time of blackness: a part of Muslim theology'.[26] Although he does not suffer from amnesia like Saleem in *Midnight's Children*; the narrator of *Shame* fabricates history with direct references to historical and geographical names. The use of history in this sense differs from the use of history in the dastans where history is not fabricated. Yet, there is an interpreted version of history in the dastans, because a dastan reciter opts to manipulate history for his country's goodwill. The heroes and the nation in the dastan are always in the centre whatever the resulting historical facts are. The dastanic history is not the manipulation or fabrication of facts, but the purposeful interpretation of them.

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[25] Cundy, op. cit., p. 60
[26] V. S. Naipaul, *Among the Believers*, (London: André Deutsch, 1981) p. 134

Rushdie's history, however, is not even exactly what really happened. He deliberately produces his own form of history and even changes dates as in Gandhi's assassination in *Midnight's Children.*

Brennan points out that the fictional names of people and places are a collection of historical and geographical names 'associated with the novel's locale'. *Iskander* is a variation on *Alexander*, and significantly one of the chapters is entitled 'Alexander the Great', *Harappa* recalls the ancient Harappan civilisation of the Indus Valley, *Mohenjo* is 'the name of both the Harappa country estate and the most famous Harappan archeological site', *Sufiya* is probably derived from Muslim mystics known as *Sufis*.[27] There is a distinction between the use of the historical characters' actual names in some intrusive comments by the narrator and the use of fictional names that are clearly their fictional counterparts. In most cases, the fictional names are satirically demoted from the originals, which also emphasises Rushdie's 'slight angle to reality'. In the reflected world of the novel all the historical names have fictional counterparts because the novel isolates itself from a reality that is outside its universe.

As part of the country's history, an account of how the name Pakistan was invented is provided as well:

> It is well known that the term 'Pakistan', an acronym, was originally thought up in England by a group of Muslim intellectuals. P for the Punjabis, A for the Afghans, K for the Kashmiris, S for Sind and 'tan', they say, for Baluchistan. (No mention of the East Wing, you notice; Bangladesh never got its name in the title, and so, eventually it took the hint and seceded from the secessionists. Imagine what such a double secession does to people!) *(p. 87)*

[27] Brennan, Ibid., pp. 119-121

In fact, corrects Goonetilleke, the name was 'coined by Chaudhri Rahmat Ali, a Muslim graduate student, in 1933 (the date is significant – this was in the era of simple Indian nationalism)'. Although this fact does not totally match Rushdie's fiction, it still agrees that the name was invented in England.[28]

Some of the reality that carries historical importance is humorously depicted by bringing humour and pathos together like in the depiction of the Amritsar massacre in *Midnight's Children*. Similarly in *Shame*, there is satiric humour in the way harsh realities are presented. For instance, the torture that the narrator's poet friend is subjected to is a short and sharp anecdote:

> Since my last visit to Karachi, my friend the poet had spent many months in jail, for social reasons. That is to say, he knew somebody who knew somebody who was the wife of a second cousin by marriage of the step-uncle of somebody who might or might not have shared a flat with someone who was running guns to the guerrillas in Baluchistan. You can get anywhere in Pakistan if you know people, even into jail. ... They said he had been hung upside-down by the ankles and beaten, as if he were a new-born baby whose lungs had to be coerced into action so that he could squeal. *(p. 28)*

Although the narrator admits that his name is the name of a famous poet in the following paragraph, the actuality of what really happened is never revealed in the narration. He jokes about the regime in Pakistan ('You can get anywhere in Pakistan, if you know people, even into jail') cuts across the sadness of the story. However, he never isolates himself from history, claiming his right to talk about it, and thus universalising it. It is not the property of the participants:

> *Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject!* ... I know: nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they ever likely to. *Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies?* I reply with more questions: is history to be considered the property of the participants

[28] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 48

> solely? In what courts are such claims staked, what boundary commissions map out the territories?
> Can only the dead speak? *(p. 28)*

Simon During's interpretation of the above passage is totally from the post-colonial perspective. This dialogue, he states, is across the bar 'which internally divides the postcolonial'. This divide 'separates what one can call the post-colonised from the post-colonisers.' The language for many ex-colonies, post-colonised and the post-colonisers is English. Rushdie's dialogue 'between the post-colonised and the post-coloniser takes place in a language which is not quite transatlantic English', because 'the position of the adverb in the phrase "Is history to be considered the property of the participant solely?" marks a tone at the slightest of removes from that of English.' Rushdie elliptically asks, 'hinting, among other things, at the powerlessness of the pre-colonial tongues', 'Can only the dead speak?'. He answers the post-colonised challenge 'in terms of the *différend*', because 'he is charged' with his inheritance, and as post-coloniser, he 'speaks from a place in contemporary history where a *différend* is dramatically foregrounded.'[29]

Imperial Influence:

The imperial influence on the story is felt as soon as the depiction of The Hotel Flashman, visible from Old Mr Shakil's bedroom window, begins:

> ... the Hotel Flashman, in short, whose great golden dome was cracked even then but shone nevertheless with the tedious pride of its brief doomed glory; that dome under which the suited-and-booted Angrez officers and white-tied civilians and ringleted ladies with hungry eyes would congregate nightly, ... *(p. 12)*

The Hotel Flashman 'suggests that the sun was setting on the Empire but that its influence continues after its demise.'[30] Old Mr Shakil was a widower who raised his

[29] Simon During, 'Postmodernism or Post-colonialism today', *Textual Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (Spring 1987) p. 45
[30] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 51

children 'with the help of Parsee wet-nurses, Christian ayahs and an iron morality that was mostly Muslim' (13). Despite having been raised in a strict Muslim morality, The Shakil sisters hold Westernised parties, and know how to dance in all Western styles.

Old Mr Shakil's purchase of a British library in its entirety 'symbolises the less painful option of a surface borrowing from other cultures.'[31] Owing to his grandfather's complete purchase of this library consisting of unread books from a colonial officer, Omar, who is not allowed to go out of the mansion in which he was born until he is twelve, has access to both Eastern and Western learning, and he is empowered by his Western legacy. This suggests that Omar is an in-between character. He has Western education, but Eastern mesmerising ability.

Another reference to an important imperial influence is the fact that Omar's brightness is discovered by a colonial tutor Eduardo Rodrigues, a name that carries Spanish connotations referring to the long history of the colonisation of India. The name also foreshadows the Spanish and Moorish settlers of Bombay in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Omar represents the bright, élite class of the colonised land, and is educated by the coloniser. Another significant imperial reference here is that Omar is half Indian, half English, and he becomes the private pupil of Rodrigues, who marries Farah Zoroaster, another bright child who became his private pupil in the same days as Omar, who actually loved her. This marriage led Omar to heavy drinking. What Eduardo Rodrigues saw in Omar was important:

> What Eduardo saw in Omar (in my opinion): the possibilities of his true, peripheral nature. What's a doctor, after all? – A legitimised voyeur, a stranger whom we permit to poke fingers and even hands into places where we would not

[31] Cundy, op. cit., p. 59

> permit most people to insert so much as a finger-tip, who gazes on what we take most trouble to hide; a sitter-at-bedsides, an outsider admitted to our most intimate moments (birthdeathetc.), anonymous, a minor character, yet also, paradoxically, central, especially at the crisis ... yes, yes. Eduardo was a far-sighted teacher, and no mistake. And Omar Khayyam, who had picked Rodrigues for a father, never once considered going against his tutor's wishes. This is how lives are made. *(p. 49)*

It is the hybridity and marginality that Eduardo saw in Omar, which also gives the novel the strongest of its post-colonial aspects. Omar, who probably has a European biological father, chooses Eduardo as a father and educator.

Hybridity and Marginality:

Pakistan is an acronym, and it is a hybrid country. This crude and simplistic proof of the novel's hybridity and absurdity, however, is both useful and problematic when analysing Omar as a human being from birth and as a character in his adulthood. Old Mr Shakil's purchase of a British library is a hybridisation. Rushdie's stance is that 'a distinction' can be made between the negative side of mutation and 'the positive' side of hybridity. A particular 'cultural identity' is constituted by the 'essentialist ideas' of 'cultural purity'. However, hybridity at the other extreme suggests 'an amalgam of different strands and components of cultural identity.' Hybridity is the positive blend of elements from different worlds. The fact that *Shame* can be accepted as a 'truly hybrid novel in terms of its form as well as its content' is problematised 'by its relation to allegorical forms of writing' and this leads 'to the creation of less sophisticated portraits of the post-colonial condition'.[32]

[32] Cundy, op. cit., p. 59

Omar Khayyam Shakil, in this sense, suffers from the lack of cultural purity, but enjoys the blend of both cultures, like many of Rushdie's protagonists in all his texts. However, Omar's blend of cultures is problematic because he is marginalised by this impurity:

> 'I refuse completely,' his eldest mother Chhunni told him on his seventh birthday, 'to whisper the name of God into your ear.'
>
> On his eighth birthday, middle-Munnee confided: 'There was no question of shaving your head. Such beautiful black-black hair you came with, nobody was cutting it off under my nose, no sir!'
>
> Exactly one year later, his youngest mother adopted a stern expression. 'Under no circs,' Bunny announced, 'would I have permitted the foreskin to be removed. What is this idea? It is not like banana peel.'
>
> Omar Khayyam Shakil entered life without benefit of mutilation, barbery or divine approval. There are many who would consider this a handicap. *(p. 21)*

Born to a Muslim family, raised by three mothers who have themselves been brought up in a strict Islamic patriarchy, Omar's existence challenges the paradigms, paradoxically, of the society he was born into. He has a wild side as a grown-up. He has a controversial personality that allows him to get drunk everyday in a Muslim society. His marginality, however, is tolerated, as he becomes an exceptionally good doctor. Aadam Aziz's skill as a doctor in *Midnight's Children* is not seen as exceptional, but Omar becomes a leading immunologist in Pakistan.

Rushdie's alertness to a new health problem is significant in *Shame*. Perhaps he is the first 'to bring it into literature: *Shame* was published in 1983 and it was only in 1981 that the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was identified.'[33] A character like Omar, a successful doctor representing the middle class intellectual of Pakistan, gives the author the opportunity to mention new medical problems and developments in the novel.

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[33] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 56

The novel's hybridity is also seen in the descriptions of the lawns of the houses owned by the Pakistani élite, who acquired from the British the habit of having lawns in front of their houses. Despite their lawns, consumerist goods, post-colonial habits such as having parties, reading foreign magazines, the mentality is still patriarchal. In other words, the Western form has an Eastern content, which is what occurs in Rushdie's fiction: novels in Western form with Eastern contents.

The concepts of translation and migration are regarded as co-existing conditions, being yet another hybridity. The following extract highlights both the similarities between Omar Khayyam Shakil and Omar Khayyam the poet, as well as the importance of translation:

> Omar Khayyam's position as a poet is curious. He was never very popular in his native Persia; and he exists in the West in a translation that is really a complete reworking of his verses, in many cases very different from the spirit (to say nothing of the content) of the original. I, too, am a translated man. I have been *borne across*. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion – and use, in evidence, the success of Fitzgerald-Khayyam – that something can also be gained. *(p. 29)*

The people in Rushdie's texts are mostly dislocated and uprooted characters. They are all migrants between two cultures. Omar Khayyam is also, symbolically, a migrant, because he is in-between two cultures. For Rushdie, translation and metaphor have the same meaning. When the two words are looked at etymologically, the word metaphor and the word translation turn out to mean the same thing. 'Translation' is a word from the Latin and means to 'carry across'. Metaphor in Greek means to 'carry across', too. This connects with Rushdie's idea of migration. People are carried across. It is important to note that Rushdie embraces hybridity and the positive aspects of being

borne across frontiers, because for Rushdie and for the narrator of *Shame*, 'habitation on borders' is not 'infertile'.[34] He is familiar with the process of migration:

> I, too, know something of this immigrant business. I am an emigrant from one country (India) and a newcomer in two (England, where I live, and Pakistan, to which my family moved against my will). And I have a theory that the resentments we *mohajirs* engender have something to do with our conquest of the force of gravity. We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown. *(p. 85)*

An important instance of hybridity and marginal beliefs in the post-colonial condition is the murder of a Pakistani girl in London by her own father for bringing dishonour upon her family by making love to an English boy (115). It is significant in that a post-colonial migrant Pakistani family live under an iron traditional morality, creating a contrast to the city in which they live. The father holds on to his traditional values of honour, and murders his daughter. An incident that may stereotypically be attributed to a third-world country takes place in a Western metropolis, making it look like just another 'third-world country'.[35]

Hybridity and marginality, introduced alongside the concept of migration are central to all Rushdie novels. These I will be discussing in the following chapters. Along with oral storytelling and magical realist devices as well as the post-colonial condition, the representation of women in *Shame* is another widely discussed aspect of the novel. It is useful here to study this representation under another title.

The Representation of Women:

[34] Cundy, *op. cit.*, p. 58

[35] This confirms Kureishi's ironic assertion that post-colonial migrants make London look like a third-world country.

Cundy writes extensively on the representation of women in *Shame*. She asserts that although the novel's declared project is 'to voice the silenced stories of Pakistan's oppressed women', this project is undercut by the representation of the women themselves. Omar's ability to hypnotise women for sexual purposes, for example, is an extreme example of male manipulation of women. His resentment of his peripheral position serves as a resentful 'confusion, frustration and even outright hostility towards the relative autonomy of women which surfaces in Rushdie's fiction.' Rushdie depicts the Shakil sisters as sexually naïve, because they have an 'arrested sexuality' (13). Cundy suggests that 'Omar's accidental glimpse of [the] outside world through a crumbling wall strikes immediate fear into him and sends him running back indoors – back to the womb- rather than risk venturing forth.'[36]

Although the description of women, in many respects, humanises the text, certain gender prejudices are explored. Cundy thinks these stem presumably from the fact that Rushdie comes from the same culture. In chapter seven, for instance, which starts with the depiction of a father who killed his daughter because she had brought 'shame' onto the family by sleeping with a white boy, the narrative voice intervenes to declare 'his understanding of the father' as if advocating the killing of 'Westernised' Muslim daughters. Rushdie fails to articulate a female narrative of Pakistan's story. However, 'a coherent and positive image of the migrant postcolonial subject is projected.[37]

Nevertheless, Cundy misrepresents Rushdie in this argument for the simple reason that she apparently confuses the attitude of characters with the belief of the author who created them. It is true that Rushdie's understanding of the father who killed

[36] Cundy, op. cit., p. 54
[37] Cundy, op. cit., p. 55-56

his daughter stems from the fact that he shares that father's cultural roots. However, understanding does not necessarily mean agreeing. Morcover, it is this understanding that enables Rushdie to better depict the cultural clashes of post-colonial characters.

Aijaz Ahmad reads *Shame* very critically. Rushdie 'has not remained untouched by certain kinds of feminism,' because he lives in the milieu of the British left; therefore, he is aware of women's oppression and capable of 'effective narrativization'. In the main framework of the novel, Bilquis and Rani are portrayed far more sympathetically than are their husbands. However, Ahmad thinks that they are portrayed as paltry, shallow creatures, 'capable of nothing but chirpy gossip.' Every woman throughout the novel is, without exception, represented 'through a system of imageries, which is sexually overdetermined'. Many of them lack coherence and individual identity. [38]

The crux of the matter of women's representation in *Shame* is Sufiya Zinobia, as she is the character that provides the direct link with the title of the novel. Ahmad regards her as the personification of 'shame'. She breeds 'all-enveloping violence'. She is 'presented from the outset as the very embodiment of the principle of redemption'. In the course of the novel, her shame 'comes to refer less and less to herself' or to her family and it 'becomes increasingly focused on the world as Sufiya finds it,' therefore she becomes 'the conscience of a shameless world'. However, this is problematic, because it reduces 'the complex moral obligations of a social conscience' to 'the limiting emotiveness of mere shame.'[39]

In Ahmad's view, the portrayal of Sufiya 'raises a fundamental question about Rushdie's view of the world in general and women in particular.' Although Rushdie

[38] Ahmad, Ibid., pp. 143-144
[39] Ahmad, op. cit., pp. 145-146

stresses the importance of women in *Shame*, he 'seems to have fashioned a macabre caricature of what female resistance to cruelties might be'. His imagination leads to a kind of degradation. The characterisation of Sufiya illustrates 'the limiting, even misogynist nature of the typologies within which Rushdie encloses the whole range of women's experience.' What Ahmad criticises most is the connection of women's oppression in the novel to the history of the country they belong to. In fact, women are not 'mere victims of history', but much more centrally, they 'have *survived* against every odds, and they have *produced* history' (original emphasis).[40]

Shame, which took Salman Rushdie a much shorter time to complete than *Midnight's Children*, is a dense, tightly organised novel. It is a celebration of a dark satire about Muslim Indian culture within the parameters of Pakistan. It is another hybrid novel by Rushdie shifting between reality/unreality, fact/fiction, though not as widely studied as the author's *Midnight's Children*. Yet, the assumed postmodernist devices used in the novel are implicitly traditional, because the characteristic techniques of qissa and dastan traditions are significantly invoked by the use of history, oral storytelling, and fragmented structure. The fragments are also reminiscent of kilim, if imagined visually.

Unlike *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* is more specifically about Pakistan. It is a description of the post-colonial condition in Pakistan, an 'invented' hybrid country resulting from the end of British Raj. Being an 'invented' country for Muslims separated from India, Pakistan's, and thus *Shame*'s, hybridity is sharper, due to its Islamic identity

[40] Ahmad, op. cit., p. 146

mixed with that Indian culture in which its people had lived for centuries together with its Anglophilia, its Americanisation, and its colonial past. *Shame*, therefore, stands as another depiction of another post-colonial condition, which makes the novel an amalgam of distinct literary traditions.

The Satanic Verses

The Satanic Verses, Salman Rushdie's most controversial book to date, completes what he calls a trilogy that started with *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*.[1] Unlike the earlier novels that were set in the subcontinent, *The Satanic Verses* is set both in London and Bombay, problematizing more overtly the tension within and between cultures, religions, and different classes of society. There is a greater commitment in this novel to the concepts of migration, belonging and not belonging, lost hopes and dreams, lost futures, broken hearts, break ups, and longing.

The Satanic Verses comprises three different stories and two protagonists, Saladin and Gibreel. The three plots are the lives of Saladin and Gibreel, the *Qur'anic* story fictionalising the origin of Islam in dream sequences, and the long walk of Ayesha and the villagers to the sea which, they believe, will open and give them a passage to Mecca. Rushdie 'thought that they were probably three completely different books' but

[1] Madhu Jain ''My Theme is Fanaticism', An interview with Salman Rushdie', *India Today*, 15 Sep. 1988, reprinted in Appignanesi & Maitland (ed.) *The Rushdie File*, (London: Fourth Estate, 1989) p. 38

he understood that the second and third stories could be images of Gibreel's mind.[2] What follows is a brief guiding summary of event and action in what is a complex and multi-layered novel.

The novel opens with the crash of an aircraft hijacked by Sikh terrorists who explode the plane over the English Channel. This is based on a real event: the blowing up of an Air India plane off Southwest Ireland in 1985 by Sikh militants.[3] The name of the plane is 'Bostan,' which is the name of one of the gardens of Paradise in Islam. Two Indian passengers, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta fall from the plane safely to English soil. This is a direct recall of the fall of Satan from Paradise in both Christian and Islamic myths. Gibreel Farishta –farishta means 'angel' in Persian- refers to Angel Gabriel, and he turns into an angel growing wings and halo when he falls to the ground, whereas Saladin grows hooves and a tail turning into 'satan' as soon as he falls on the English soil. These references to religious myths invite a direct comparison to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, with its epic description of Satan's fall from heaven together with his disciples after his rebellion. Saladin also rebels against his own culture and religion, and falls from the 'Bostan' while migrating to Britain.

Saladin is entering Britain for a second time. He holds a British passport, because he is married to Pamela, an English woman who, by marrying him, wants to rebel against Englishness and embrace immigrant causes. Saladin's intention, though, is to shed his Indianness and become fully anglicised. After marrying Pamela and settling down in England Saladin, an actor, becomes a voice-over in TV advertisements for

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[2] 'Interview: Salman Rushdie talks to the London Consortium about *The Satanic Verses*', *Critical Quarterly*, vol. 38, no. 2, (Summer 1996) p. 51

[3] D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, *Salman Rushdie*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1998) p. 74

products such as ketchup due to his 'English' English accent and his ability to project different voices. The way he makes his living is something he has in common with Gibreel, the famous Bollywood actor who takes part in 'theological' movies, and who is coming to Britain for the first time in his life after enigmatically vanishing from Indian public life.

Magically, Gibreel and Saladin swim slowly in the air, flapping their arms to fly, and land safely on a beach in Southeast England.[4] They are first welcomed to her house on the beach by an Anglo-Argentinean woman named Rosa in her late eighties. There are, however, others who see them come ashore and report the incident to the police, who come to Rosa's house to search for the illegal immigrants. As soon as they fall to the ground Saladin grows horns and hair all over his body. The police, suspicions confirmed, accuse him of being an illegal immigrant and arrest him, but they leave the untransformed Gibreel in Rosa's house.

Saladin is severely beaten by the police officers who are amused by his metamorphosis. They take him to a detention centre for illegal immigrants where Saladin encounters more metamorphoses. In a mass breakout, he escapes and finds his friend Jumpy Joshi in bed with his wife Pamela, who, after hearing about the plane crash, thought Saladin was dead. She refuses to acknowledge her husband, and Saladin takes refuge in Shaandaar Café, a restaurant and guesthouse run by Muhammad and Hind Sufyan, immigrants from Bangladesh.

[4] In a comic mimicry of this fictional fall in real life, in 'October 1996 a couple in a pub garden spotted a body falling from a DC9 over Richmond, South-West London, as it approached Heathrow.' *Daily Mail*, Tuesday, December 26, 2000, p. 7.

Gibreel, too, escapes from Rosa's house, where he was subject to Rosa's dreams of finding an answer in him to her overwhelming needs. He returns to the main purpose of his journey to England: the pursuit of Alleluia Cone, the first woman to climb Everest, who was his lover for only three days while she was in India. After finding her, he sleeps there for several nights, before he loses his faith and starts having nightmares about the foundation of Submission, the religion in his dreams that undoubtedly refers to Islam. In his missionary walks through the streets of London, he is knocked down by the car of a famous Indian film producer who recognises him and offers him the opportunity to make a new film.

After Saladin returns to normal life from his metamorphosis, he searches for Gibreel who betrayed him by refusing to acknowledge their friendship and turning him over to the police at Rosa's house. When he finds out where Gibreel lives, he starts making anonymous telephone calls, which suggest 'the satanic verses' of the title, because the devil prompts him to separate Gibreel from Alleluia. 'The Satanic Verses' also function as a pun to echo the verses in the dream sequences.

The Satanic Verses is a huge novel comprising of so many stories that it is difficult to summarise briefly. It is the story of three cities: London, Bombay and Mecca. All of the stories are, however, interrelated. It is perhaps one of the most talked about books in literary history due to its controversial content on Islamic issues which is suggested in dream sequences. This has put the novel at the centre of non-literary debates ever since its publication, although it is a neatly constructed exemplary text that deserves to be studied 'academically' within the paradigms of its traditional, cultural and post-colonial aspects. This chapter is an attempt to offer a reading of this book to prove

that its content is not all about religious blasphemy, and to argue that it is equally an important book about the issues of migration, hybridity and problems of identity in the post-colonial condition.

Metamorphosis and Magical Realism:

The Satanic Verses opens with a literal plunge into magical realism and metamorphosis. This metamorphosis, however, is not a Kafkaesque one. It has more magical realist connotations in that the story sets itself as an unrealistic text at the outset of the novel. Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha are the only survivors of the jumbo jet disaster. Miraculously and magically enough, they fall to earth unharmed:

> Just before dawn one winter's morning, New Year's Day or thereabouts, two real, full-grown, living men fell from a great height, twenty-nine thousand and two feet, towards the English Channel, without benefit of parachutes or wings, out of a clear sky. *(p. 3)*

As they fall, Gibreel sings the first words of the novel: 'To be born again, first you have to die' (3). Their fall actually suggests a reincarnation, which points to the most radical form of metamorphosis. Their forms have changed and they have become other creatures in their new lives after the crash. The whole novel centres 'around a change, a metamorphosis, a rebirth that both survivors undergo during a descent that should result in death but that miraculously leaves them both alive,' with some changes which appear as a halo around Gibreel's head, suitable to his archangelic name; and horns, hooves and tail that Saladin grows.[5]

[5] James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie*, (ed.) Kinley E. Boby, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992) p. 91

Gibreel's halo evokes more than magical realism, as it is a reference to the origins of his name. Miraculously, Gibreel suddenly flaps his arms in the air enabling him to fly safely. It is an angelic miracle:

> Chamcha held on to Gibreel while the other began, slowly at first and then with increasing rapidity and force, to flap his arms. Harder and harder he flapped, and as he flapped a song burst out of him, ... The more emphatically Gibreel flapped and sang, sang and flapped, the more pronounced the declaration, until finally the two of them were floating down to the Channel like scraps of paper in a breeze. *(p. 9)*

Towards the end of the first part of the first chapter, which is titled 'The Angel Gibreel', a first person voice interrupts the narration, although the story is narrated by a third person from the beginning, and continues thus for the rest of the novel. This seems to be the authorial voice that is not heard in *The Satanic Verses* as much as in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*. The authorial voice, whose place is indeterminable in the novel, claims to be omnipresent, suggesting the 'magic' in the novel. However, he is ambivalent in that he only 'hopes' to manage to know the whole truth:

> I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and –potence, I'm making no claims at present, but I can manage this much, I hope. Chamcha willed it and Farishta did what was willed.
> *Which* was the miracle worker?
> Of what type – angelic, satanic – was Farishta's song?
> Who am I?
> Let's put it this way: who has the best tunes? *(p. 10)*

Rushdie deploys a pun on an English saying: 'The devil has the best tunes.' The narrator, who asks 'Who am I?' changes the question into 'who has the best tunes?' If the English saying is to be taken as the formula to answer this question, the narrator has the best tunes. In other words, the devil is the narrator. The authorial voice is heard again

later in the novel where it suggests an authority in decline over the characters, but still omnipresent and able to see everything:

> (I'm giving him no instructions. I, too, am interested in his choices – in the result of his wrestling match. Character *vs.* destiny: a free-style bout. Two falls, two submissions or a knockout will decide.) *(p. 457)*

Gibreel's angelic characteristics and abilities are the most significant determinants of the novel's plot constructed around his and Saladin's magical miracles and metamorphoses. After becoming involved in a relationship with Alleluia, Gibreel walks out on her to escape her house because, having nightmares after losing his faith, he has changed into a 'full-time archangel' and his mission to save London is hampered by uxoriousness. He is by now able to fly over London. However, he lands on the streets to try to stop the flow of traffic and make people pay attention. He is then run down by the car of an Indian film producer who recognises him and takes him back to Alleluia's house. Gibreel thinks that the weather makes London a bad place to live, and decides to change the climate. As we are plunged into a magical world from the beginning of the novel, it is not extraordinary that Gibreel turns the climate of London into a tropical one. Before landing on Alleluia's doorstep, he makes the temperature rise suddenly.

Harrison compares this magic to that of Rushdie's earlier novels and suggests that the joyfully magical sequences of the Midnight's Children Conference in *Midnight's Children* or the triple pregnancy that gave birth to Omar Khayyam in *Shame* are lost in this novel. Magic is no longer 'spontaneous, visceral, thumb-to-nose response by the third world to the patriarchal rationality of the West'. The strategy at work in this novel is 'more deliberate, more manipulative' and Rushdie's strategy turns to 'breaking down

the barriers between reality and fantasy.'[6] Magic becomes the part of reality suggesting the relation of the symbols provided by it to historical events or religious beliefs. Gibreel's angelic characteristics are not only a suggestion of magical realism, but also a reference to the Angel Gabriel, a religious concept believed to be true by believers, rather than being phantasmagoric overtaken by real.

The magic in Ayesha's walk of pilgrimage with the other villagers crossing the Arabian Sea to go to Mecca recalls the parting of the Red Sea for Moses to walk through in Islamic mythology:

> 'This, too, the angel has explained,' she said quietly. 'We will walk two hundred miles, and when we reach the shores of the sea, we will put our feet into the foam, and the waters will open for us. The waves shall be parted, and we shall walk across the ocean-floor to Mecca.' *(p. 236)*

Rushdie presents comedy and tragedy with this magical and holy pilgrimage that has tragic connotations for the believers.[7] Mishal, who has cancer, is one of the villagers to join Ayesha. She believes that her cancer will disappear if she walks to Mecca. Her husband Mirza's attempts to stop her are humorous and suggest a realism that overtakes magic:

> '... When the waters of the ocean part, where will the extra water go? Will it stand up sideways like walls? Mishal? Answer me. Are there miracles? Do you believe in paradise? Will I be forgiven my sins?' He began to cry, and fell on to his knees, with his forehead still pressed against the wall. His dying wife came up and embraced him from behind. 'Go with the pilgrimage, then,' he said, dully. 'But at least take the Mercedes station wagon. It's got air-conditioning and you *can take the icebox full of Cokes.' (p. 239)*

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[6] Harrison, Ibid., p. 96

[7] Rushdie says he is interested in putting together comedy and tragedy, like Kafka. See John Haffenden (ed.), 'Salman Rushdie', in *Novelists in Interview*, (London: Methuen, 1985) p. 240.

Metamorphosis is also presented through reality. Saladin's metamorphosis becomes more recognisable when he starts staying in the Shaandaar Café. However, he is still among the normal people in an unfantastic environment. No one is surprised to see him transformed. He is described in conventional discourse, not in a fantastical way. Although it goes together with magical realism, metamorphosis in *The Satanic Verses* is better interpreted as part of the hybridity. His new goatlike devil figure is a reference to his alienness. Steven Walker suggests that 'magical realist metamorphosis is self-interpreted' in *The Satanic Verses*, referring to a strange dialogue between Saladin and 'a former male model now changed into a manticore (man-tiger)' in hospital where Saladin recovers from a racist police beating:[8]

> 'They describe us,' the other whispered solemnly. 'That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct.' *(p. 168)*

Walker states that metamorphosis is employed to describe racist stereotypes 'in the world of magical realist procedures' in the novel. Saladin's metamorphosis into a devil indicates his 'image of the Third World immigrant as sexually potent' that pictures the *racist imaginations* already superimposed on him.[9]

Style and Structure:

Stylistically speaking, *The Satanic Verses* is not as innovative as Rushdie's earlier novels. The oral narrative devices are not employed. The authorial interventions are not as frequent and clear as they are in *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*. Stylistic

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[8] Steven Walker, 'Magical Archetypes: Midlife Miracles in *The Satanic Verses*', in Lois Parkinson Zamora & Wendy B. Faris (ed.), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995) p. 351

[9] Walker, Ibid., pp. 351-352

reminders of Eastern tales such as *Arabian Nights* are absent. An oral storyteller who interrupts and digresses is not observed. However, his ancestral relation to the literary traditions of India, which is influenced by the Arabian and Persian cultures, is referred to, when Saladin, who has substantial similarities to the author, finds 'a ten volume set of the Richard Burton translation of the *Arabian Nights*' (36) in his father's bookshelves.

Although there are suggestions that the author is still in the text as its creator, the narrative point of view is in the third person. The narrative voice comes out in the first person as an omnipresent creator:

> Higher Powers had taken an interest, it should have been obvious to them both, and such Powers (I am, of course, speaking of myself) have a mischievous, almost a wanton attitude to tumbling flies. ... I yield pride of place to no personage, whether mortal or im-. *(p. 133)*

These are unacknowledged authorial voices, but they represent an 'interesting shift into and out of first-person interior monologue'.[10] The narrator is again present in the following account of how Mahound receives the divine messages through Gibreel:

> The dragging again the dragging and now the miracle starts in his my our guts, he is straining with all his might at something, forcing something, and Gibreel begins to feel that strength that force, here it is *at my own jaw* working on it, opening shutting; and the power, starting within Mahound, reaching up to *my vocal cords* and the voice comes. *(p. 112, original emphasis)*

The narrator's presence in *The Satanic Verses* is only suggested rather than being acknowledged by the use of narrative devices. The author's appearance in the novel confirms his position as the author/creator. Gibreel sees the image of God in his room in the Shaandaar Café, where he believes God is looking him after. However, this image does not clarify Gibreel's doubt 'as to whether he is Ooparvala, "the Fellow Upstairs",

[10] Harrison, op. cit., p. 112

or Neechayvala, "the Guy from Underneath", but has recognisable similarities to Rushdie in his appearance:

> He saw, sitting on the bed, a man of about the same age as himself, of medium height, fairly heavily built, with salt-and-pepper beard cropped close to the line of his jaw. What struck him most was that the apparition was balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses. This was not Almighty he expected. 'Who are you?' he asked with interest. ...
>
> 'Ooparvala,' the apparition answered. 'The Fellow Upstairs.'
>
> 'How do I know you're not the other One,' Gibreel asked craftily, 'Neechayvala, the Guy from Underneath?' *(p. 318)*

Apart from these suggestions that the narrator is the creator and an inevitable part of the text, the authorial comments and interruptions are insignificant, but still curiously interesting. Although it is not an innovative novel by Rushdie standards in its use of language, it is inarguably another experimental Rushdie novel in terms of its structural novelties.

Rushdie ventures to include more structural innovations in *The Satanic Verses*. The metaphoric nature of the narration suggests many possibilities. Sentences slide back and forth from the first person to third person verbs and pronouns and 'the time frame switches from the twentieth to the seventh and back to the twentieth century, with twentieth century idiom and thought patterns spoken by seventh century minds and mouths'.[11] The whole text deals with three different plots, each having different subplots. These three different plots are presented in nine parts. Milan Kundera gives each story a letter: A, B, and C:

> The three lines are taken up in sequence in the novel's nine parts in the following order: A-B-A-C-A-B-A-C-A (incidentally: in music, a sequence of this kind is called a rondo: the main theme returns regularly, in alternation with several secondary themes).

[11] Harrison, op. cit., p. 114

> This is the rhythm of the whole (I note parenthetically the approximate number of pages): A (90), B (40), A (80), C (40), A (120), B (40), A (80), C (40), A (40). It can be seen that the B and C parts are all the same length, which gives the whole a rhythmic regularity.[12]

In comparison to *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*, *The Satanic Verses* is the most innovative novel written by Rushdie from the point of view of structure, and its range and variety are greater than the earlier novels. The trends started in the two earlier novels are developed in this novel. The attempt to re-write history is only 'found in the short Islamic sections'. The 'greater influx of realism in *The Satanic Verses* permits these realities to a substantial degree.'[13] Although most of the action takes place in London, 'episodes ranging in length from whole sections or books to brief incidents are located in the Middle East (and/or the dreams of one of the characters), India, Scotland, and New York, as well as both the seventh and twentieth centuries.'[14]

One of the major textual problems is the difficulty it displays in resolving the relationship between dream and reality. There is little difference in their presentation. Most of the historiography containing historical identities and reality is suggested in the dream sequences of the book, whereas most of the metamorphoses and magic realism occurs, paradoxically, in the sequences that suggest reality. Rushdie describes the text's sudden switches between the centuries, places, themes, dreams and reality as 'channel hopping', and this describes best the structure of *The Satanic Verses*:

> Take the image of channel hopping, sitting there with a remote control and pushing the buttons and getting fractions of fifty worlds which blur into each other as you sit there. Well, [*The Satanic Verses*] in a way does the same channel hopping; it takes a large number of different kinds of narrative and puts them up against each other and darts between them.[15]

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[12] Milan Kundera, 'The Day Panurge No Longer Makes People Laugh', *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 2, (Summer, 1996) pp. 43-44
[13] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 93
[14] Harrison, op. cit., p. 89
[15] Salman Rushdie 'An Interview by Catherine Bush,' *Conjunctions* 14, (1989) p. 19

Intertextuality:

Early in the novel, Gibreel loses his faith, as does Aadam Aziz at the beginning of *Midnight's Children*. The whole idea of losing faith and having a hole where God used to be may be interpreted as a direct reference to Rushdie's own loss of faith. Due to its devotion to the concepts of migration and hybridity, *The Satanic Verses* borrows the concept of translation from *Shame*, where it is argued that something can be gained as well as lost by translation. The hybrid English accent adopted by the Indians is mocked. A satirical description of Saladin's Anglophilia is the content of one of the authorial interventions in *Shame*:

> *Outsider! Trespasser! You have no right to this subject!* ... I know: nobody ever arrested me. Nor are they ever likely to. *Poacher! Pirate! We reject your authority. We know you, with your foreign language wrapped around you like a flag: speaking about us in your forked tongue, what can you tell but lies? (Shame, p. 28, original emphasis)*

On his return to Bombay after migrating to England, Saladin meets his former friend Zeenat Vakil. After their first lovemaking, she starts criticising his Anglophilia:

> 'You know what you are, I'll tell you. A deserter is what, more English than, your Angrez accent wrapped around you like a flag, and don't think it's so perfect, it slips, baba, like a false moustache.' *(p. 53)*

Zeeny, as Saladin calls her, criticises him for having an English accent that she likens to a false moustache. Although Saladin is still Indian, he believes that the English accent, wrapped around him 'like a flag', is a way of moving away from his own identity. In the above passage from *Shame*, the author indicates his concerns over being criticised in Pakistan for speaking out with an English accent about what he sees as problems, because he is not native to his land anymore, but has become an alien. Zeeny's reaction

to his English accent is no different from the one in *Shame*, where the author states that he is forced 'by history' to write in English. His lover similarly, considers Saladin an outsider.

The Satanic Verses proves its genealogical relation to *Midnight's Children*. When Changez, Saladin's father, offers him an English education, his mother, Nasreen Chamchawala's advice to her son echoes Amina Sinai's reaction to Mr Methwold's dirty house in *Midnight's Children*:

> ... his mother Nasreen Chamchawala refused to cry, and volunteered, instead, the benefit of her advice. 'Don't go dirty like those English,' she warned him. 'They wipe their bee tee ems with paper only. Also, they get into each other's dirty bathwater.' *(p. 39)*

The identical reactions of two traditional Indian women expressing their prejudices against English culture point to the fact that they are seminally related characters from two different novels imagined and written by the same author. These similarities extend to the protagonists. Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children*, Omar Khayyam in *Shame* and Salahuddin Chamchawala, who changes his name to Saladin Chamcha, in *The Satanic Verses* are all marginal and unconventional characters. They have all lost religious faith and all come from privileged families. Due to their privileged Western education, they all have an outsider's as well as an insider's perspective on their cultural origins, which enables them to criticise and, perhaps, even deprecate their origins. Saladin can also be regarded as a 'post-colonial version' of Kipling's Kim, because he is a 'professional mimic who can do a thousand English voices precisely because no one of them is authentically his own.'[16] However, he returns to his roots at the end of the novel,

[16] Michael Gorra, 'Rudyard Kipling to Salman Rushdie: Imperialism to Post-colonialism', in Richetti, J. (ed.); Bender, J., Dierdre, D.; Seidel M. (ass. Eds.), *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 652.

although he is successful, like Kim, in translating himself and switching his identity between cultures.

As well as concerning relations between his texts, Rushdie's novels represent relations to the non-literary world. Saladin has chosen to live and work in England, and like Rushdie, he comes from a wealthy middle-class family, was sent to England to be educated when he was a teenager and has an 'English' accent. These biographical similarities to the author highlight his depreciation of his own culture and his escape from it and suggest that his privileged condition is too much of a barrier to his (and at the same time the author's) 'really understanding or representing the unprivileged'.[17] Saladin's marriage to Pamela Lovelace, the dysfunctional marriage of an Indian man to an English woman in which both seek to escape from the stereotypes of their national identities, suggests Salman Rushdie's first marriage to Clarissa Luard. Malise Ruthven observes that the two women's names are those of two Richardson heroines – Pamela from his earlier novel 'with the tormentor of his later novel *Clarissa*.' Ruthven comments that the novel is 'full of such references to English, Urdu and Latin American literatures'.[18]

Catherine Cundy reads *The Satanic Verses* in comparison with V. S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*. Both novels deal with 'similar issues of location and dislocation, of the reintegration of the past into the present'. They both 'illustrate the migrant's problems of self-contextualisation', for example, the 'imaginary, fantasised nature of Vilayet, the migrant's preconceptions about his new home and the identity he invents to

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[17] Harrison, op. cit., p. 5
[18] Malise Ruthven, *A Satanic Affair: Salman Rushdie and the Wrath of Islam*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1991) p. 21

coincide with those preconceptions, are concerns' of both books. The discomfiture Naipaul experiences on arriving in England is 'often figured through associations with food, as it is with Saladin'. While Naipaul speaks of 'the secrecy and embarrassment with which he attempts to consume the food of his own culture he has been given for the journey', Saladin finds it hard to get used to the food of his new adopted culture:[19]

> One day soon after he started at the school he came down to breakfast to find a kipper on his plate. He sat there staring at it, not knowing where to begin. Then he cut into it, and got a mouthful of tiny bones. ... His fellow-pupils watched him suffer in silence; not one of them said, here, let me show you, you eat it this way. ... Then the thought occurred to him that he had been taught an important lesson. England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him how to eat it. *(p. 44)*

The textual allusions of *The Satanic Verses* are not limited to literary texts; filmic texts also figure significantly in its texture. The novel, as does *Midnight's Children*, displays many cinematographic elements and overt references to films. In one of the dream sequences, Gibreel, the dreamer, is described as the viewer of a film, in which the on screen characters start speaking to offscreen Gibreel about a theological problem in a detective plot:

> And then, without warning, Hamza says to Mahound: 'Go ask Gibreel,' and he, the dreamer, feels his heart leaping in alarm, who, me? *I'm* supposed to know the answers here? I'm sitting here watching this picture and now this actor points his finger out at me, who ever heard the like, who asks the bloody audience of a 'theological' to solve the bloody plot? *(p. 108)*

This is an open allusion to Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, in which the main female character Cecilia, a cinema-obsessed, working class woman goes to see her favourite film (the film in the film) 'The Purple Rose of Cairo' in the local cinema every

[19] Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996) pp. 68-73

evening. Impressed by her keen interest, the male hero of the sub-film, the film in the film that is, pointing and walking out of the screen, starts talking to her:

> TOM *(Offscreen)* ... and here I am now – on the verge of a madcap ... Manhattan ... weekend ...
>
> *As Tom's offscreen voice trails off, Cecilia reacts, looking around the audience, moving about in her seat. The film cuts to Tom on the black-and-white movie screen – as seen over the full-colour heads and backs of the theatre audience.*
>
> TOM *(Shaking his head, looking out at the offscreen Cecilia)* My God, you must really love this picture.
>
> *The film cuts back to audience, to Cecilia in her row, surrounded by other scattered patrons.*
>
> CECILIA *(Pointing to herself, looking at the offscreen Tom)* Me?[20]

Evidently intertextuality not only occurs between texts, self-reflexiveness is called attention to in the gesture towards Allen's meta-filmic practice. In a novel with more than one story intermingling fiction and facts, dream and reality, past and the present, east and the west, the connotations to non-literary factual and fictional worlds such as cinema, painting, history and real people are rich and inevitable. As well as intertextuality, historiography makes for another significant theme and strategy in Rushdie's fiction.

Historiographic Metafiction:

History is the material from which Rushdie creates fiction. He deploys historical events, makes little or substantial changes and creates a collage. The plane crash in the opening of the novel refers to a real event. In 1985, when Rushdie was writing *The Satanic Verses*, Sikh terrorists blew up an Air India Boeing 747 that they had hijacked

[20] 'The Purple Rose of Cairo', A Film by Woody Allen, in *Three Films by Woody Allen:* 'Zelig', 'The Broadway Danny Rose', 'The Purple Rose of Cairo', (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1987) p. 350

off Southwest Ireland. This terrorist action as an historical anecdote becomes the major material on which Rushdie builds his novel.

Srinivas Aravamudan points out that the significance of this plane crash is its allusion to miraculous falls and their connection with the continuation of India and its ruling dynasties. It recalls the death of Sanjay Ghandi in 1980 by an aerial accident, of Indira Gandhi in 1984 by Sikh terrorists who gunned her down, and of Pakistan's President Zia ul-Haq in 1988 in a mysterious plane crash.[21] It is ironic that Rushdie was subject to a frightening terrorist threat after the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie preserves his stand at a 'slight angle to reality' by fictionalising history and historicizing his fiction. The connection to the real hijacking makes it look more real, while Saladin and Gibreel fly down to the earth phantasmagorically.

Brian Finney notes that their miraculous survival and landing ashore in Hastings invokes 'the Norman conquest of 1066' a date used by English historians 'to mark the beginning of the Middle Ages'. Hastings is the site of the battle 'in which William the Conqueror defeated Harold and replaced Anglo-Saxon civilisation with a new regime.' Finney also points to the fact that while William swallowed a handful of sand on landing at Hastings, Gibreel swallows a mouthful of snow. Saladin had already swallowed a kipper full of bones.[22] The narrative reminds us that the history of Britain consists of many invasions. The invasion of postcolonial migrants is yet another marking of a new era in British history.

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[21] Srinivas Aravamudan '``Being God's Postman God's Postman is no Fun, Yaar`` Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', in D. M. Fletcher (ed.) *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*, (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994) p. 192

[22] Brian Finney, 'Demonising Discourse in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*' *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 29:3, (July 1998) p. 78

Ayesha and the villagers' pilgrimage to Mecca on the ocean bed refers to the miracle of Moses who walked on the bed of the Red Sea that had parted for him. This religious reference to a holy miracle is a use of fantasy in the novel, where the holy pilgrimage is threatened by the waves of the ocean that resists parting. In other words, it resists acting against the laws of physics. At a certain distance from the shore, the pilgrims' heads disappear under the water. A few of them are rescued or turn back. The drowned bodies wash ashore in time. While under interrogation and threatened with possible prosecution for illegal immigration, all the survivors, except for one, agree that they saw the waters part. However, this distorted religious myth is absurdly overlapped with a real event from history, a factual incident that suggests the use of historiography yet again in *The Satanic Verses*. Although many details have been changed, it is based on an actual event that 'ended with the survivors being prosecuted for illegal emigration, though the pilgrimage in that case was to have been to Kerbala in Iraq.'[23]

Rushdie fictionalises the history of Islam in Gibreel's dreams. History is not merely changed, fabricated or purposefully manipulated, but it is put into a dream sequence to move radically away from reality. Rushdie studied the history of Islam at Cambridge, therefore his wide knowledge on Islamic history makes him attempt to subvert and rehistoricise the origins of Islam, although it is never referred to as Islam throughout the novel. The new religion being born in Gibreel's dreams is called 'Submission', which literally means 'Islam' in Arabic. The messenger of the new religion is Mahound, an abusive name used to refer to Prophet Mohammed in the middle ages and meaning 'false prophet'. It is 'associated with the Crusades', when Islam was

[23] Harrison, op. cit., p. 110

seen as the enemy of Christian Western civilisation.[24] Mahound lives in Jahilia, a city of sand that refers to Mecca. It is another significance of the historiographical narrative that Jahilia, which literally means 'ignorance', is a name given by the Muslims to the period before Islam.

The dream sequences, where the alleged blasphemy occurs, became the core of the indignation and furore in the Muslim world after *The Satanic Verses* was published. These dreams, although Islam is not mentioned, are obviously about the birth of Islam, and carry a sense of insult against Islam from the Muslim perspective. The main reason for this suspicious insult is the attempt to rewrite the history of Islam, and thus the way the *Qur'an* was written. In the novel, the Prophet Muhammad, referred to as Mahound, was described as a 'businessman-turned-prophet'. To attract more followers, he is ready to accept the pagan proposal that three Meccan goddesses share divine status with Allah. Initially, Mahound believes that this proposal is divinely inspired, but afterwards he realises that the Devil interfered in his reception of the message from Allah. Therefore, these verses are expelled from the *Qur'an*, and condemned as 'the satanic verses'. According to Islamic belief, it is blasphemous to parody the Prophet, and the way the *Qur'an* was written. From the Muslim perspective, *The Satanic Verses* is seen 'as a calculated attempt to vilify and slander the Prophet of Islam', an attempt which Muslims rarely tolerate,[25] as well as a depiction of his wives as the women in Mecca's brothels.

Rushdie denies the authority of history and historical characters. The Prophet Mohammed is not the only historical character whose authority he questions and satirises. Ayetollah Khomeini is the Imam, the contemporary representative of Islamic

[24] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 99
[25] Shabbir Akhtar, *Be Careful with Muhammad! The Salman Rushdie Affair*, (London: Bellew Publishing, 1989), p. 1.

fundamentalism in the novel. Rushdie attempts to establish a link between Mrs. Thatcher and the Imam. Mrs. Thatcher is referred to as Mrs. Torture or Maggie the Bitch. Finney points out that the connection to the Imam 'becomes clear when the Imam tells an equally disconcerted Gibreel that he will smash the clocks when he comes to power in the name of [God]'. According to Finney, the fact that Rushdie satirises 'these two modern leaders who have set out to reverse the chronological progression of time emanates [...] from his post-colonial belief in the need to acknowledge the historical effects of imperialism'.[26] If Rushdie indeed has such satirical intent, it is subordinate to his more general historiographic scepticism and playfulness. As a well-known slogan of the French Revolution, 'smash the clocks' alludes to the cyclical nature of history and to the circularities of all fiction.

Cinematography as a Device:

Nicholas D. Rombes Jr. sees *The Satanic Verses* as cinematic narrative because the text deliberately explores 'the modern spectacle of religion and its cinematisation', while the vocabulary of film itself, which plays on 'ways of seeing' and the flattened reality of modernity, 'expos[es] the camera's potential shortcoming via the very language and structure of cinema itself.'[27] The cinematic influence on the novel is evident in the fact that Saladin and Gibrèel are both film actors. Gibreel is an Indian actor who is famous for making theological movies. From Gibreel's vanishing from the Indian film industry at the beginning of the novel through to his dreams, the world of cinema and its vocabulary are predominant in the text. Ruthven points out that it 'draws

[26] Finney, op. cit., p. 79
[27] Nicholas D. Rombes Jr. '*The Satanic Verses* as Cinematic Narrative', *Literature/Film Quarterly*, 11:1, (1993) p. 48

on Rushdie's wide experience in the theatre, cinema and television.'[28] Saladin's new profession as a voice-over actor in TV commercials in England reminds us that Rushdie made a living as a copywriter in advertising for years.

Rushdie confirms that one of the reasons he has chosen to create such a structure in *The Satanic Verses* as well as in his other texts is that 'those of us who are educated in the cinema (and that means everybody) are very familiar with the idea of interrupted narrations – flashbacks, dream sequences etc. are the commonplaces of cinema.'[29] He admits that a mixture of Bombay and Tamil cinema influences his fiction:

> ... First of all there's a deliberate mistake in the book ... the kind of religious movies that Gibreel acts in are not really called 'theologicals'. They're actually called 'mythologicals'... mythological movies have not really been a Bombay form. They've ... been a South Indian form and it's Tamil cinema that has particularly gone in for them. [30]

For Gibreel, he 'transposed the South Indian form to Bombay where there are movies in which 'you get a deus ex machina: it is not uncommon for a god to arrive at an important moment in the plot and play a part', and the character of Gibreel 'is a mixture of two or three types of Indian movie star.'[31] In a sense, the amalgam in *The Satanic Verses* is a reflection of the flamboyance of Indian cinema: the mixture of genres, songs, flashbacks, and the use of all kinds of cinematic discourse. Stephen Baker regards what Rushdie expresses through Gibreel as 'the pervasiveness in his immediate environment of "Bollywood" kitsch' and *Satanic Verses* is Rushdie's own artistic struggle during which he presents dream sequences to tell us 'something similar with regard to the

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[28] Ruthven, Ibid., p. 21
[29] Consortium Interview, Ibid., p. 52
[30] Consortium Interview, op. cit., p. 52
[31] Consortium Interview, op. cit., p. 52

Indian movie industry and the origins of Islam.'[32] In the opening of the novel, while Saladin and Gibreel fly slowly down to the earth, after a violent scene followed by a description of clouds, Gibreel starts singing in the air recalling scenes from Bollywood films where singing and dancing occur unexpectedly and unrelated to the context:

> 'O, my shoes are Japanese,' Gibreel sang, translating the old song into English in semi-conscious deference to the uprushing host-nation, 'These trousers English, if you please. On my head, red Russian hat; my heart's Indian for all that.' The clouds were bubbling up towards them, and perhaps it was on account of that great mystification of cumulus and cumulo-nimbus the mighty rolling thunderheads standing like hammers in the dawn ... *(p. 5)*

Srinivas Aravamudan indicates that this is the quaint translation of the lyrics from 'Hindi film musical of 1955, *Shri Charsawbees* (Mr 420)', which is referred to twice later on in the novel[33]: '... Gibreel yowled an air from the movie *Shree 420.*' (407), and:

> [Saladin's] movie-list included *Potemkin, Kane, Otto e Mezzo, The Seven Samurai, Alphaville, El Angel Exterminador.* 'You've been brainwashed,' Gibreel scoffed. 'All this Western art-house crap.' His top ten of everything came from 'back home', and was aggressively lowbrow. *Mother India, Mr India, Shree Charsawbees... (my emphasis, pp. 439-440)*

According to Aravamudan, the reference to the name of the film is a trick to recall more than an Indian musical film. The name of the film is *Mr 420*, the same number as the hijacked jumbo jet's flight number: AI-420. This is not a coincidence, but 'an inside joke between Rushdie and his readership on the Indian subcontinent' who can understand this book better than any other reader due to its 'frequently untranslated, and untranslatable colloquialisms, allusions, and sprinklings of choice Hindi epithets.' 420 is the number of a section in the Indian Penal Code installed to eliminate fraud 'by the British imperialists to better govern the country'.[34]

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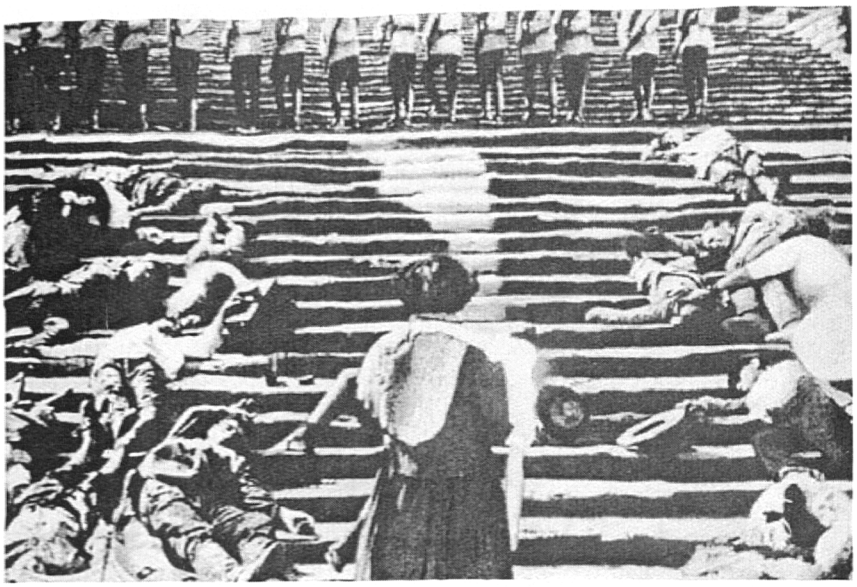
[32] Stephen Baker, *The Fiction of Postmodernity*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) p. 187
[33] Aravamudan, Ibid., p. 190
[34] Aravamudan, op. cit., p. 191



http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Forum/6370/battleshippotemkin.html

Gibreel's 'lowbrow' film taste is juxtaposed by Saladin's art house film list. The films in the list are significant in their forms, which all correspond to the forms used in *The Satanic Verses*. The structural similarity of *The Satanic Verses* to Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin is noteworthy. *Potemkin* is comprised of five themes. The first one is the 'exposition of the action' that Eisenstein calls *Men and Maggots*, followed by *Drama on the Quarter-Deck*, the sailor's refusal to eat the soup; *The Dead Man Cries for Vengeance*, finding Mist. Vakulinchuk's body in the Odessa port; *The Odessa Steps*, fraternisation of shore and battleship; and finally *Meeting the Squadron*, night of expectation.[35] These five acts recall the three different plots in *The Satanic Verses*, presented in nine parts. Yet, they do not constitute a complete entity in *The Satanic Verses*. While each story keeps its own original meaning, their combination is a collage with a different meaning. In this sense, it is like a kilim.

Of the other important art house films in Saladin's list; *Otto e Mezzo* ($8^{1/2}$) is Fellini's 1963 film. It is a puzzle, a labyrinth in which to find the 'real' film. Orson

[35] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Introduction' in *Battleship Potemkin*, trans. from the Russian by Gillon R. Aitken, (London: Lorrimer Publishing, 1984 revised edition) pp. 8-9.

Welles's *Citizen Kane* is a 'mise en scene' filled with overlapping dialogues. Kurusawa's *The Seven Samurai* is a traditional folk samurai narrative. I would like to suggest that these techniques could all be applied to the structure in *The Satanic Verses*. However, in particular, *Samurai*'s blending of traditional folk narrative with Hollywood styles is best compared to *Satanic*'s traditional dastanic techniques mediated in a Western novel in the English language.

The text is intertextualised with film in several points of the narrative. The terrorist act in the aircraft, for example, is intersected with the film they have been watching on the plane immediately before the hijackers start their action:

> *Bostan* circled London, gunmen patrolling the gangways, and the lights in the passenger cabins had been switched off, but Gibreel's energy illuminated the gloom. On the grubby movie screen on which, earlier in the journey, the inflight inevitability of Walter Matthau had stumbled lugubriously into the aerial ubiquity of Goldie Hawn, ... *(p. 18)*

Rushdie's familiarity with cinema vocabulary, as in *Midnight's Children*, is obvious in this novel, too. The premise for using film vocabulary is Gibreel's desire to rehabilitate himself 'by converting large sections of his satirical dreams about Islamic history throughout the novel into yet another "theological"' film.[36] Therefore the dreams of Gibreel are depicted as film scenes seen through Gibreel's eyes that function as the viewfinders of a movie camera. The pervasive movie talk is supported by technical jargon displaying Gibreel's, and also Rushdie's, experiences in the profession:

> Gibreel: the dreamer, whose point of view is sometimes that of the camera and at other moments, spectator. When he's a camera the pee oh vee is always on the move, *he hates static shots*, so he's floating up on a high crane looking down at the foreshortened figures of the actors, or he's swooping down to stand visibly between them, *turning slowly on his heel to achieve a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree pan*, or maybe he'll try a *dolly shot*, tracking along beside Baal and Abu

[36] Aravamudan, op. cit., p. 196

> Simbel as they walk, or *hand-held* with the help of a *steadicam* he'll probe the secrets of the Grandee's bedchamber. *(my emphases, p. 108)*

The cinematic discourse in Rushdie fiction allows intrinsic collage into the text. Therefore, Rushdie's fiction is not only influenced by traditional literary forms but also by the indigenous Bollywood film styles. These influences in his fiction naturally originate from his post-colonial condition enabling him to blend juxtaposing cultural forms. The sections below are the inevitable thematic consequences of this condition.

Migration and Hybridity:

Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, 'the free falling protagonists of *The Satanic Verses*, provide the most direct image in Rushdie's fiction of the post-colonial subject in collision with this world.'[37] An ideologically sensitive reader of the novel might interpret the song Gibreel sings while falling as expressing a late capitalist (with Japanese, English and Russian products), multi-ethnic ('my heart's Indian for all that') eclecticism.[38] This is inarguably a post-colonial condition, because it involves a multi-cultural mixture resulting from an imperial past. However, this condition inevitably corresponds to the post-modern condition as defined by Lyotard. In this sense, Gibreel's song is not only the post-colonial subject's identity problem, but also the problem of Third World citizens ruled by international 'capital' in the late capitalist age. Migration, therefore, is not only a consequence of the post-colonial condition, as the developed Western powers do not accumulate migration only from their former colonies. The major cause for migration in this age of global capitalism is poverty, and the hopes of

[37] Cundy, op. cit., p. 67
[38] Aravamudan, op. cit., p. 190

finding a prosperous life in the west. The depiction of the falling plane and its falling contents at the outset of the novel is a tragi-comic narrative of such a migration:

> The aircraft cracked in half, a seed-pod giving up its spores, an egg yielding its mystery. Two actors, prancing Gibreel and buttony, pursed Mr Saladin Chamcha, fell like titbits of tobacco from a broken old cigar. ... Also - for there had been more than a few migrants aboard, yes, quite a quantity of wives who had been grilled by reasonable, doing-their-job officials about the length of and distinguishing moles upon their husbands' genitalia, a sufficiency of children upon whose legitimacy the British Government had cast its ever-reasonable doubts – mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home. (original emphases, p. 4)*

Hybridity is the end of this journey. The central characters are now migrants or *mohajirs* as Rushdie prefers to call them. Saladin Chamcha has changed his name from Salahuddin Chamchawala. This is a fundamental consequence of post-colonial condition. Saladin's breach of his roots is represented by his cutting the walnut tree planted by his father to celebrate his birth. His Englishness is a repression of his own personal and cultural history.[39]

Metamorphosis is the symbolic alienation of the immigrant Saladin. He has changed his name and identity by his own will. He tries to 'transform himself into a "goodandproper Englishman,"' and cultivates 'English accent, English manners, English dress, love for English food'.[40] He has cut his roots, and is described by British culture, but is actually seen as an alien in society no matter how well he speaks English with an English accent and no matter how well he is assimilated to British culture. None of his efforts prevent him from growing horns, hooves and a tail. The way he makes his living

[39] Cundy, op. cit., p. 78
[40] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 76

is also satirical, because as a voice-over actor, he can only be heard. He makes his big break by starring in *The Aliens Show*:

> His big break, the one that could soon make money lose its meaning, had started small: children's television, a thing called *The Aliens Show*, by *The Munsters* out of *Star Wars* by way of *Sesame Street*. It was a situation comedy about a group of extraterrestrials ranging from cute to psycho, from animal to vegetable... *(pp. 61-62)*

It is important that even here he does not appear as a person, and his hybridity is, in a sense, a form of alienation which refers to being out-of-this-world. Satirically, Rushdie makes him shorten his family name to Chamcha, a word whose meaning was given in *Midnight's Children*, foreshadowing Saladin's future in his earlier novel. Mustapha Aziz's half-Irani wife Sonia 'had been required to begin "being chamcha" (literally spoon, but idiomatically a flatterer)' (*MC*, 391). As will be explained also in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, many Bombay families have surnames that are derived from a deceased ancestor's line of work, and the word 'wala' is added to the name of the profession to refer to the person who does the job, 'Fishwalas' (*GBHF*, 19). In this sense, Saladin's surname suggests a line of descent from those who flatter, thus giving a different slant on his praise for English culture.

On his return journey to India, it is revealed that Saladin's English personality is little more than a front:

> ... an air stewardess bent over the sleeping Chamcha and demanded, with the pitiless hospitality of her tribe: *Something to drink, sir? A drink?*, and Saladin, emerging from the dream, found his speech unaccountably metamorphosed into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently (and so long ago!) unmade. ... 'So, okay, bibi, give one whiskysoda only.' *(p. 34)*

Saladin's inner self bursts through in the variety of English he speaks, and it is because of this bursting out of his inner self that 'within forty-eight hours of arriving in Bombay,

he makes love to an Indian woman (for the first time), his friend, Zeeny Vakil,'[41] who is the strongest opponent and critic of his hybridity.

It is ironic that his own people, from whom he always tries to run away in London, protect Saladin. After his escape from the detention centre, he takes refuge in the Shaandaar Café, run by an immigrant Bangladeshi family. Their story is another dimension to the novel, and is very important in the sense that it helps us understand how conventional concepts are forced to change after migration. Muhammad and Hind Sufyan start running a café and guesthouse after migrating to London. In Bangladesh Muhammad, a man of culture, a cosmopolitan capable of quoting from the *Qur'an* as well as the military accounts of Julius Caesar, was the breadwinner of the house, by virtue of his being a teacher. However, due to his inability to cook, his wife Hind becomes the breadwinner in London, while Muhammad waits on customers in the café. He had to leave his homeland due to his Communist ideals, but has become a second-class citizen, and Hind's cooking becomes the basis for their restaurant, a typical situation in which many Asian immigrants find themselves. Their two daughters, Anahita and Mishal, exhibiting the situation of immigrants, are unaware of their homeland, Bangladesh, a place that their 'Dad and Mum keep banging on about,' which Mishal prefers to call 'Bungleditch.' (259).

The account of the race riots in Brixton is appalling. The Shaandaar Café becomes the target of an arson attack and both Muhammad and Hind Sufyan die. The theme of hybridity and migration is predominantly paradigmatic. It is a challenge from

[41] Goonetilleke, op. cit., p. 76

the marginal provincial centre to the metropolitan imperialistic centre. However, Rushdie's privileged upbringing makes him satirise both cultures.

Ethnicity or Traditional Influence:

Finney argues that Rushdie 'privileges a non-totalized, pluralistic, open-ended form of discourse that coincides with postmodern writing practices'.[42] The writing forms Rushdie uses are the traditional oral storytelling forms that he used more significantly in his earlier novels. His ethnic origins do not seem to be reflected in form at first glance apart from the uses of mostly untranslated vernacular words.

Feroza Jussawalla indicates that Rushdie has been classified as a post-colonial writer 'whose fiction depicts the hybrid nature of postcolonials in their migrations and movements'.[43] He is even regarded as a 'Third World Cosmopolitan'.[44] He is seen as a metropolitan intellectual and a hybrid owing to his post-colonial condition, being a child born as his country was gaining independence. His texts are often attributed to postmodernism. However, Rushdie is a traditional writer in most aspects. Calling him a postmodernist writer is a Eurocentric perspective and 'does not provide complete answers to Rushdie's complex works or the complicated response to his work' because the hybridity he manifests 'results from being not only a "post-British" colonial but also a "post-Mughal" colonial.'[45]

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[42] Finney, op. cit., pp. 80-81
[43] Feroza Jussawalla, 'Rushdie's *Dastan-E-Dilruba: The Satanic Verses* as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam', *diacritics: a review of contemporary criticism,* (Spring 1996) vol. 26, No. 1, p. 50
[44] Timothy Brennan, *Salman Rushdie and the Third World: Myths of the Nation*, (London: Macmillan, 1989) p. viii.
[45] Jussawalla, Ibid., p. 51

As an oral storyteller in writing, Rushdie digresses while telling his story just as an oral storyteller would do, and comments on his tale. The story being told opens into another story, making the whole a lengthy amalgam of proliferating stories. Rushdie was brought up in an Indian Muslim family, and therefore Mughal-Islamic tradition with its history, culture and literature is predominantly influential on his background.[46] Gibreel's song, on the opening page of the novel, is a significant example of this cultural origin:

> Gibreel, the tuneless soloist, had been cavorting in moonlight as he sang his impromptu *gazal*, swimming in the air ... *(my emphasis, p. 3)*

Urdu language and culture were influenced by the Persian and Arabic language and culture after the introduction of Islam to the subcontinent by the Mughal conquest. *Ghazal*, in its original spelling, is a form of 'lyric love poetry' in Persian literature,[47] and it is, in most cases, not written, but produced on the instant orally and sung in an improvised melody. *Ghazal*s tend to be very long, which is another connection to the lengthy works by Rushdie. Gibreel's impromptu 'gazal' is apparent reference to this Persian and Urdu form of poetry and its obvious influence on his writing.

Apart from *ghazal* and oral storytelling techniques that are not as obvious as they are in the previous novels, what distinctively displays Rushdie's cultural origin is the general form of *The Satanic Verses* which is the equivalent of Persian *dastan* and Arabic *qissa* forms. *Qissa* is an Arabic form of fiction, usually short tales, like the ones that make up the *Arabian Nights*. Rushdie's love for the *Arabian Nights* has made him use the form of *qissa* in his novels that are usually made up of more than one story. *Qissa* is 'suspenseful, shorter, full of excitement – but if you have a long night to fill, to enchant

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[46] Jussawalla, op. cit., p. 53
[47] Jussawalla, op. cit., p. 54

a beloved, you need more than a *qissa*; you need a *dastan*.'[48] A *dastan*, which is simply an extended stream-of-consciousness tale that connects many related stories and humorous anecdotes, is essentially Persian and Urdu, whereas *qissa* is Arabic. In its length, *The Satanic Verses* is a *dastan*, because it displays the features of a *dastan* more significantly than any of Rushdie's other novels, which also have the characteristics of both *dastan* and *qissa*. Space and geography, time and place, omnipresence, sudden shifts and moves among centuries and continents, digressive form of narration, long sentences, endless and quantitative stories and the use of magical and supernatural fabulousness are dominant in *The Satanic Verses*. Although all of these characteristics ostensibly recall postmodernist techniques, they are rooted in Rushdie's traditional cultural origins.

Rushdie acknowledges that he has borrowed techniques from the Eastern literary traditions. Therefore, attributing his fiction to postmodernism is not solely sufficient to understand and interpret his novels, because Rushdie's style interacts with different traditions. However, it is true that it is these cultural influences that cause his texts to be defined as examples of postmodernism, because the representation of ethnicity and cultural storytelling devices produce hybrid texts of pastiche, which is another form included in the definitions of postmodernist writing. Thus, the hybridity and the eclecticism in his texts are not due to the consumer logic of capitalist society that originated the concept of postmodernist culture in the West, but are more a product of a centuries-old imperialism, because *The Satanic Verses* is yet another depiction of the post-colonial condition, which, this time, is split between London and Bombay.

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[48] Jussawalla, op. cit., p. 67

The Moor's Last Sigh and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*

Written in hiding as a result of the *fatwa* issued against him for alleged blasphemy, Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* was published seven years after *The Satanic Verses*. It is a significantly different kind of novel even though it is still recognisably the work of Rushdie. Although set in Bombay, foregrounding the city's hybridity and alluding to India's long history of conquests by imperialist powers and the Arabic connotations of the title, there are no Muslim characters in this novel, whereas all of the main characters in the three preceding novels were Muslims. 'The Moor' in the title referring to the Moorish invaders of Portugal is a shortened form of the narrator's name, Moraes Zogoiby who is the fictional descendant of Vasco da Gama, one of the first European conquerors of Bombay. Rushdie, this time, plays on the Christian and Jewish identities in Indian culture, thus creating new hybrid characters in a new long-winding and flamboyant story. The hybrid identity of the Bombayite Moor alludes not only to the colonisation of India by the European powers including the descendants of those

Moorish tribes with Arab origins in Portugal, but also to the colonisation of the Iberian peninsula by the Arabs.

The novel starts with Moares's last sigh, representing his death, and then goes back in history to recount the family's history with allusions to secular Moorish Spain where all Catholics, Jews and Muslims could live together. This allusion is important, because Bombay resembles Spain under Arabic rule in the 15th century, because it simultaneously accommodates people of many different beliefs. The novel ends with 'the Moor's last sigh' completing the circle, and referring to the famous sigh, which was 'breathed in 1492 by Muhammad XI (Boadbil), the last sultan of Andulusia, looking back at Alhambra' ending Arabic dominance on the peninsula.[1]

Rushdie's familiar narrative devices and structures are again employed in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. The first person narrator Moares Zogoiby, henceforth the Moor as he is called in the novel, recounts his family saga in the first person with oral storytelling. He is, like Saleem, another anti-hero with a deformed body: born with a club-like fingerless right hand, and having an illness that makes him age in double speed. He reaches his adolescence when he is only six. Therefore, he is only in his thirties, like Saleem, but his body is as old as sixty and dying just like Saleem's 'crumbling, overused body'. Although he is the first person narrator, he recounts the story of his mother Aurora Zogoiby. Once again, Rushdie creates a narrator, like Saleem, around whom the story is centred, although it is not merely the story of his own life. *The Moor's Last Sigh*'s only difference from *Midnight's Children* is that the latter starts as if it is the story of its narrator's life and turns out to be the combination of many life stories. On the

[1] D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, *Salman Rushdie*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1998) p. 133

other hand, *Last Sigh* starts as if it is the story of Moor's mother and turns out to be the narrator's *Bildungsroman* at the same time. For these reasons, it is sometimes regarded as a sequel to *Midnight's Children.*[2]

The inevitable digressions caused by the authorial interventions are again the dominant narrative strategies as in most of Rushdie's texts, because the narrator functions as an oral storyteller: 'If love is not all, then it is nothing: this principle, and its opposite (I mean, infidelity), collide all the years of my breathless tale' (28).

The narrator's interventions in the parenthetical asides indicate the narrative consciousness of an omnipresent and omniscient oral storyteller travelling over the years. However, he makes clear where he stands by simply isolating himself from the flow of the story. Although he is a part of the story, and he dies at the outset of the novel, the fact that he *is* the narrator clarifies that he is outside the novel's fictional universe. He is both a character in the novel and the author/narrator. He is in another dimension, in another time: '... I must not run ahead of my story ...' (107).

At the end of the novel, he goes back to the beginning of the story where he breathes 'his last sigh.' This is a return to his death that frames his narrative. It is both the beginning and the ending. This circular narration lacks the narrative liberties and innovative techniques Rushdie ventured to take in his previous novels, and fails to take them further. Both the Moor and Saleem have many stories to tell, and they both start telling their stories at the age they remain during the course of their narration. Saleem is thirty-one in the beginning of *Midnight's Children* during which he goes back to his grandfather's youth to start his long 'dastan' which lasts until his present age: he is

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[2] Goonetilleke, Ibid., p. 113

thirty-one at the end of the novel. Moor opens his narration at his last sigh, goes back to the years when his parents met and finishes his narration at the point he started: at his last sigh. In many ways, *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a repetition of the collaboration between Eastern and Western literary tropes that Rushdie attempted in his 'threesome' earlier.

The idiosyncratic uses of English and vernacular words, as in his earlier novels, bring linguistic richness to the text. Rushdie takes advantage of his familiarity with both Indian and English cultures in order to describe the hybridity of the story and its characters, by deploying vernacular words without translation. This consolidates both his hybridity and the presence of the author in the text:

> I, however, was raised neither as Catholic nor as Jew. I was both, and nothing: a jewholic-anonymous, a cathjew nut, a stewpot, a mongrel cur. I was – what's the word these days? – *atomised*. Yessir: a real Bombay mix.
>
> *Bastard*: I like the sound of the word. *Baas*, a smell, a stinky-poo. *Turd*, no translation required. Ergo, *Bastard*, a smelly shit; like, for example, me. *(p. 104)*

The Bombay mix – a pun on famous mixture of spicy nuts - the narrator refers to is what describes best the fictional universe of the novel. A character in this cultural mixture is like a spicy mixture of nuts: sweet, sour, salty and chilly. Rushdie carves his stories from the cultural mixture of Bombay, which is naturally reflected in the language of the novel. In fact, Rushdie himself is the representative of such a cultural collage, having been brought up in a Muslim Indian family in Bombay and educated in privileged English schools. His multiple cultural identity dovetails with Bombay's flamboyant cultural scene. He is from and of both Bombay and London. In other words, he is of both Indian and English cultures. This enables him to communicate in both cultures, and to

employ a linguistic mixture in his narration. Although the language of the novel is English, the narrator is part of the indigenous culture, and therefore the way he plays with the meanings and multiple allusions provided by the co-presence of Urdu and English words reflects Rushdie's own cultural identity. He, therefore, plays on words to achieve multiple narrative possibilities:

> Space-lizards, undead bloodsuckers and insane persons are excused from moral judgement, and Uma deserves to be judged. *Insaan*, a human being. I insist on Uma's insaanity. *(p. 322)*

Insaan means 'a human being' in Urdu, Persian and Turkish, and *insaaniyad* is 'humanity,' 'the quality and state of being human.' Apparently, 'insanity' in the above example refers to both '*insaaniyad*' and 'madness'. Uma's 'insanity' is actually her '*insaaniyad*'. In other words, the narrator argues that madness is humanity, through this pun on the two similar sounding words in English and Urdu. The Turkish connection here is of course another sign of Rushdie's post-Mughal cultural inheritance. Mughals, according to D. P. Singhal, ruled India from 1526 to 1857,[3] as recently as the British took control. Babur Shah, who established the Mughal Empire in Northern India, was a Chaghtai conqueror. Chaghtais originated from the Turkic Mongols, and Babur came to India with the idea of representing the Mughal, Turkish and Islamic cultures in the sam,e way as earlier Turkish rulers of the Northern Indian sub-continent,[4] such as Changez Khan. It is therefore not coincidental that the vernacular words deployed in Rushdie's fiction also have Turkish, in addition to their Arabic and Persian roots.

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[3] D. P. Singhal, *A History of Indian People*, (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 180.
[4] Ram Prasad Tripathi, 'The Turko-Mongol Theory of Kingship', in Alam, M. & Subrahmanyam, S. (ed.) *The Mughal State 1526-1750*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 115.

The text represents numerous intertextual relations, in compliance with an oral storyteller's digressive style. Our oral narrator alludes to Homi Bhabha while talking about 'hybridity' in the novel, and satirises Bhabha's essay 'DissemiNation':

> Dr Vakil at once set about compiling an exhaustive catalogue, and began work, too, on an accompanying critical appreciation, *Imperso-Nation and Dis/Semi/Nation Dialogics of Eclecticism and Interrogations of Authenticity in A. Z., ... (p. 329)*

The oral narrator not only alludes to Bhabha's 'DissemiNation' here, but also remembers Zeeny Vakil from *The Satanic Verses*. She becomes Dr Zeenat Vakil in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. Another appearance from an earlier fictional universe is Commander Sabarmati and Shiva's son Aadam who is transferred from *Midnight's Children*. Moor is a physically disintegrating character, similar to Saleem, who resembles Scheherazade who wishes to prolong his life until the completion of his story. Moor, like Saleem, is also 'running out of time' (152).

Bombay is a very important source of imagination for Rushdie, because of its hybridity providing the range and variety of the stories in his novels. *The Moor's Last Sigh* uses Bombay as 'the ocean of stories' (350), invoking another Rushdie text: *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. This is a kind of 'second order memory' distanced from 'the parable "reality" of *Midnight's Children* with its vivid evocation of the texture of the city.'[5]

Aurora's sleeplessness is another intertextual relation with both Omar Khayyam Shakil of *Shame* and Gibreel Farishta of *The Satanic Verses*. The fact that Aurora is an artist, Omar a would-be poet and Gibreel an actor associates insomnia with creativity.

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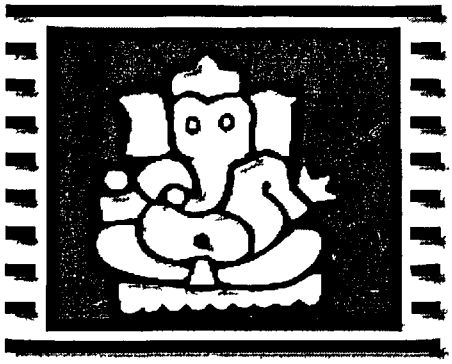
[5] Catherine Cundy, *Salman Rushdie*, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 115

Ganesh, the elephant headed God represents another intertextual migration from *Midnight's Children* to *Last Sigh*. Aadam Aziz reappears as a money-crazy yuppie called Aadam in this novel. He is no longer an elephant-eared Godly hope, but a contemporary materialist and soulless money worshipper.



Being a Rushdie novel, *The Moor's Last Sigh* is not devoid of history. The historiographic allusions are apparent even in the title. History is reused and rewritten to produce new stories in a new fictional universe. The Moor creates his own version of events, interlinked with his life, and the way we see them is the way the Moor sees them. He tells a story set during a time when the world is going through changes. The Second World War starts and Nehru demands independence as a prerequisite of Indian support in the war effort. Jinnah and the Muslim league refuse to support this demand. Among all these crucial historical connotations, stories become more important than history for the narrator. After all, this is another unreliable history book after *Midnight Children*, Rushdie's first 'unreliable' historical account of India.[6] Less than a hundred pages into the novel, the Moor decides to get rid of history and politics: 'To hell with high affairs

[6] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, (London: Granta Books, 1991) p. 23

of the state! I have a love story to tell.' (87). And so history is discarded, although the novel could never really be read without an historical interpretation.

The Bollywood film genre continues to shape Rushdie's fictional world. Jennifer Takhar points out that 'the presence of the actors Nargis and Sunil Dutt' is a far more explicit example than the disguised case of Gibreel Farishta' who is based on 'real-life Bollywood actors Amitabh Bachan and N. T. Rao.' It is also important that Aurora Zogoiby's chaotic canvases are packed like an Indian film: eclectic and flamboyant.[7] The narrator acknowledges the cinematographic quality of Bombay: 'that super-epic motion picture of a city' (129). It is the film capital of India. As Saleem declares, 'nobody from Bombay should be without a basic film vocabulary' (*MC*, p. 33). The film vocabulary used openly in the earlier novels is replaced by more obvious Bollywood film characters alluding to certain films in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. *Bharat Mata*, Mother India, as the myth of the nation as a nurturing female, is foregrounded by invoking the famous 1957 film *Mother India*. *Last Sigh*'s own alternative *Bharat Mata* is Moor's mother, 'the artist Aurora Zogoiby, with her paintings which serve as allegories of the changing face of India.'[8] The 'motherness' is an important theme for the Moor and India:

> Motherness – excuse me if I underline the point – is a big idea in India, maybe our biggest: the land as mother, the mother as land, as the firm ground beneath our feet. Ladies-O, gents-O: I'm talking about *major* mother country. The year I was born, Mehboob Productions' all-conquering movie called *Mother India* ... hit the nation's screens. *(p. 137)*

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[7] Jennifer Takhar, 'Identity Through Bollywood Cinema: The "reel" or "reel" zone?' *Literature in English of the Indian Subcontinent in the Postcolonial Web*, http:\\www.landow.stg.brown.edu/post/rushdie/takhar15.html, (21/03/2001)

[8] Cundy, Ibid., p. 112

According to Takhar, this extravagantly and aggressively popular nationalist film is 'deployed in connection with the mother-son, father-son theme running conspicuously in [this novel] as a sort of jocular caveat.' Even Nargis, the actress that played the main character of the film 'shows up in [the novel] with her husband Sunil who played the part of her reckless son in the film.' Rushdie 'has finally expressed the intensity of his emotional attachment to Nargis and by extension his attachment to India'.[9] The film *Shree Charsawbees* (Mr 420), alluded to in *The Satanic Verses*, appears again in *Last Sigh* in Abraham's adopted son's nickname 'Shri Adam Zogoiby' (359).

Rushdie's fictional universe is a demanding one requiring knowledge of different genres in its connotative structure. He produces generic mixtures in his texts. Like all of his previous novels, *The Moor's Last Sigh* is, in all senses, a post-colonial novel with its diversity, hybridity and allusions to the multiple imperialist attempts in Indian history. It, again, evokes many characteristics of aforementioned Eastern literary genres such as dastan in its length, stream of consciousness, magic and fabulous, geographic diversity and time travelling between fifteenth and twentieth centuries. However, as Orhan Pamuk argues, it is a lesser performance than *Midnight's Children*, its predecessor, although Rushdie still exhibits his skills as a 'verbal illusionist,' determined to devote his talents 'to create "harmony" from "cacophony"' by trying to embrace all the diversity and richness of life in Bombay.[10]

The techniques Rushdie utilised in the earlier novels are, however, not taken any further in this book. The hybridity is rather strained. Rushdie tries to 'embrace' all the

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[9] Takhar, Ibid.
[10] Orhan Pamuk, 'Salaam Bombay!' *The Times Literary Supplement*, (08/09/1995) No. 4823, p. 3

diversities in one premise, and this does not work effectively despite linguistic farce. The Moorish, Portuguese, Jewish, Hindu and Catholic identities represented in the Zogoiby family to reflect the hybridities and flamboyance of Bombay exhibit a 'forced' hybridity in order to cover all the colonial history of India. The result resembles a joke created to include all kinds of identities in Indian culture. The natural and instinctive hybridity present in *Midnight's Children* is replaced by a studied and invented hybridity in *The Moor's Last Sigh*. While *Midnight's Children* was an effortlessly hybrid post-colonial novel without trying to be one, *The Moor's Last Sigh* appears to have been written over-deliberately to create 'post-colonial hybridity.' It is, compared with *Midnight's Children*, *Shame* and *The Satanic Verses*, a lesser achievement. For many, sympathy for this novel originates from the desire to express 'solidarity with a writer threatened with silence.'[11]

The Ground Beneath Her Feet, the latest Rushdie novel, came four years after *The Moor's Last Sigh*. It also occupies a different place to his other books. Despite the strained hybridity as in its predecessor, the central theme in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is an unusual one for Rushdie: rock'n'roll. This work is considerably less dense than his other novels, and its premise is less political, less about the issues he was concerned with in his earlier works. It is a more accessible novel, and is relatively easy to read. Being a book in which Rushdie attempts to rewrite the history of rock'n'roll, it invites a comparison with Hanif Kureishi's novels that centre on music and drugs. Thus it becomes a significant Rushdie text to include in this study.

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[11] Cundy, op. cit., p. 115

The Ground Beneath Her Feet is a love story. Vina Apsara, Ormus Cama and Umeed Merchant are the three main characters: their lives and stories are intermingled. Vina Apsara is the lead singer of an internationally famous rock band named VTO - reminiscent of the Irish rock band U2. The novel traces the story of Vina and her lover Ormus Cama, also the composer of most of the band's songs. Their love story is a reference to the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. She is the daughter of a Greek-American woman and an Indian father who abandoned his family. What Ormus and Vina share, as well as their musical talents, is a twisted family life: Ormus's twin brother died at birth and communicates to him from 'the other side'; his older brothers, also twins, are, respectively, brain-damaged and a serial killer. Vina grew up in rural West Virginia. One day, she found her stepfather and sisters shot to death and her mother hanging from a pole in the barn. This multiple tragedy is reminiscent of a Bollywood drama full of disasters for the heroes, and triumphs for the villains. Mr. Umeed Merchant, referred to as 'Rai' in the novel, is a professional photographer who follows Vina wherever she goes because she is his ideal woman. He completes the love triangle in the novel. The premise of the novel is his search for Vina until the day she dies in a devastating earthquake.

Rushdie employs the major literary techniques he used previously, such as magic realism, intertextuality, and historiography, although in less density. Using history as fictional material again, Rushdie transposes significant dates in order to recreate his fictional version of history. The novel opens on the day Vina Apsara dies. It is St. Valentine's Day 1989:

> On St. Valentine's Day, 1989, the last day of her life, the legendary popular singer Vina Apsara woke sobbing from a dream of human sacrifice in which she had been the intended victim. *(p. 3)*

The last day of the main character's life is the day of the issuing of the *fatwa* against Rushdie. The history of his own life coincides with the death of his fictional character. Being an important day that changed his life and forced him into hiding, February 14, 1989 becomes the opening date of the novel. Real and fictional worlds eclipse each other, creating an alternative reality for the novel. This is also the day of a massive earthquake that kills the novel's heroine. Although this is the end of the actual story, it is the day the narrator starts telling it. In the usual Rushdiesque strategy, the novel completes the circle by moving back in time to come back to the day Vina dies at the end of the novel. The earthquake that kills Vina happens in an unnamed Latin American country. This is followed by an account of the major earthquakes around the world in the last quarter of the twentieth century. These earthquakes and the personal disasters in the protagonist's life turn everything upside down in this world, his response to all these disasters becomes an obvious reference to Panglossian wisdom in Voltaire's *Candide*: 'East is West! Up is down! Yes is No! Lies are Truth! Hate is Love! Two and two makes five! And everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds' (353). The earthquakes in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are also an intertextual allusion to *Candide*, because the disasters to which Candide responds optimistically are again earthquakes in Lima and Lisbon. Lima, being the capital of modern Peru, could well be the Latin American city where Vina dies in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet.*

Ormus writes the songs of the future in a magical way, and magical realism contributes to the creation of alternative histories. His twin brother who died at birth sends him the melodies of the songs that will be VTO hits:

> Ormus was bringing back more than vowel sequences or misheard, non-sensical lines (though sometimes, for example when he first played me a number called "Da Doo Ron Ron," it was hard to tell the difference). He was being given whole songs now. Songs from the future. Songs with names that meant nothing in 1962 and 1963. "Eve of Destruction." "I Got You, Babe." "Like a Rolling Stone." *(pp. 182-3)*

Ormus Cama obviously invokes Muddy Waters in songs such as 'Like a Rolling Stone' and Sonny Bono for 'I Got You, Babe'. The strategy of historiographic metafiction is employed along with magical realism to force the limits of conventional patterns. Magic and history are intermingled. Ormus's unworldly musical talent is realised in his birth:

> Ormus Cama was born in Bombay, India, in the early hours of May 27, *1937, and within moments of his birth began making the strange, rapid finger* movements with both hands which any guitarist could have identified as chord progressions. However, no guitar players were included among those invited ... *(p. 23)*

The realistic description of Ormus's birth is flavoured with miraculous magic and fantastic elements. Rushdie deconstructs his narrative, arranges the flow of events in a *non-chronological order, and creates a generic mixture out of a rock star's story.* He still stands at a slight angle to reality as he declares in *Shame*. This angle also provides him with the ground for rewriting history. Vina Apsara has significant similarities to Tina Turner. Her name, 'Vina,' implicitly recalls 'Tina'. She stands for many female rock idols in history with her familiar characteristics of a rock goddess. She eventually becomes the spokesperson for women's rights, a heroine singing for American blacks, a

charismatic figure clenching 'her fist against racial injustice' and singing 'from political platforms' (354). She also becomes the leading figure of vegetarianism:

> Later, she will successfully pioneer the celebrity exercise video and license a range of organic vegetarian meals, which, under the name Vina's VegeTable®, will also succeed. *(p. 394)*

This obvious reference to Linda McCartney positions Vina in the novel as an alternative figure symbolising famous real life figures in the history of rock music. Unknown rock stars with rather familiar hits emerge throughout the novel. Van Morrison 'becomes Zoo Harrison,' John Lennon sings 'Satisfaction,' and Madonna turns up 'as an art critic'. There are other names to work out, such as Debbie H., as Blondie's Debbie Harry, or a star called Uncle Meat, named after a Frank Zappa album, and Jim Morrison, who dies in his bath, becomes Lizzard King, the name of one of his songs.[12] Rushdie's reality is in a metaphoric relationship with history. He stays away from realism by rewriting and renaming all historical facts. Elvis Presley is given his real life manager's name, Jesse Garon Parker. His first hit is still called 'Heartbreak Hotel' (90), but his first movie is called *Treat Me Tender*, referring to *Love Me Tender* (91). Jesse's manager in the novel, however, takes Elvis's real life surname: Tom Presley.

As well as giving fictional names to real characters to avoid realism, he also uses the no longer used real names of other famous people. Ironically, while being realistic, Rushdie moves away from the real world because although these are real names, the people they signify are not known by these names in the real world. In a Rushdie novel, even reality can become a tool to create fictional worlds. The real names Issur Danielovitch (Kirk Douglas), Archibald Leach (Cary Grant), Bernie Schwartz (Tony

[12] Sam Wollaston, 'Bombay Mix', in *The Guardian Friday Review*, (2 April 1999) p. 2

Curtis), Stanley Jefferson (Stan Laurel), Allen Konigsberg (Woody Allen), Betty Joan Perske (Lauran Bacall), Camille Javal (Bridget Bardot), Greta Gustafsson (Greta Garbo), Diana Fluck (Diana Dors), Frances Gumm (Judy Garland) become fictional names, although these are their unknown real life names.

Rushdie freely and openly borrows and reproduces 'the traditional techniques of the Indian oral narrative tradition.' This is a technique of 'circling back from the present to the past, of building a tale within a tale, and persistently delaying climaxes' and 'the whole fiction of Rushdie fits into this definition of the alteration brought about by [post-colonial] literature.'[13] Umeed Merchant, the first person narrator, tells someone else's story as does the narrator of *The Moor's Last Sigh*. This time, however, the narrator has a more significant role in the plot than simply the narration of Vina's story. The author, recalling the narrator/author of *Shame*, overlaps the first person narrator. Reminiscent of oral storytellers, the authorial interruptions are, again, prevalent. The authorial voice is so persistent that the narration may go far from the centre of the story. Rushdie, as usual, plays with the Urdu and English relation. It is made clear that Umeed means 'hope' in Urdu. At the outset of the novel, which also presents its conclusion representing a circling narration, Vina and Umeed are separated. They both represent 'hope' for each other. Umeed's search for Vina throughout the novel represents the pursuit of 'hope.' Equally, Vina's hope is characterised by the innocent and silent existence of Umeed in her life:

> ... the last words she screamed down at me break my heart every time I think of them, and I think of them a few hundred times a day, every day, and then there are the endless, sleepless nights.

[13] B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths & H. Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, (London & New York: Routledge, 1989) pp. 183-84

"*Goodbye, Hope.*"

...

Umeed, you see. Noun, feminine. Meaning hope. *(pp. 18-9)*

The use of untranslated words contributes to the novel's hybridity: 'Such pressure on my back passage, either I'm in danger of passing stool or else there is some other *chokra* trying to make an appearance' (25). *Chokra* is used as an alien word, as well as many other untranslated words such as *sharam*, *wala*, *yaar* or *nakhras*. No English translation is needed for *chokra* in the above example. The native culture is so centralised that the meaning becomes clear: 'baby'. The term is used in the depiction of Ormus's birth, and the *chokra* that tries to make an appearance is his stillborn twin brother who sends him melodies from the 'other side' telepathically.

Peter Kemp states that Rushdie's style is a 'phonetic farce.'[14] The idiosyncratic pronunciations of the English words are highlighted within the text. "phamily phortunes ... phuture ... philty" are spelled with 'ph' and they are pronounced as the 'f' sound. So while reading, despite the striking misspellings, there will not be a mispronunciation. However, Piloo, the character uttering these mispronunciations in the novel, must be significantly mispronouncing the words. These misspellings foreshadow the reformulation of the English language in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* where Estha and Rahel, the twin protagonists, continuously mispronounce English words. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* presents a post-colonial characteristic by displaying alternative uses of the English language in its post-colonial setting. Rushdie transfers the real life linguistic alternatives to his fictional universe and not only fills the

[14] Peter Kemp, 'Losing the Plot', *The Sunday Times Books*, (4 April 1999) p. 3

gap between his text and the characters he depicts, but also provides the text and as a result his reader, with an example of how his character might sound.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet is a hybrid post-colonial novel. The Bombay it describes is different from the city described in Rushdie's earlier books. Though it is still a hybrid city, the Bombay of this novel does not have the political and anti-imperialist aspirations of *Midnight's Children*. Yet, the novel still suggests a subversion of Western perceptions of the east. The indigenous characters and their points of view are centrally placed. Their story begins in Bombay and stretches out to the Western world. The legendary rock band in the novel is of Indian origin. The popularity of an Eastern rock band in the west fits into a post-colonial discourse where the concept of the east is reversed from being marginal to central. However, even the Bombay film industry, despite being much larger than its music industry, has not been able to gain a worldwide popularity. Moreover, the era referred to in the novel is the early years of rock'n'roll when not even an Indian rock band was imaginable. Rushdie admits to the fact that 'the biggest rock star in the history of rock'n'roll being Indian was clearly outrageous'. By admitting this, he leaves aside the issue of Freddie Mercury who was that 'very thing: an Indian rock star; though he did not really draw attention to his race'.[15] In this respect, he is like Ormus who does not want to reveal his racial origin in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Nevertheless, VTO, the rock band at the centre of the novel for which Ormus writes his songs, has a Bollywood glamour, invoking, again, the Bollywood influence on Rushdie's fiction.

[15] Kemp, Ibid., p. 3

Rushdie's play on language and identity indicates his keen interest and talent in exhibiting Indian culture as manipulated and hybridised by imperial intervention. Bombayites, for instance, are the people who speak five languages badly, but none of them well. They speak 'Bombay's garbage argot', called '*Hug-me*', an acronym for the mixture of 'Hindu Gujarati Marathi English' (7). Although *Hug-me* is the consequence of imperial rule to fit into a colonial or post-colonial discourse, it is the mixture of four different indigenous languages, not just English and one indigenous language. Even though the description of this hybrid language does not stand out as a protest against imperialism in the text, it is still the reflection of a hybrid Bombayite identity. What is significant here is the confirmation of Rushdie's own assertion about the language Indian people should use to communicate. He denotes that people in different parts of India have no common language to communicate in other than English.[16] Comically in Bombay, people can only communicate in *Hug-me*.

What clearly distinguishes this novel is that it is not as densely constructed as the earlier ones. It is a more accessible book, tending to approach a degree of mass-popularity. The allusions and metaphors are too explicit to allow for full readerly engagement: they remain on the surface, leaving very little for the reader to explore. Rushdie still creates alternative novel forms in terms of both style and structure. The authorial interventions are still prevalent to evoke traditional oral storytelling techniques. Various formulas such as linguistic liberty, onomatopoeic words, brand names of technological devices, scientific information about earthquakes inevitably evoke postmodernist considerations.

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[16] Rushdie, Ibid., p. 17

However, despite its rich material allowing the use of magical realism, historiographic metafiction, alternative realities, intertextuality and multiple stories, the novel fails to carry the firmness of *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, and *The Satanic Verses*. This novel marks Rushdie's departure from his earlier themes. It is his break with his past and his roots. It uses all possible elements of post-colonial discourse, including techniques from traditional literary genres. Like its predecessor, however, it creates another strained hybridity that brings together all post-imperial possibilities: hybrid languages, reformulated English language, a rock band using Pakistani qawwals, an oral storyteller in English and dastanic proliferation of the narrative.

Yet, even though *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is not innovative in bringing new stylistic and structural techniques into his fiction, it is still an important Rushdie novel. He, now, writes about a Western music genre. In this sense, the novel alludes more to Lyotard's 'postmodern condition,' because of its eclecticism: an Indian rock band using Cuban horns and Pakistani qawwals. It brings more of a cultural mixture together, not due to the post-colonial condition but because of the global consumption of rock music and Western culture, even in the Indian subcontinent. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* invites more postmodernist criticism because of its more Western content in the 'postmodern condition', unlike Rushdie's previous novels which were regarded as postmodernist for their traditional content.

Part Three

The Buddha of Suburbia

Hanif Kureishi is an English-born author of subcontinental origin with a Pakistani father and an English mother. *The Buddha of Suburbia*, published in 1990, is his first novel. Born in a South London suburb and educated in English schools, Kureishi was not brought up in his father's culture. However, he has never been detached from the experience of immigration and hybridity. His father was an immigrant working as a government clerk, and his mother was a working class English woman. Having grown up in an ethnically mixed working class suburb, he writes about London and its suburbs which is the domicile for all of his characters.

He was brought up in Bromley, Kent. Being a suburban, he is a hybrid character himself, inheriting ethnic characteristics from his father and the English language as his mother tongue from his mother. This hybridity causes an inevitable ambivalence in his perspective. Cultural clashes because of migration, ethnicity and hybridity naturally arise out of London's racially and ethnically mixed population, although he is not

necessarily the storyteller of interracial relationships. He writes stories of London, since he would rather call himself a 'Londoner' than a 'Britisher'.[1]

Kureishi writes about the London he is familiar with and this London has, for the last fifty years particularly, been a metropolis to which people from all of Britain's former colonies have been migrating as a result of the disintegration of the colonial Empire. Immigrants from all of the former colonies have become an indispensable part of today's London. Today, it is an eclectic city that includes 'yoga exercises, going to Indian restaurants, the music of Bob Marley, the novels of Salman Rushdie, Zen Buddhism, the Hare Krishna Temple, as well as the films of Sylvester Stallone, therapy, hamburgers, visits to gay bars, the dole office and the taking of drugs.'[2] With this image of London as material, as Nahem Yousaf argues that Kureishi's texts intend to create 'diverse British communities of which characters of Asian backgrounds are members.'[3]

Although he is a British Asian and his works deal with the issues of British Asian identity, he is not particularly representative of that identity. Asked by Seonaid Cruickshank whether he sees himself as a Pakistani writer, he says he is just a writer, not particularly a Pakistani writer, who writes from within himself.[4] He is quite isolated from his Asian side. Kureishi does not seek to create a group identity of Asian or British. He rather seeks to 'illustrate the diverse forms of membership of any community'.[5] However, he still finds it difficult to identify himself with England.[6]

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[1] Hanif Kureishi, 'Some Time with Stephen: A Diary', in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988) p. 75
[2] Hanif Kureishi, 'Bradford', *Granta* 20, (Winter 1986) p. 147
[3] Nahem Yousaf, 'Hanif Kureishi and "the brown man's burden"', *Critical Survey*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (1996) p. 19
[4] Seonaid Cruickshank's 1998 interview published on the internet in *New Standpoints: The Essential Magazine for teachers of English*, http://www.speakeasy-mag/teacher/ns/ns5.Interview
[5] Yousaf, Ibid., p. 15
[6] Hanif Kureishi, 'The Rainbow Sign', in *My Beautiful Laundrette.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986)

Kureishi refers to writers such as himself and Salman Rushdie as 'cultural translators'.[7] They are part of English literature. Kenneth Kaleta argues that everything Kureishi and these writers write about is a part of Englishness, although Kureishi's characters are usually Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.[8] Therefore, his texts illuminate the pluralistic society he knows. He does not want to be considered as an Asian writer, but he cannot avoid being regarded as a post-colonial storyteller both because he does not fit the environment in which he was brought up in South London and because he portrays the lives and contradictions of Asian immigrants.

As Kureishi writes about any subject or theme that he enjoys, contradictions emerge in his texts. He is an observer with no particular standpoint. He portrays most of his characters from the real London scene where anything could be done by anybody regardless of race, religion and ethnic origin. The Asian community's resentment originates from the fact that his characterisations include Asian drug dealers, black prostitutes and ethnic entrepreneurs who dream of becoming rich overnight.

The Buddha of Suburbia dramatises multicultural relations, conflicting racial groups and economical classes in contradictory images of London. It is the *Bildungsroman* of Karim Amir, a member of the second generation of Asian immigrants. Karim, the narrator, is the teenage son of a Pakistani father and an English mother in a South London suburb. His obvious resemblance to the author gives this *Bildungsroman* an autobiographical sense. Karim's reality is strongly reminiscent of Kureishi's teenage life. The novel traces his venture from the suburbs to Central London to become an actor, through detailed depiction of his family and school life, his love of

[7] Hanif Kureishi, *Outskirts and Other Plays*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1992) p. xvi
[8] Kenneth Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi: Post-colonial Storyteller*. (Austin: Texas University Press, 1998) p. 17

pop music and his sexual fantasies with his school friend Charlie, the lead singer of a rock band and reminiscent of David Bowie.

Content and Style:

The Buddha of Suburbia consists of two parts. The first part entitled 'In the Suburbs' comprises eight chapters revealing Karim's suburban life. The second part, consisting of ten chapters, is called 'In the City', and is obviously about Karim's life in London, where he tries to become an actor. His greatest dream is to leave the suburbs for London, 'where life [is] bottomless in its temptations' (8). His father, Haroon, is a clerk in a government office and his mother works in a shoe shop. Bored by depressing suburban life like his son, Haroon is involved in a relationship with an English woman. This woman, Eva persuades him to lecture in her house to a gathering of English people interested in Buddhism. He is the representative of Indian culture and characterised as a dislocated 'Buddha' in the title of the novel.

Karim is the first person narrator of the novel, which opens with his self-introduction:

> My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London Suburbs and going nowhere. *(p. 3)*

The first person narrator's descriptive style, conventionally seen in realistic autobiographical novels, is modified by the narrator's interventions. The natural rhythm of the opening sentence is halted by a short and sharp adverb 'almost' invoking the

resistance to English identity within himself. By making his narrator produce self-assertions, Kureishi cuts through the dense extrapolative descriptions in the novel. The word 'almost' and the parenthetical aside '(though not proud of it)' reinforces 'the novel's inherent contradictions in theme, in opposition to the rhythmic blending of these seemingly contradictory images', and gives the novel its distinctive voice.[9]

Compared to Salman Rushdie, Kureishi is more conventional in style. The authorial voice in Kureishi's texts does not overlap the narrative voice as occurs in Rushdie's novels, although there are certain statements made through the narrator as in the above example. There are fewer metaphors and allusions, which makes the text more accessible than Rushdie's novels. Kureishi prefers direct photographic depiction with the least possible authorial voice, whereas in Rushdie's fiction, we come across frequent interventions by the author who provides the reader with dense metaphoric extrapolations. These come directly out of the depiction in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, rather than through metaphors and allusions. Despite the stylistical differences, Kureishi and Rushdie occupy a common place in English literature. Immigration, racial discrimination and exploitation are the issues with which they both deal. Almost all of their characters have a role in multicultural hybrid societies shaped by the post-colonial era.

Kaleta regards *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a piece of music. A style of composition 'to reinforce content is found throughout the novel'. Kureishi uses 'words as sounds and as signification to create linguistic and thematic cohesion throughout his novel', and this style carries themes to his final paragraph, completing his piece in much

[9] Kaleta, Ibid., p. 67

the same way that a classical coda completes a symphony'. It is a novel of style, and 'its language is like music.'[10]

Kaleta's assessment also points to Kureishi's keen interest in pop music. The novel's rhythm is distinctively fast and easy to follow. Its ease of reading and Western rhythms allude to pop music. The flow of sentences and incidents does not give the sense of ethnicity as they have the pace of Western realist fiction. The first person narrator's conscious remarks in between sentences do not clearly underline the narrator's, and implicitly the author's stance and identity. Carefully chosen naïve words and descriptions recall the culture of pop music in which the novel is set. From the beginning to the end, the text keeps a balanced wholeness in its simplicity of words and depictions: 'I don't know why ... it was all getting me down,' 'I did so.' (3), 'Dad pulled up his vest and slapped his bare stomach rapidly with both hands. The noise was loud and unattractive and it filled our small house like pistol shots.'(6). However, in terms of its consistent rhythm, it is like a piece of music.

Short remarks and short sentences are juxtaposed with a more conventional style, with the ongoing monotonous rhythm and the normal reading pace of many sentences. Such short sentences and remarks are important to Kureishi's style, and they contribute more to his narrative than the lengthy metaphorical descriptions which occur in Rushdie's novels. The narrative-interest is less one to do with writing then to do with speaking, but not however in the sense of oral storytelling. The juxtaposition of long and short sentences recalls the spoken forms of language. The narrator is actually speaking in his natural pace: 'He became easily sarcastic, Dad.' (4). On the first page, the sudden

[10] Kaleta, op. cit., p. 71

information about his age after a full paragraph describing the boring atmosphere in the suburbs with naïve adjectives such as 'slow and heavy', gives the reason for the narrator's unsophisticated depictions and logic. He is only seventeen:

> ... I was looking for trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest I could find, because *things were so gloomy, so slow and heavy*, in our family, *I don't know why*. Quite frankly, it was all getting me down and I was ready for anything.
>
> Then one day everything changed. In the morning *things were one way and by the bedtime another. I was seventeen. (my emphasis, p. 3)*

From the seventeen-year-old protagonist's point of view, things can only be 'slow and heavy', though we 'do not know why'. However, this seemingly conventional and simplistic style is paradoxical in the way it brings together juxtaposing images. The declaration of the narrator's Englishness in the opening sentence simply constitutes a paradox with his unlikely English name: Karim Amir. Rhetoric 'underlies the opening paragraphs and interrupts itself' and words 'connote paradoxical images in this Anglo-Asian narrative.'[11] The preposterousness of incidents and identities is the base for Kureishi's paradoxical structure. The premise of the novel is multicultural, hybrid, naïve and absurd in its selection of clashing identities and incidents.

Sandhu points out that 'juxtaposition and collage are the central techniques that Kureishi employs to create this collision-filled London', and collage was a 'favoured format of many English artists of the 1960s.' Sandhu notes that it was not surprising for Kureishi, who is a Beatles fan himself, to personally ask Peter Blake, who designed the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club*, to design the jacket for *The*

[11] Kaleta, op. cit., p. 69

Buddha of Suburbia.[12] It is also not surprising for Kureishi, who lived his teens in the late hippie generation, to use collage in constructing his novel.

The characters and the incidents in *The Buddha of Suburbia* produce a natural collage by their absurd co-existence. This flamboyant collage switches from one culture to an opposing one or from high culture to low culture. In the first chapter, Haroon prepares to go to Eva's house for the first time. He is going to lecture on Buddhism, although he is from Muslim origin. The fact that he is invited to speak on Buddhism signifies Western stereotypical conception of Indians. Haroon is an Indian, so he is assumed to be an expert on spirituality.

Haroon tries to convince Margaret, his wife, to come with him to Eva's house, because he wants her to see the importance and respect he achieves acting out his new role as a spiritual man in materialist Western society. However, Margaret's rejection exhibits a striking cultural clash and mutual prejudice between Englishness and Indianness:

> 'But it isn't me that Eva wants to see,' Mum said. 'She ignores me. Can't you see that? She treats me like dog's muck, Haroon. I'm not Indian enough for her. I'm only English.' *(p. 5)*

[12] Sandhu, Ibid., p. 144

Karim is willingly convinced to accompany his father, because he admires Eva's son Charlie. However, he spells out his willingness 'innocently as a vicar, not wanting to stymie things by seeming too eager' (6). He goes upstairs to his room, which reflects the flamboyant fashion of the seventies:

> I charged upstairs to get changed. From my room, the walls decorated ceiling to floor with newspapers, I could hear them arguing downstairs. ... I put on one of my favourite records, Dylan's 'Positively Fourth Street', to get me in the mood for the evening.
>
> ... I wore turquoise flared trousers, a blue and white flower-patterned see-through shirt, blue suede boots with Cuban heels, and scarlet Indian waistcoat with gold stitching around the edges. I'd pulled on a headband to control my shoulder-length frizzy hair. I'd washed my face in Old Spice. *(p. 6)*

His preparations are immediately juxtaposed with his father's spiritual purpose in going to Eva's house. Karim listens to Bob Dylan to get in the mood for a night of Buddhism. Dylan's 'Positively Fourth Street' overlaps his parents' argument audible from downstairs. His clothes reflect not only seventies' fashion, but are also a cultural amalgam. He puts on an Indian waistcoat over a Western style 'flower-patterned see-through shirt' with connotations of the hippie generation. His outfit is completed when he washes his face 'in Old Spice', a distinctively Western product that points out Kureishi's deliberate use of brand names to foreground the consumerist habits of a second generation Asian teenager.

When they arrive in Eva's house, she welcomes them, wearing a kaftan. The amalgam of Haroon and Karim's hybrid identities attracts the attention of a marginalised middle class, looking for an escape from its own reality. However, as Haroon starts

talking about Buddhism just before conducting the group yoga exercises, one of Eva's 'spiritual' friends is evidently not there to be lectured on Buddhism:

> The man said in a loud whisper to his friend, 'Why has Eva brought this brown Indian here? Aren't we going to get pissed?'
> 'He's going to give us a demonstration of the mystic arts!'
> 'And has he got his camel parked outside?'
> 'No, he came on a magic carpet.'
> ...
> I gave the man a sharp kick in the kidney. He looked up. *(p. 12)*

The unnamed man's reaction to Haroon's presence points to a stereotypical image of Indian identity. Karim's annoyance and his kick are suddenly juxtaposed by his own disinterest in his father's spirituality:

> I hissed to Charlie, 'Let's get out of here before we're hypnotized like these idiots!'
> 'Isn't it just fascinating?' *(p. 13)*

Although Charlie turns out to be more interested in Haroon's performance than Karim, they go to Charlie's room in the attic, where they smoke dope, and put on Pink Floyd's *Ummagumma*, to which Karim 'forces' himself to listen (14). While Charlie asks whether he does meditation every morning, Karim admires Charlie's clothing style, his room filled with piles of records, four guitars 'two acoustic and two Stratocasters' (14), and a drum kit:

> 'Your father. He's the best. He's wise. D'you do that meditation stuff every morning?'
> I nodded. A nod can't be a lie, right?
> 'And chanting, too?'
> 'Not chanting every day, no.'
> I thought of the morning in our place: Dad running around the kitchen looking for olive oil to put on his hair; my brother and I wrestling over the *Daily Mirror*; my mother complaining about having to go to work in a shoe shop. *(p. 14)*

Karim's lie not only juxtaposes with the real situation in their house every morning, but also points to a class distinction. Karim's parents are working class people and there is no time in their lives for spirituality, hobbies and interests that are solely for the better off middle class people like Charlie's family. Karim goes downstairs feeling dizzy after smoking, and finds the whole house in silence. He realises that all the guests are meditating, before finding that Eva and his father are making love in the garden. He goes back to the attic, excited about being so close to Charlie for the first time, and frees his sexual desire for him. There is a scene of a brief homosexual encounter as they listen to Pink Floyd and smoke dope while simultaneously his father and Eva make heterosexual love in the garden. This is a strikingly absurd contrast to the original spiritual purpose of the night. Ethnic mysticism clashes with psychedelic rock, alcohol, drugs and adultery.

Pop music and its culture contribute to the paradoxes and the juxtaposing collage of the novel. Rushdie's allusions to pop and rock stars with fictional names in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are no longer allusions in Kureishi's text. Here pop stars are referred to by their real names: Pink Floyd, David Bowie, the Sex Pistols, the Rolling Stones, Syd Barrett, Cream, and pop magazines such as *New Musical Express* or *Melody Maker*. They are actually the determinants of Karim's way of life and his personality. His choice of clothing, reading and eating is a part of pop culture. Charlie is a rock singer, whom Karim adores. He is strongly a reminiscent of David Bowie, who went to the same school as Kureishi in Bromley. Karim apparently admires Charlie's rebellions at school:

> A few days ago, during the school assembly, with the staff sitting like a flock of crows on the stage, the headmaster was expatiating on Vaughan Williams. We were about to hear his *Fantasia on Greensleeves*. As Yid, the religious-education master, sanctimoniously lowered the needle on the dusty record, Charlie, standing along the row from me, started to bob and shake his head and whisper, 'Dig it, dig it, you heads.' 'What's going down?' we said to each other. We soon found out, for as the headmaster put his head back, the better to savour Vaughan Williams's mellow sounds, the opening hisses of 'Come Together' were rattling the speakers. ... For this, Charlie was caned in front of us all. *(p. 9)*

The use of 'Come Together' as opposed to religious conservatism not only emphasises Kureishi's own attitude towards these values but also signifies the co-existence of juxtaposing concepts such as rebellion and conservatism, traditional and modern, Eastern and Western cultural values. However, these Western cultural values are mostly Western brand names, such as 'Levi's', or 'Old Spice'. This free and unconventional use of brand names indicates the consumerist culture on which Kureishi constructs the identity of his characters. Pop culture and consumerism of Western products are the determining aspects of the contemporary hybrid scene he writes about. *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a created universe, recreating the seventies' scene.[13] This universe is made more real by the use of important brand names of the era.

Fashion is explicitly used in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. What he wears is important for Karim in order to keep up with his generation. His choice of clothing reflects the seventies' fashion. His brother Allie always reads fashion magazines such as *Vanity Fair*. The use of brand names –'Walnut Whip'- magazines and the TV programmes –*Steptoe and Son*- of the time contributes to the objective view that Kureishi tries to employ in the novel. Karim's eyes are employed as the viewfinders of a camera, recording whatever is in view. Inevitably, everything Karim records includes all these brand names, as they constitute his reality. He is only seventeen, but his ethnic

[13] Kaleta, op. cit., p. 73

identity and cultural mix multiplies the collage and connotations created by these Western products and pop bands.

Historiography:

Kureishi is not a historian, nor does he re-write the history of the seventies in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. His reconstruction of the decade is not based on historical facts. However, *The Buddha of Suburbia* still presents much from history. In fact it situates itself as a historical novel at the very beginning of Karim's self-introduction, that defines him as 'having emerged from two old histories' (3). The stories of Karim and all of the other ethnic characters are affected by the history of colonisation. They are, in the first place, post-colonial immigrants who are directly affected by colonisation. Their condition in post-colonial London is a result of colonial history. The mutual preconceptions and prejudices between the characters have strongly historical and ideological roots. In terms of its presentation of these mutual prejudices, *The Buddha of Suburbia* recalls the cultural conflict between English and Indian identity in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*.

The second chapter starts with the introduction of Anwar and his wife Princess Jeeta. They are stereotypical Asian immigrants running a cornershop in London, which was once the centre of the British Empire. Anwar is Haroon's best friend with whom he came to England in the fifties. It is revealed that Haroon and Anwar lived next door to one another in Bombay, before coming to Britain. Haroon's family was an aristocratic family. They had seen 'riots and demonstrations and Hindu-Muslim fighting' (23). Haroon became a socialist after seeing how badly the servants of his family were treated.

He was sent to England by his family to become a lawyer. He would return to serve his country like earlier Indian leaders, Gandhi and Jinnah. But Haroon possessing an aristocratic background became a civil servant in a government office and lives a working class life.

Anwar and Haroon could hardly equate the reality of Britain with what they had envisaged before migration. Leaving their aristocracy back home, they had to live in a rundown shared flat with no running water. Their disappointment in England was bitter:

> Dad was amazed and heartened by the sight of the British in England, though. He'd never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, as dustmen, shopkeepers and barmen. He'd never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one told him the English didn't wash regularly because the water was so cold – if they found water at all. And when Dad tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him that not every Englishman could read or that they didn't necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman. *(pp. 24-25)*

The English they had envisaged were obviously the colonial English, who were the ruling class, not the servants. It is not only the immigrants that Kureishi satirises here, but also the English who are not as intellectually equipped as Haroon. The irony is obviously their unwillingness to be tutored by an Indian. Kureishi satirically brings together two opposite sides. One is supposedly a member of high English culture, but unaware of Byron. The other is the representative of the supposedly low, ethnic Indian culture, but comfortably articulate on highly intellectual concepts such as classical poetry. The created universe in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and its post-colonial immigrants in conflict with English culture cannot be separated from the facts of colonial history, although Kureishi does not attempt to allude to history by rewriting it with alternative names and dates.

The Buddha of Suburbia echoes multiple definitions of Englishness, and multiple explanations of post-colonial Indian identity through historical progress. It reflects the changed concepts in the traditional ways of life in both cultures. Re-enacting coloniser-colonised relations, the novel deals with certain colonial attitudes and ways of defining and preserving cultural identity in the problematic condition of the post-colonial migrant, following the collapse of the British Empire. The further effects of the post-colonial condition as a consequence of the novel's historical allusions will be best analysed in the section below.

Post-colonial Migration and Hybrid Characterisation:

Karim is introduced as a 'new breed' at the outset of the novel. Hybridity is the inevitable condition of Kureishi's characters. Yousaf finds it possible to locate his writing within 'contemporary debates about identity politics'.[14] These debates inevitably arise out of the contemporary scene in London, where Kureishi's post-colonial characters reside. By using contradicting images of these characters, he describes London's internal cultural collage. As his ethnic hybridity, in John Clement Ball's words, makes him 'semi-detached' to Britain's traditional racial-traditional culture and to that of Pakistan', his position is pragmatic, omitting 'issues of racial or group identity'.[15] Kureishi does not dramatise or idealise any of his characters.

Karim's father Haroon, being a post-colonial migrant, is an important representative of the hybridity and cultural clashes caused by migration. His relationship

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[14] Yousaf, op. cit., p. 14

[15] John Clement Ball, 'The Semi-Detached Metropolis: Hanif Kureishi's London', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 27:4, (October 1996) p. 16

with Anwar represents the situation of immediate post-colonial migration. The story of their arrival in Britain and cultural changes they had to undergo is significant in Kureishi's post-colonial setting. After they settle in Britain, Haroon marries an English girl, while Anwar marries a Pakistani woman, Princess Jeeta who is originally from a noble family. Haroon's changed identity after his intercultural marriage causes a decline in his relationship with his old friend and his roots. In Anwar's personality, Kureishi represents the migrants who never lose contact with their roots, in the hope of going back home one day. On the other hand, Haroon has already lost contact with his roots by marrying an English girl. He is now a character that does not comply with the traditional father figure. He leaves his family for another woman. However, he realises that by acting as a representative of the stereotypical image of a mystical culture that he no longer belongs to, he is admitted to and respected in the English community, whereas Anwar, despite being strictly religious and traditional, is not so respected.

Karim, on the other hand, is a perfect example of the in-between second generation. He still keeps in touch with his roots by visiting Anwar's family, although he has acquired Western habits and interests. Contrary to the strict traditional upbringing of her father, Jamila, Anwar's daughter, has been Karim's secret sexual partner since their adolescence. The idealisation of this peripheral and secret relationship is juxtaposed with Anwar and Princess Jeeta's strict Islamic values, their belief in their daughter's innocence about sex, and Jamila's traditional clothing. However, Karim is a boy of their culture and is, therefore, allowed to take Jamila out. Karim's dream-come-true, on the other hand, is to go to London and to become an actor, although his father, in compliance with an Asian father's stereotypical dream, wants him to become a doctor:

'He'll go to university, oh yes. He'll be a leading doctor in London. My father was a doctor. Medicine is in our whole family.' (7). Nevertheless, after his father leaves his family, Karim looks forward to becoming a 'leading actor,' instead of a 'leading "doctor" in London.'

Kureishi's presents the view of an international London with its metropolitan intellectuals and peasant migrants unfamiliar with cutlery yet soon to become London's major take-away kebab shop owners. Anwar runs a grocery shop, exemplifying the post-colonial migrant's place in the social hierarchy as managing non-intellectual family businesses. In order to preserve his family's cultural identity, he asks a close relative in Pakistan to find a bridegroom to marry his daughter. He wants to preserve his dignity by preventing the possibility of Jamila's marriage to an Englishman, whom, he thinks, would not suit his traditional values.

The bridegroom Changez is a disconcerting portrait of a newcomer to Britain. His characterisation is satirical. He is required to work in his father-in-law's shop. However, he, like Karim, hopes to enjoy London's colourful life. Although he looks like the peasants who arrived in Britain in the fifties, he has a university degree, and does not want to be a shopkeeper: 'I'm the intellectual type, not one of those uneducated immigrant types who come here to slave all day and night and look dirty' (107). The contradictions in Changez's character are humorous. Although he tries to prove that he is not a stereotypical Asian immigrant, his cultural habits have travelled to Britain with him. At the welcoming party organised for him, he irritates Helen, Karim's girlfriend, by the way he eats:

> I sat next to Changez when he started to eat. Helen watched from across the room, unable to eat, virtually retching at the sight of Changez balancing a plate on his knee, garland trailing in his dal, as he ate with his good hand, nimbly using the fingers he had. Maybe, he'd never used a knife and fork. Of course, Jamila would be entertained by that. She'd crow all over the place to her friends. 'Do you know my husband has never been in contact with cutlery before?' *(p. 82)*

Changez has a deformed hand, which makes it more difficult for him to use the cutlery that he is not accustomed to. Jamila's boast about Changez is her victory over her father, because she does not want to marry him. Changez has grown up in Pakistan, unlike Jamila who has always been familiar with cutlery and Western eating habits. Kureishi description includes Changez's inability to use cutlery and Jamila's 'crow', but the satire involves the huge difference between two people both originally from Pakistan, one brought up in England, the other in Pakistan. Despite being of Pakistani origin, Jamila's reaction to Changez's eating habits is a Western reaction. She has grown up in Western society, outside her father's universe. Although her reality involves an arranged marriage to Changez, his unfamiliarity with cutlery, symbolising his marginal cultural identity appears primitive to her.

However, Changez surprises Karim by revealing that he is actually a lover of literature. He has come to Britain to explore more of England and its literary world, not to work in a grocery. He wants Karim to take him to the bookshops:

> 'And visit bookshops? I hear there are many establishments in Charing Cross Road.'
>
> 'Yes. What do you like to read?'
>
> 'The classics,' he said firmly. I saw that he had a pompous side to him, so certain he seemed in taste and judgement. 'You like classics too?'
>
> 'You don't mean that Greek shit? Virgil or Dante or Homo or something?'
>
> 'P. G. Wodehouse and Conan Doyle for me! Can you take me to Sherlock Holmes's house in Baker Street? I also like the Saint and Mickey Spillane. And

> Westerns! Anything with Randolph Scott in it! Or Gary Cooper! Or John Wayne!' *(p. 83)*

Classics for Karim are 'Greek shit', as opposed to the pomposity of Changez. However, Changez's literary taste, which he declares as comprised of classics, turns out to be P. G. Wodehouse and Conan Doyle. His 'low-brow' tastes actually symbolise a sudden switch from high culture to low culture. Popular culture's expansion as far as the subcontinent is the expansion of London, as the metropolitan capital of the British Empire, to all corners of the world.

Jamila eventually agrees to marry Changez, when her father stages a hunger strike. Before starting a new life in a run down anarchic communal house, Jamila lives with Karim and Changez in a flat, although she never sleeps with Changez. He has, however, nowhere else to go even following his discovery of Karim and Jamila's ongoing sexual relationship despite her marriage. Eventually, Changez befriends a Japanese prostitute initially to satisfy his sexual desires, but this develops into a mutually desired relationship.

All the characters in the novel are dislocated and within an environment contradicting their values. Kureishi enjoys creating distinctly extraordinary peripheral characters. Juxtapositions are inevitable in the co-presence of Changez, coming from Pakistan to make an arranged marriage; Jamila, having grown up in London rebelling against the marriage arranged by her father and fighting against racism in an anarchic group; and the narrator Karim, the hybrid son born of an interracial marriage, interested in rock music and experiencing bisexual fantasies.

Characterisation of Haroon as the Buddha endorses the Asian identity of the novel. The exotically named narrator introduces his father as a mystic philosopher

lecturing on Eastern thinking. All of this happening in a South London suburb is rather ex-centric in terms of mixing opposing cultures. However, Kureishi, as a Londoner, depicts the contemporary London scene. A Buddha in the suburbs of London is a scene of cultural interpenetration with paradoxical images, such as the interest shown in Buddhism by suburban English people. Both Haroon and Karim belong to post-colonial London and their paradoxical lives emerge from the historically *post*-imperial period.

In the second part of the novel, Karim fulfils his dream. He is admitted to a theatre company in London. After being admitted to the company, Mr. Shadwell, the director of the theatre, wants to offer him a role in a play based on Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book.* In order to test whether he fits the proposed part, Shadwell says a few words to Karim in Punjabi or Urdu and waits for his answer. He then realises that Karim speaks neither Punjabi nor Urdu and has never been to India. Afterwards, he expresses his puzzlement:

> He shook his head then and did a series of short barks in his throat. This was him laughing, I was certain. 'Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!' He went. He said, 'What a breed of people two hundred years of imperialism has given birth to. If the pioneers from the East India Company could see you. What puzzlement there'd be. Everyone looks at you, I'm sure, and thinks: an Indian boy, how exotic, how interesting, what stories of aunties and elephants we'll hear from him. And you're from Orpington. *(p. 141)*

Many second generation Indians brought up in Britain do not speak sub-continental languages. They are much more influenced by British culture than Indian. It is ironic to expect to hear jungle stories from the exotic looking Indian boy Karim, because he is not authentically Indian. However, his ethnicity, which was a burden in his childhood, now allows him to perform Mowgli, the native boy in Kipling's *The Jungle Book.*

The London depicted by Kureishi once reached out into the world, but now it has become a place where people from all over the world are settling. They penetrate into British culture, rather than homogenising with it. This new kind of internationalism is, according to Homi K. Bhabha, 'the history of post-colonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasants and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees.'[16] In the post-imperial era that started after the Second World War when the British Empire began to disintegrate, people, much needed for the post war reconstruction, began migrating to London and provided cheap labour. The social appearance of London inevitably changed. It became what may be called a post-colonial capital. Its 'racial demographics saw a disproportionate decline in white dominance.'[17]

In the post-colonial era in question, the people who migrated to Britain caused an influential change in British culture, but they were also affected by the new culture they had to absorb upon reaching Britain. They wished to continue to hold on to their traditional cultural values in their new dwelling-place. Their condition inevitably creates cultural collisions, which, when depicted in a literary text, become a cultural collage, because eclecticism is a necessary and intrinsic part of their lives. Secular Western values and traditional religious Eastern values take their turns according to the needs in daily life. Kwame Anthony Appiah suggests that their new home brings new habits and make it necessary for them to clear a space for new habits.[18] These new paradigms certainly influenced the texts describing their situation. In this sense, *The Buddha of*

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[16] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture.* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 5
[17] Ball, op., cit., p. 8
[18] Antony Kwame Appiah, 'Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Post-colonial?' *Critical Inquiry* 17.2, (1991) p. 337

Suburbia cannot avoid being involved with colonial history and it inevitably represents the hybridity of post-colonial characters.

Recycling of Themes and Characters in Intertextual Relations:

It is possible to consider *The Buddha of Suburbia* in relation to Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Karim has the same problem as Kim and Saleem. They all need a single father figure. Karim, with multiple parenthood, is a post-colonial Kim. He is the son of an Indian father and an English mother in England, whereas Kim was the son of a white father and an Indian mother in India. Karim is an Indian boy in the English suburbs, feeling more English than Indian, while Kim feels more Indian than English. Although they both represent the identities they biologically belong to, they prefer the identities developed in the culture they live in: Karim prefers the English culture to the Indian culture he represents in England, and Kim prefers the Indian culture to the English culture he represents in India.

Karim's discontent with his father's Indianness and inability to act like the English fathers whom Karim envies results in his search for another father figure. He opts for his mother's brother. Uncle Ted fills the gap Karim wishes to fill as a proper father who can make kites and model aeroplanes like his English friends' fathers. When his real father Haroon leaves home for another woman, Kim's problem of fatherhood is shifted into another dimension: the problem of two mother figures, his real mother and Eva, his father's new partner.

Although Karim feels more English, he cannot avoid being seen as an exotic Indian boy. When he finds a job in a theatre company in London as an actor, a job he has been longing for, he is required to play the part of Mowgli in a play based on the *Jungle Books*. However, he can neither speak any of the native subcontinental languages, nor represent an Indian identity with his English teenager manners. Unlike Kim, he cannot shift his identity from a sahib to a native boy and back again. In this sense, Karim's reluctance to play the part is not only his rejection of Indian identity, but also a challenge to Kipling's depiction of hybridity. The post-colonial "Kims" cannot be asked to shift identities as required by the imperial authority. They have acquired more stable identities, shaping a new cultural picture in the imperial centre.

Karim's problem of parentage is a genealogical problem as is Kim or Saleem's. They are all Indians, and the multiple parenthood of all three of them represents their hybridity. They are all in search of a solid and definable identity that they do not have. Karim, Kim and Saleem are all 'almost English'. Kim and Saleem are the sons of a white English, or Irishman in Kim's case, and a native Indian woman. Karim is the son of a white English mother and a native Indian father.

Alamgir Hashmi regards *The Buddha of Suburbia* as the continuation of the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* and the social realistic tradition in the English novel. It actually belongs to the dual tradition of Englishness and Indianness, Hashmi argues. It is, as a novel form, Western, but sets itself as a hybrid post-colonial novel amalgamating multiple cultural identities. Hashmi notes that Kureishi's references to H. G. Wells should be acknowledged: a kind of 'twentieth century underclass tradition is paid a

formal and personal obeisance' by a reference to 'Bromley High Street, next to the plaque that said "H. G. Wells was born here"' (64).[19]

Kureishi has common elements he uses in conjunction with his other texts. Prior to the publication of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Omar in *My Beautiful Laundrette* is involved in a homosexual relationship with a white English thug Johnny, as does Karim in *The Buddha of Suburbia* with the white English punk Charlie. In all of his texts Kureishi celebrates peripheral characters and life styles. Leaving home is idealised. The suburbs for all Kureishi characters are places to leave, rather than being places to in which live. Omar leaves the suburbs in search of wealth in inner London. Shahid in *The Black Album* leaves the suburbs, because the people are not interested in culture and arts. Haroon leaves home for another woman and Karim leaves the suburbs to become an actor. Kureishi's most recent novel *Intimacy*, despite being in a rather different category to his first two novels, is the story of a successful film director and scriptwriter who leaves his wife and children.

Kureishi's Asian protagonists migrate between his own texts, in a similar fashion to Rushdie's genealogically related characters who travel among his texts. Haroon is an Asian teenager who complained to his girlfriend Amina that they should get away from the suburbs in the stage play *Borderline*, and he becomes Karim's father in *The Buddha of Suburbia.* Amina in this play is reminiscent of Jamila in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, with a father who tries to arrange a marriage, and her family, too, has a cornershop. Eva is again an English lady who lives in Chistlehurst in another stage play *Birds of Passage.* She invites the Asians to her district to see the 'what England's really like'. Eva in *The*

[19] Alamgir Hashmi, 'Hanif Kureishi and the tradition of the novel', *Critical Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 1, (1993) pp. 27-28

Buddha of Suburbia eventually becomes an interior designer, symbolising our desire and need to 'refashion and transform ourselves'. Her job also reflects the idea of solidifying the houses people possess. Interior design is a reflection of stability and confidence. It is a mark of respect, which the Asians cannot achieve with their houses alone.[20]

None of Kureishi's characters live in a clean, tidy and respectable home. Omar's alcoholic father in *My Beautiful Laundrette* has a damp, dirty and small flat. Jamila in *The Buddha of Suburbia* leaves her home to begin living in a communal house with leaking pipes and mice, but filled with radical lawyers, vegetarians, intellectual lesbians and jazz-lovers. On the other hand, none of the people who live in respectable, luxurious properties are depicted from an enviable perspective. Kureishi rejects the idea that one has to have a stable and well-furnished house in order to be respected.

Charlie Hero is the most important recycled character in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. Kureishi's experience of studying in the same school as David Bowie in Bromley, when Bowie was known as David Jones, makes him metamorphose Bowie into Charlie Hero. Kureishi's keen interest in pop music as a teenager originates from his generation's London, where many pop idols of the seventies' were born. He writes of and from a background under the influence of pop music. The speed and sensuality of pop influenced his ideas and the eventual content of his writing. Songs such as Steppenwolf's 'Born to be Wild' (1969), Springsteen's 'Born to Run' (1975), urge freedom and 'escape from the shackles of domesticity'. Many of the bands that were successful as Kureishi was growing up scorned suburbia as a 'deadening zone'.[21] It is no

[20] Sandhu, op. cit., p. 137
[21] Sandhu, op. cit., p. 135

surprise that Kureishi, who grew up with pop music, condemns the suburbs, and glamorises pop culture.

No matter how easy Kureishi's text may be to read, it has references to the post-colonial condition on the grounds that the city described in the novel consists of a collage. Unlike those of Rushdie, the post-colonial elements do not originate from Kureishi's cultural roots, because he does not employ characteristics of, for instance, dastan or qissa. Nor does he use a fragmented style. However, the root of his juxtapositioned themes is definitely traceable to the same cultural origin as his own. Kureishi dramatically describes race and class differences. His descriptions are satirical. The first person narrator is not the author's voice. Despite similarities between Karim and Kureishi, the author isolates himself simply by depicting everything from Karim's point of view. The closest point to where Kureishi might stand in his text though, is Karim's point of view. Karim, as the narrator, is viewer as well as participant. He only recounts what he sees. His interventions occur only in asides. These interventions are usually in one or two words, like 'almost', 'pompous' or in parentheses such as '(though not proud of it)'.

Kureishi's multiple stories, despite being similar to Rushdie's in terms of their representation of ethnicity and multiculturalism, do not force the form of his novel to change. *The Buddha of Suburbia* resembles a diary of a period taken out of Karim's life. Kureishi leaves it to the reader to take its issues further, and hides his own standpoint. What does not work in Kureishi's fiction, in comparison to Rushdie, is that he does not create new forms or experimental storytelling techniques despite his rich material which allows for a multiple pastiche. Yet *The Buddha of Suburbia* is still a legitimate topic of

study alongside Rushdie's novels because it also concerns the post-colonial condition due to its depiction of post-imperial migration to London and the inevitable results of the immigrant culture.

The Black Album

Kureishi's second novel, *The Black Album*, is set in London in 1989, the same year as the issuing of the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie. Like *The Buddha of Suburbia*, it focuses on characters of ethnic origin and again takes up as themes questions of immigration and problems concerning identity. This time, Kureishi satirises and at the same time celebrates the pleasure-seeking Shahid Hasan, another British Asian youth who in many ways resembles Karim of *The Buddha of Suburbia*. It is the story of a period in Shahid's life from the point at which he begins studying in London until he leaves the city for a break with his lover after a stream of overwhelming incidents.

The Black Album is more historical and political than its predecessor, which had more autobiographical connections with Kureishi's life. There is a third person narrator who provides more of an authorial voice, unlike *The Buddha of Suburbia*, which is narrated from the protagonist's point of view. Although it is mostly welcomed as another challenge to the stereotypical limitations of ethnic, religious and sexual identities, it is also criticised for celebrating the cultural values of the

clubbing, rave and drug-taking generation. Its representations of pop idols as academically worthy of study, and its celebration of reading and writing literature as well as admiring drugs and designer clothes have become the core of the criticism it has received. However, like Kureishi's earlier works, it is a novel about desire, eroticism, interracial relationships and hybridity caused by post-colonial immigration. It is a depiction of contemporary London's multicultural and inevitably ambivalent society.

Shahid's ambivalence, as a result of his hybridity, is foregrounded throughout the novel. This naturally reflects upon the novel's narration which is equally unclear. Although the third person narration is through Shahid's eyes, it is still hard to determine the narrator's ideological standpoint. The entire novel is composed of the stories of many people who have a role in Shahid's life. The multiplicity of characters and their stories in Kureishi's fiction presents a collage in which the tales of drug addicts, homosexual relations, religious fanaticism and the culture of pop music co-exist in the same narrative.

Shahid leaves the Kent countryside to study in a racially mixed college where there is more violence than academic life. He is overwhelmed by the furore over the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and ambivalent in his attitude to fanatical Muslim friends and his lover Deedee, a former topless dancer turned lecturer at the college. Deedee is married to another lecturer, Mr. Brownlow, a depressed and disillusioned Marxist, disappointed at the fall of socialism. Like *The Buddha of Suburbia*, this novel is full of musical connotations. The title of the novel alludes to Prince's *The Black Album.* Prince is the idol of Shahid and Deedee, because he is half black and half white, half man and half woman, half-feminine and half-macho, representing the

novel's overall ambivalence about sex, race, ideology and religious beliefs. Being the co-editor of *The Faber Book of Pop*, Kureishi enjoys employing his own interest in and knowledge of pop music in numerous allusions to pop music idols including Madonna. Beverly Fields finds the title of the novel a 'sassy response to the Beatles' *The White Album*'.[1] I also find that it recalls Metallica's very aggressive-sounding *Black Album* in the way it opposes all limitations presented by society.

Kureishi employs juxtapositions again, as in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, to emphasise both the hybridity and the ambiguity of his characters caused by their contradictions. Despite the important issues of the year in which the novel is set, such as censorship, racism, Islam versus Western civilisation, there is no authorial standpoint or dominant attitude in the narrative. Shahid has no direction, because he sees all tendencies and ideologies as limitations. Therefore, he does not take sides, and simply lets himself do what he enjoys doing, making the novel a mixture of juxtaposing themes, producing an ambivalent style and a diffuse response.

Style and Content:

The style is descriptive with very few allusions and metaphors as in realistic fiction. This simple realistic narrative, however, does not prevent the text from being a collage. The juxtaposing images and contradictory characters in the simple depictions allow for pastiche, although there are no authorial interventions, no employment of storytelling techniques in Rushdie fashion, and no magical realism. The text still contains richly colourful images providing collage and amalgam as seen in his previous novel leading to an inevitable comparison with Rushdie's more flamboyant style.

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[1] Beverly Fields, 'Literature vs. Piety on the Streets of London.' *Chicago Tribune*, (22 October 1995).

The novel opens with Shahid and Riaz's first encounter in the student housing in which they live. Riaz is a law student living next door to Shahid, and he acts as the leader of local Muslims, lecturing them on religious matters and providing legal assistance with their problems. He is also a charismatic political figure for the Muslim students at the college. He hardly ever leaves his room, spending all his time studying at his desk. Shahid thinks nobody lives next door, until Riaz comes out of that room and bars his way while Shahid walks through the narrow corridor:

> Shahid was about to apologise when his neighbour said a word in Urdu. Shahid replied, and the man, as if having been confirmed, took another step forward, offered his hand and introduced himself as Riaz Al-Hussein. *(p. 1)*

Shahid is a distinctively Muslim name, and his first friend at the residence turns out to be another British Asian with another distinct Muslim name. This cultural linkage between two young men presents a picture of two dislocated Pakistanis in a student hostel in a multicultural area of North London. They greet each other in Urdu while one expects to hear English. The hostel is situated 'beside a Chinese restaurant in Kilburn' and many rooms are 'filled with Africans, Irish people, Pakistanis and even a group of English students'. In such an environment, Kureishi places two Asian youths, and makes them greet each other in Urdu.

Shahid is a pop-music loving young Briton of Pakistani origin, in a sense, Karim's descendant from *The Buddha of Suburbia*, but with an important difference: both of his parents are from Pakistan and he can speak Urdu, as opposed to the non-Urdu-speaking Karim. Although he is not hybrid genealogically, he is still ambivalent in identifying himself. He is a cultural hybrid. As Karim declares himself reluctantly as 'an Englishman born and bred, almost', emphasising his mixture of cultures and identities, Shahid is reluctant to admit his Asian identity, despite the fact that he is not the descendant of English parents. However, immediately after his first

encounter with Riaz, they go to a take-away kebab shop, since Shahid wants Indian food despite his reluctance to accept his Asian identity:

> 'In the past few days my mouth has been watering for good Indian food, but I'm not certain where to go.'
> 'Naturally you miss such food. You are my fellow countryman.'
> 'Well ... not quite.'
> 'Oh, yes, you are. I have observed you before.'
> 'Have you? What was I doing?' *(p. 2)*

The short and ambivalent aside 'Well ... not quite' subverts Karim's reluctance to admit his Englishness by saying 'almost'. Ironically, although Shahid has no English lineage, he resents being regarded as Asian. With all his manners, habits, and interests, he is like an English youngster from the countryside. However, he looks for direction and identity where he can accommodate his English manners and ethnic cultural identity without juxtaposing them. For this reason, he gives Riaz access to his life with directional authority, by going to dinner with him. This marks the importance for people in the minority in a foreign country of finding fellow countrymen and creating homogenised sub-communities.

The style only presents pictures of the multicultural surroundings and its images, rather than exploring the problem of identity. It is sufficiently clear from what the text visualises that the Asian characters in the novel do not fit into the gloomy back streets with strikingly derelict houses that is their environment. The third person narration allows an authorial voice throughout the text. Yet, this voice does no more than describe the situations and events Shahid participates in. Apart from the depictions in the novel, issues such as religion, drugs, socialism, pop music and racism are discussed through the characters' dialogues and Shahid's thoughts, although still in the third person narration. Ambivalence dominates these discussions. Kureishi, who does not suggest any political or ideological view, any religious or

sexual preference, prefers to remain unheard so as not to interfere with Shahid's unclear position, because he does not want to write a novel that takes sides.[2]

Tom Shone harshly criticises the book for not being a novel, but 'a play with extended bits of scenery description.'[3] Although the descriptions are pictorial, and the narration is close to the pace of real life, it is still a fiction. In some cases, the text gives the sense of reading a diary rather than a novel. Yet, Kureishi's bare descriptions presenting realistic pictures, are drawn deliberately, because by describing scenery, he shows us where he stands (as spectator, only) in the narration, and thus makes us see things from his camera-like perspective. He hides his own voice behind bare descriptions. In other words, Kureishi leads the reader wherever Shahid goes, and makes the reader see whatever he sees. What Shahid sees, as described by the author, is actually what Kureishi wants his reader to see. Shahid's eyes function as natural viewfinders. The scenes he chooses to describe realistically, are actually what the readers are required to see.

The description of the little streets Shahid walks with Riaz presents a view of London's multicultural areas that accommodate mostly the immigrants and refugees, which is what the author foregrounds. The description of 'closed down and boarded' shops is a significant and ironic reference to the bankruptcy of the old, wealthy imperial capital. This also signifies the historical content of the novel whose post-colonial setting is inseparable from historical allusions. *The Black Album* is potentially full of hybridity due to its allusions to post-colonial history, and it is predominantly ambivalent due to its alternative histories. However, both the hybridity and the alternative histories will be best studied under separate headings.

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[2] Maya Jaggi 'A buddy from suburbia', Wednesday March 1, 1995, in http://www.booksunlimited.co.uk/reviews/generalfiction/0,6121,99010,000

[3] Tom Shone, 'I'm all shook up,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, Issue 4796, (03 March 1995) p. 20

Ambivalence and Hybridity:

In seeking a new life in London, Shahid's cultural origins are not regarded as a disadvantage to him. Although Shahid is originally a Pakistani, he is more like a typical English youngster since he was born and brought up in England. His curiosity about London is not that of a newly migrated Indian, but of a naïve teenager in the big city. He is simply described as a young man who comes to the metropolis from a smaller centre, and London is an ocean in whose depths there are mysteries to explore. As a young man newly arrived in the great metropolitan capital, he wanders around central London not knowing what to do or why to do it:

> He went to the cinema or obtained the cheapest theatre seats and one night he had attended a socialist political meeting. He went to Piccadilly and sat for an hour on the steps of Eros, hoping to meet a woman; wandered around Leicester Square and Covent Garden; entered an 'erotic' bar where a woman sat beside him for ten minutes and a man tried to charge him £100 for a bottle of fizzy water, and punched him when he walked out. He had never felt more invisible; somehow this wasn't the 'real' London. *(p. 5)*

Shahid is attracted by everything London has to offer him, but he lacks direction. He is willing to 'rave' and take drugs as well as reading books, writing novels and listening to music. His eclecticism is not only a sign of his lack of direction, but it also presents the contradictions originating from his cultural roots. However, his roots, which contradict London culture, are not depicted as a burden to Shahid's existence in the city, because Kureishi tends to present ethnicity rather than debating the issue. He would rather describe the clashes than analyse their impact. By recounting Shahid's adventures in raves, not only does Kureishi depict a London of unexpected coincidences, but he also writes about post-colonial London, which is in fact contemporary London. It is the post-colonial condition that fills the city with unexpected juxtapositions which result in a cultural collage. Riaz's entry into

Shahid's life is an example of one of those unexpected clashes. As the culturally hybrid children of post-colonial migrants, they use the English language, in which they are more fluent, to communicate, although they have a mother tongue in common. But their English still gives away their origins:

> Shahid established that Riaz had lived and worked 'with the people, showing them their rights', in a Muslim community near Leeds. His accent was certainly a compound of both places, which explained why he sounded like a cross between J. B. Priestley and Zia Al Haq. But his English was precise and without slang; Shahid could feel the punctuation hanging in the air like netting. *(p. 6)*

Riaz's Indo-Anglian English accent points to the influence of Englishness on sub-continental cultures. On noticing Riaz's precise English usage despite his accent, Shahid recalls his Uncle Asif's assertions on the English language and Englishness. Uncle Asif was a journalist in Pakistan, imprisoned by Zia Al Haq 'for writing against his Islamization policies', who liked 'to assert that the only people who spoke good English now were the subcontinentals' (6). Riaz's 'precise' English confirms Shahid's uncle's assertion.

In fact, through Shahid's observations, Kureishi is wryly ironic about the situations he describes selecting his characters from the ethnic inhabitants of London and bringing them together in unexpected coincidences. The framework of the whole story is based on the idea of post-colonial migration. The actual reference to the post-colonial condition and the hybridity of contemporary London culture originates from Kureishi's satire on the contradictory condition of the immigrants. Kureishi's simple style evokes the simplicity and naïve understanding of the uneducated immigrants who try to continue their traditional lives in England. While trying to live stable lives in Britain, they always maintain the hope of returning 'home' at an undefined date in the future. However, as the years pass by, they realise that they are never going to

leave because Britain has become home to them and the reason that has kept them away from their native lands is their jobs. Inevitably, they have to work in order to live, since their main purpose in life is to return 'home' with money to invest. Yet, all they can do is visit this 'home' once every couple of years.

Shahid's parents are fortunate immigrants who have a relatively privileged business. They run a travel agency successfully, which makes them more settled and assimilated into the cultural habits of their host society. However, according to the strict religious understanding of Shahid's new friends, being more settled in British society means losing identity. When Riaz asks Shahid straightforwardly whether or not his parents lost their identity after coming to Britain, Shahid reveals another contradiction in his family which is not of traditional or religious importance:

> 'You could be right. Maybe that is what happened. My family's work has always been to transport others around the world. They never go anywhere themselves, apart from Karachi once a year. They can't do anything but work. My brother Chili has a ... a looser attitude. But then he is a different generation. *(p. 7)*

The contradiction in Shahid's parents does not originate from a loss of identity. What Shahid emphasises is the contradiction of their not travelling (although they are travel agents) rather than any cultural conflicts within themselves. Shahid does not want to be classified as a post-colonial migrant in cultural conflict, because he does not believe he suffers from such conflict. However, the initial reason for his parents' migration to Britain was to establish a business and save money in the stereotypical immigrants' way. Their children who were born and bred in England are alienated from their parents' roots. In contrast to Shahid's love of books, Chili, his elder brother, is a lover of designer clothes, who blames his father for not going to the United States instead of Britain. He is a money worshipper, and wants to earn money easily. He revels, while his parents work and expect him to carry on the

family business. Chili represents the end of ethical reasoning in conventional immigrant understanding. The idea of studying, earning money by working day and night, being a hardworking and successful immigrant businessman does not appeal to him.

This alteration in the immigrant experience is presented through cinematic references.[4] He watches movies such as *The Godfather* or *Once Upon A Time In America* as career documentaries. Shahid thinks his father likes and trusts Chili more, since Chili's interest in making money is more useful to the family business than Shahid's interest in books and art. Yet, Chili thinks their father likes brainy Shahid best. However, both Shahid and Chili admire their father, and in different ways, they both want to be like him, although wanting to live different lives from their parents. Shahid does not want to admit to being a loser. Yet he enjoys having a literary side that isolates him from his family and from the success of making money in the family business. Although he is disturbed by Chili's sarcastic attitude and disrespect towards his artistic interests, Shahid is annoyed when Riaz calls Chili 'one of those dissipaters' who become useless after coming to Britain. In an ambivalent way, Shahid strongly rejects his brother's image as a 'dissipater'.

Through Riaz, Shahid meets Chad, one of Riaz's disciples. Chad is also an Asian youth who turns out to be policing on Shahid. It is revealed in Shahid's confession to Riaz and Chad that his unwillingness to admit his situation as the hybrid child of immigrant parents has resulted in his desire to become a racist. This was originally a reaction to the racial abuse he suffered in school:

> 'I argued ... why can't I be a racist like everyone else? Why do I have to miss out on that privilege? Why is it only me who has to be good? Why

[4] Kenneth Kaleta, *Hanif Kureishi: Postcolonial Storyteller*, (Austin: University of Texas, 1998) p. 143

> can't I swagger around pissing on others for being inferior? I began to turn into one of them. I was becoming a monster.' *(p. 11)*

Racism, which Shahid regards as a privilege, is a refusal to be silent, in the face of bullying and abuse. Kureishi here ridicules the situation ironically by giving racist views to a person who suffered from racism. Shahid is, however, not certain as to whether he is racist or not, because he is associated with people of the same ethnic origin as himself. Shahid's desire to be racist is a post-colonial desire that Simon During sees as 'the desire of de-colonised communities for an identity'. This includes a desire 'to speak or write in the imperial tongue.[5] Shahid wants the enjoyment of the imperial language, so he desires to be a racist to kill 'niggers', to abuse 'the Pakis', 'the Irish', and 'any foreign scum' in precisely the same racist discourse, using all the taboo words to refer to racial origins. He wonders why he, too, should not have the right or 'privilege' to abuse people of other races. He regards himself as a 'white boy'. As an assimilated Anglo-Pakistani, he prefers his Anglo side to his Pakistani side. His experience of racial abuse connects him to the author's own experiences in his schooldays in Bromley.[6]

Shahid's identity is what Gayatri C. Spivak refers to as the migrant and post-colonial mixture leading to hybridity.[7] The protagonists in both of Kureishi's novels are post-colonial subjects either inhabiting or expressing cultural gaps caused by intercultural relations. Thus the author marks the gap in Shahid's character. The gap here is filled with racism which appears to be a racial self-criticism, as Kureishi, being a British Asian himself, may get 'explicitly critical of the post-colonial' Pakistanis in London at times.[8] Contrary to Spivak, I would like to argue that it is not

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[5] Simon During 'Postmodernism or Post-Colonialism', in Thomas Docherty (ed.) *Postmodernism: A Reader*, (London: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 1993) p. 458
[6] Jaggi, Ibid., p. 2
[7] Gayatri C. Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine*, (London: Routledge, 1993) p. 243
[8] Spivak, Ibid. p. 253

always relevant to regard Kureishi as an explicit criticiser of post-colonial Pakistanis in London, because Shahid's ambivalence is itself a product of cultural imperialism.

It is useful at this point to return to Simon During's assertion that the post-colonial desire to speak in the imperial tongue is 'to call forth a problem of identity, to be thrown into mimicry and ambivalence'.[9] In this sense, Shahid's explicit criticism of post-colonial 'subjects' in London is understandable, because the problem of identity makes him act as racist. This leaves him with opposing feelings caused by the colour of his skin and racism. While trying to translate himself into the imperial culture, he adopts racism, which he sees as one of the forms of imperial language.

It is often difficult to determine Kureishi's place in his narration. On his first days at the college, Shahid has breakfast with his classmates, who all represent the flamboyance of the second generation of post-colonial immigrants. Kureishi is indecisive as to whether to celebrate their cultural eclecticism or to condemn their tendency towards Westernisation:

> In the early morning rush, as he shoved through the turnstiles, past the two security guards who occasionally frisked students for weapons, and into the lightless basement canteen for coffee, Shahid felt more spirited than he had since starting the course. He had breakfast with two people in his class, an Asian woman in salwar kamiz and blue jean jacket, a young black woman in baggy white dungarees, trainers and round gold spectacles. *(p. 24)*

The picture of the two ethnic identities, in unexpected combination, may be called a problematic combination of identity. The two women who stick to their ethnic identities by wearing salwar kamiz and dungarees are at the same time captured by Western 'blue jean jacket' and 'trainers'. Kureishi celebrates ethnic clothing, but equally he satirises the combination of salwar kamiz and the blue jean jacket on the

[9] During, Ibid., p. 458

same body. While providing the reader with such photographic descriptions, his reproaching attitude towards their combination is critical. His narration is, as previously suggested, like a viewfinder. What his viewfinder chooses to frame influences the reader's response: the reader is left without an authorial voice to celebrate or condemn what is framed, and the frame is inevitably full of impressions of hybridity.

Shahid's ethnicity is juxtaposed with his interest in distinctively Western cultural icons, including books by Henry Miller, William Burroughs, Jean Genet, posters of Allen Ginsberg, and a reproduction of a Matisse painting on the wall. However, not all his interests are the icons of acclaimed high Western culture. His admiration for Prince, for instance, represents his hybridity. He thinks that the difficulty of defining Prince's identity makes him worthy of academic study. This is also one of the reasons Shahid chooses to enrol in the college. He wishes to become a student of Deedee whom he met at a beach party in Brighton a year earlier. Deedee is also a Prince fan who accepts no limitations or stereotypical identity definitions. Shahid makes himself known as a Prince fan during Deedee's first lecture after which he is invited to her office, where posters of Prince, Madonna and Oscar Wilde are pinned above her desk with a quotation beneath them: 'All limitations are prisons' (25). When he expresses his reasons for wishing to study Prince, he actually spells out his willingness to defy all limitations and celebrate the freedom of hybridity with no stereotypes: 'He's half black and half white, half man, half woman, half size, feminine but macho too.' (25).

Their talk in Deedee's office marks the beginning of their passionate relationship, introducing one of Kureishi's best love stories. On the following night,

she invites him to her house, and they go out clubbing. Their passionate and long-lasting relationship is juxtaposed with Shahid's relationship with his fanatical friends at college. Shahid's hybridity and ambivalence both physically and ideologically is emphasised by his relationship with Deedee. She always contradicts the absolute definitions suggested by Riaz and his disciples. This is an escape for Shahid. While Deedee represents the culture of the Western world advocating freedom of sexual experience and drug taking as well as enjoyment of Western music and literature, Riaz and his disciples represent the absolutism of religious fanaticism expressing hostility to all Western concepts.

Shahid tries to find a way of accommodating all his interests and experiences by getting involved with both Deedee and Riaz's fanatical movement that aims to cleanse London. This represents his hybridity both ideologically and physically. Because of his Muslim Asian origin, he joins Riaz's vigilante group protecting Bangladeshi houses against racist sieges at night, while, as a result of his ongoing 'Western' desires, he passionately wants to be with Deedee who waits for him on the very night of the vigilante action. His physical hybridity is strikingly symbolised in the present he is given by Chad, one of Riaz's faithful followers, for his participation in the picketing. Chad brings him a silk salwar and dresses him up, putting a cap on Shahid's head as the last piece of clothing (131). Shahid feels embarrassed upon seeing himself in the mirror since he has never worn a salwar before, although it is a part of his ethnicity. His appearance in a salwar contrasts with his appearance in the previous scene where Deedee dresses him as a woman, making him act like a woman (117-118). This time Shahid is required to look and act like a 'real' Asian boy.

Changing costumes carries a ceremonial importance in the novel.[10] Clothing is the allegorical reflection of identity and ideology, as well as a tool for ironic juxtapositions. Shahid borrows Chili's designer clothes, turning himself into a clotheshorse like his brother. However, he is obliged to lend the clothes to Riaz in a comic turn of the plot. As he becomes increasingly involved in Riaz's group, they start controlling him more and expect him to obey the group's hierarchical relations. During his first days under the group's domination, He is asked to take Riaz's clothing to the laundrette (15). The laundrette he unwillingly goes to recalls the one in *My Beautiful Laundrette*. After putting Riaz's clothes in a washing machine, Shahid goes for a walk preoccupied with his complicated involvements. When he returns to the laundrette, he finds that all of Riaz's modest clothing has been stolen. On his return to his flat, Chad, impatiently waiting for him, is appalled by the loss of Riaz's clothes, and opens Shahid's wardrobe searching among Chili's designer outfits to find suitable replacement garments. Shahid's objection to purple making Riaz 'look a bit effeminate' carries no importance for Chad:

> 'What choice do we have? Do you want your brother to go up and down the street naked and catching pneumonia due to your foolish stupidity?'
> 'No,' moaned Shahid, groping to salvage one of Chili's shirts before Chad sacked his closets. 'I wouldn't want that.'
> 'Hey, where d'you get this red Paul Smith shirt?'
> 'Paul Smith. He got a shop in Brighton.'
> 'Riaz'll be thrilled,' Chad said, holding it against his chest. 'He look best in plain colours.'
> 'Oh good.'
> 'Give us a hand, then. You are with us, aren't you?'
> 'Yes,' Shahid replied. 'Yes.' *(pp. 22-23)*

While they try to dress Shahid in the manner they think an Asian boy should look; Riaz is dressed in Western designer outfits, presenting another juxtaposition following Shahid's dressing as woman and an Asian boy respectively. This series of

[10] Kaleta, Ibid., p. 140

ceremonial clothes changing events displays Kureishi's ability to play with identities, to question the stereotypes of racial, religious, and sexual identity definitions.

Kureishi employs conflicting ambivalence as a tool to create hybrid universes. The ideology of the novel is as open to debate as ever. By bringing distinctive personalities with distinctive ideas together, he highlights many disputes over the issues he presents. However, these disputes and questions are not answered or resolved. He never suggests any absolute significances. One of the important debates in the novel occurs between Shahid and Chad over the value of Western literature. This turns into a quarrel regarding the importance of living life as an artist and a literature lover as opposed to living as an activist. Chad is angry about Shahid's literary and musical tastes. He considers them pointless in offering solutions to the problems of today's world and asks why Shahid reads these books and listens to these CDs. Upon Shahid's remarking that he has 'always loved stories', Chad is outraged:

> Chad interrupted: 'How old are you – eight? Aren't there millions of serious things to be done?' Chad pointed towards the window. 'Out there … it's genocide. Rape. Oppression. Murder. The history of this world is – slaughter. And you reading stories like some old grandma.' *(pp. 20-1)*

Annoyed by Chad's comment, Shahid claims that Chad makes it sound 'as though [he was] injecting [himself] with heroin'. Chad's reply to this is even more outrageous: 'Good comparison. Nice one.' Art is a refuge, a drug, like Marx's religion, as Chad sees it. Chad's reaction is not actually directed specifically at what Shahid reads. He reacts against Western civilisation as a whole. Shahid argues that writers try to explain genocide, and novels are the pictures of life. Chad asks him to go out on the street and ask people what they have read recently. He believes the

answer would be the '*Sun*, maybe, or the *Daily Express*', and has a straightforward resolution:

> 'It's true, people in the West, they think they're so civilised an' educated an' superior, and ninety per cent of them read stuff you wouldn't wipe your arse on. But Shahid, I learned something a little while ago.'
> 'What?'
> 'There's more to life than entertaining ourselves!'
> 'Literature is more than entertainment.' *(p. 21)*

This debate is an important example of uncertainty as to whether to celebrate preserved, non-Westernised cultural identity as a tool against the inequality between the Western and the Eastern worlds, or to criticise anti-Westerners for their philistine approach to cultural values. Chad's hostility stems from Western people's ignorance of a world full of atrocities. Shahid, on the other hand, naïvely tries to reassure him that art and literature are universal and that they not only entertain people, but also give a picture of life.

When Deedee reveals Chad's true identity to Shahid half way through the novel, the reason for his hostility to Western civilisation becomes apparent. It is a significant example of the hybridity that makes up post-colonial collage. Chad was an orphan child and used to be called Trevor Buss, a name he was given by the English family who adopted him. However, his stepmother was a racist. Chad became confused by seeing ordinary English people who, as Deedee points out, 'effortlessly belonged.' 'Effortlessly belonging' was at the core of Chad's indignation, because he never felt he belonged anywhere:

> 'When he got to be a teenager he saw he had no roots, no connections with Pakistan, couldn't even speak the language. So he went to Urdu classes. But when he tried asking for the salt in Southall everyone fell about at his accent. In England white people looked at him as if he were going to steal their car or their handbag, particularly as he dressed like a ragamuffin. But in Pakistan they looked at him even more strangely. Why should he be able to fit into a Third World theocracy?' *(p. 107)*

His soul 'got lost in translation', recalling Rushdie's description of *mohajirs'* (migrants) transformation as the translation from one language into another in *Shame*. Chad changed his name to Muhammad Shahabuddin Ali-Shah, insisting on the whole name, even while playing football with the other teenagers. Then, becoming more flexible, he started using the much shorter 'Chad'. This is a strong indication of the effect of the post-colonial condition on Chad's character. In a sense, it is the questioning of British identity. Trying to hold on to his cultural roots, Chad still speaks English, remaining in the framework of Britishness. His situation also reflects the migrant's situation. The migrants always *try* to adapt themselves to their new dwelling place, unlike locals who do not have to exert any effort in order to belong to their locality. In a sense, Chad represents the natural reaction of any living creature to an unnatural environment.

Post-colonial identities are fragmented because they cannot become part of an organic identity. As the British identity embraces people of distinct ethnic origins, that identity fails to coalesce into one substance. Although post-colonial people do not feel part of their new domicile, England where they should possess British identity, they do not feel part of their homelands either. They have become British, an identity they share with people with whom they have little in common. Therefore, they create homogeneous sub-societies where they can label themselves with an identity. In Chad's case, the situation is more complicated. A boy of Pakistani origin, he is brought up by an English couple. He is unfamiliar with his own natural parents. His stepparents have an identity he cannot identify with. As he tries to return to his roots, he finds himself in even more trouble. As a result, he resolves his identity

crisis by joining Riaz's group where he is accepted and recognised as having an identity.

Kureishi moves the story forward and presents more characters including Strapper, an English drug dealer who likes Asians. He calls himself a 'delinquent' who enjoys being a problem for the Western world, which, he thinks, is corrupt. He stands in the novel as another alternative point of view. He likes Asian people who are not Westernised because he thinks resisting global accumulation will speed the breakdown of Western civilisation. Strapper thinks Asian people should remain as they are, instead of being Westernised. For him, it is the wrong choice:

> '... I thought you loved the Asian people.'
> 'Not when they get too fucking Westernised. You all wanna be just like us now. It's the wrong turning'.' *(p. 195)*

In earlier drafts of the novel before publication, Strapper was the main character in *The Black Album*. He preyed on Deedee's sense of responsibility and resembled the Clint Eastwood character in Kureishi's 1991 film *London Kills Me*.[11] He evolved from main character to drug-dealer, leaving the main role to Shahid. It is now Shahid who is the object of Deedee's sense of responsibility for the weak and less privileged. However, Strapper's function is still important in that he is the key character in reconnecting Shahid's life to his brother Chili's, and he also acts as the white representative of an ideological alternative to Western society. He functions in the novel as a champion for the destruction of the system, ideologically supporting anything anti-Western. He helps Riaz's movement by informing them about the fascist thugs' plans.

The representation of hybridity and ambivalence in the novel has a strong political and historical basis. Despite the lack of debate and the ambiguous

[11] Kaleta, op. cit., p. 122

standpoint of the author, the issues raised are not only the post-colonial problem of identity and interracial relations, but also the most important ideological conflicts of 1989, the year in which the novel is set. Debates over *The Satanic Verses* affair are central to the novel's premise. However, Kureishi attempts to write the alternative history of the period through an individual's experience of religion, London's rave scene and pop music. These attempts to write an alternative history also function to increase the author's ambivalence and are best studied under another title.

Historiographic Metafiction or Alternative Histories?

In many major colonial and post-colonial texts, historical allusions to imperial and colonial histories play an important part. However, in *The Black Album*, historiographic metafiction, which is not employed in the same way as in the other novels studied in this thesis, has little to do with imperial history. *The Black Album* deals with *The Satanic Verses* affair. The fact that the novel is set amid events surrounding the notorious *fatwa* reflects Kureishi's own ideological involvement with the debates against censorship. He was among the first intellectuals and celebrities to stand up in support of Rushdie in 1989.[12] Therefore, being a novel set in 1989, the religious furore around *The Satanic Verses* becomes one of its central themes. Although neither Rushdie nor *The Satanic Verses* is directly mentioned in the novel, the preparations for a protest against the author and the book burning in the college yard openly suggest the connection to the events of the time. Moreover, there are hints to ensure the reader is aware of the object of the allusions. When they first meet at the outset of the novel, for instance, Shahid tells Riaz about the variety of books he has read. He names *Midnight's Children*, and asks Riaz whether he has

[12] Kaleta, op. cit., p. 121

read it. This is the only direct reference to Rushdie in the novel. Riaz comments on the novel's accuracy about Bombay, but he thinks 'he has gone too far' this time (9). Riaz's comment refers to *The Satanic Verses* without doubt, although it is not named.

Another reference to *The Satanic Verses* occurs in Shahid's brother Chili's questioning of Gabriel Garcia Márquez, when he tries to prove to Shahid that he, too, can read books:

> 'I go for a challenge,' Chili said now. 'But it's a steep one. *One Hundred Years*. Ten would have been enough. Or even six months. Tell me, how come this writer gives all his characters the same name? Does that other writer, the one who slags the religion, do that kinda thing?' *(p. 43)*

The more apparent and important revelation of the Rushdie Affair as a preoccupation for Riaz's followers is observed in their interrogation of Shahid's attempt to write a novel:

> 'Chad tells me you have some literary airs.'
> 'Yes, I'm working on a novel.'
> 'About?' interjected Chad.
> 'My parents. Growing up. A typical first novel.'
> 'Not an insulting one, like some other people have been writing, I hope?' Tahira said.
> 'He's not that type,' Riaz said. *(p. 68)*

Although Riaz and his disciples repeatedly allude to *The Satanic Verses*, they try to avoid mentioning either the name of the novel, or the writer's name. This implies the importance and sensitivity of *The Satanic Verses* for Shahid's friends throughout *The Black Album*.

However, the references to Rushdie function as no more than mere references. The deepest exploration of the aftermath of the *fatwa* is the depiction of the protest in the college yard launched by Riaz and his disciples. This protest is the notorious book-burning which Kureishi rewrites, but his attempt at writing an alternative history of such an important historical incident as this is simply the

relocation of the protests in which *The Satanic Verses* was burnt from city centres to a small college yard. It is a comical and trivialising recreation of the event, before which a ceremonial search for a broom handle is described. Shahid is ordered by Chad to find a broom handle and a string with which to tie the book to the stick on which they will burn it. Shahid's feelings, a mixture of outrage, angst and fears of being seen by Deedee reflect the overwhelming terror caused by the protest. However, the depiction of the protest only functions to highlight Shahid's contradictory ambivalent feelings between Deedee and on the other hand his friends who expect him to get involved actively in the protest. During the protest, his eyes search for Deedee who is, at the same time, looking for him, and opposing this violence. She finds her ex-husband Mr. Brownlow who, being a Marxist, supports the protesters willingly as he thinks that their protest is against imperialist suppression:

> Fiercely resolute she elbowed through the crowd to Brownlow. She was angry enough to clout him but people were gawping at her, it wouldn't have been a good idea. She berated her ex-husband, who stared at Riaz, shook his head and stuttered even more, his lips making futile spastic gestures. She moved around him, trying to locate something she could appeal to, but the students began laughing at them for having 'a domestic' at such a time. *(p. 223)*

Tom Shone argues that although it is set in 1989, the novel understates the *fatwa* and flattens the recent past 'into a cardboard backdrop'.[13] In fact, Kureishi airs an important argument whether freedom of speech gives a writer the right to offend, or whether it gives people the right to persecute the writer who offends them. Deedee's solitary stand against Riaz in the college yard is responded to by Riaz's opportunistic understanding of democracy:

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[13] Shone, op. cit., p. 20

> 'Pardon me, but is the free speech of an Asian to be muzzled by the authorities?'
>
> 'No, no,' people murmured.
>
> She said, 'But why don't you try reading it first?'
>
> ...
>
> He interrupted: 'Are the white supremacists going to lecture us on democracy this afternoon? Or will they permit us, for once, to practice it?' *(pp. 223-4)*

Riaz reduces the discussion of such a fundamental issue as democracy and freedom of speech into a diatribe against white supremacy when Deedee tries to oppose his protest. However, apart from the quarrel between Deedee and Riaz, the re-enactment of the historical book burning does no more than emphasise Shahid's ambivalence in the novel. It describes Shahid's overwhelming distress and its importance lies in the fact that it becomes a key moment in which Shahid makes a choice between his lover and Riaz's group. He chooses the love and affection of Deedee.

Deedee's stand against Riaz and her call for the police make the Asian students feel betrayed since they believed she supported their rights and fought against racism. Deedee's fictional position and the disappointment it causes recall Rushdie's position in real life. Having acted as a spokesperson for British Asians against discrimination, his authorship of *The Satanic Verses* disappoints many of those self-same Asians. Deedee also supports Asians against racial and ethnic discrimination, but she is against them in this particular instance. Kureishi's characters are sometimes a recreation of historical characters. Syed Shahabuddin, who started the first movement to ban *The Satanic Verses,* becomes Muhammed Shahabuddin in *The Black Album*, a young man who has never read the book but heard about it. The Muslims are satirised for not reading it. The Muslim Community in the novel find an aubergine in North London on which the colour shapes, they think, are very similar to the name of God in Arabic script. Riaz's group immediately

put it on exhibition for the public. 'They're simple types,' says Shahid, while telling Deedee about them:

> 'Unlike you, they can't read the French philosophers. A few years ago they were in their villages, milking cows and keeping chickens. We have to respect the faiths of others - ... *(p. 209)*

Shahid's innocent defence of the Muslims, however, does not hide the reference to Muslims as people who read vegetables and burn books.[14]

Kaleta argues that Kureishi sets the violent conflict between fundamentalism and Western progress in the academic forum. The conflict is 'scrutinised by scholars, teachers, and students, and students of both consumerism and the Muslim tradition.' Kaleta points out that 'Kureishi's opinion of the censorship of the book and his refusal to accept terrorism are clearly given voice in the mindless violence of the riots'. Kureishi 'does not question whether terrorism, dogmatism, or censorship are acceptable'. He uses Islam 'as he has employed Thatcherism: It is neither vindication nor condemnation of either that he seeks'. He uses both of them as 'definite ideological beliefs to fuel his story'.[15]

History and ideological beliefs are not the only material that Kureishi recycles to fuel his story. As in his earlier works, he recycles his previous characters, producing intertextual allusions. Kureishi continues to recycle the characters and themes from his previous work. The racial violence represented by the attacks on Bengali estates recall the pig heads thrown through the window of Anwar's South London grocery in *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and racial attacks and riots in *My Beautiful Laundrette* because, as in all of these previous works, *The Black Album*

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[14] Feroza Jussawalla, 'Rushdie's *Dastan-e-Dilruba*: *The Satanic Verses* as Rushdie's Love Letter to Islam', *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism*, (Spring 1996) vol. 26, No. 1, p. 58

[15] Kaleta, op. cit., pp. 137-138

describes inter-racial mingling that is not devoid of conflicts.[16] Another significant recycled character from an earlier text is Charlie Hero from *The Buddha of Suburbia* who turns up as a famous singer in the fictional world of *The Black Album*. Shahid and Deedee buy bootlegs of the Dead, Sex Pistols and Charlie Hero from the small street stalls in Islington (112). Charlie Hero has had enough time between the two novels to be famous and become the hero of another one of Kureshi's Asian teenage characters.

Kureishi then is an ambivalent writer. Although his recycled characters and intertextual allusions intensify his narration, *The Black Album* significantly lacks any substantial debate about the issues it raises. Kureishi deliberately leaves the arguments open, without suggesting any political or ideological correctness. The novel rejects all absolutisms suggested by any book or any ideology but leaves the matter there. This rejection is again reminiscent of *The Satanic Verses* which also rejects the absolutism taken from the *Qur'an* suggests. Apart from his rejection of absolutisms, Kureishi writes from no particular standpoint. However, the way he depicts his characters and their contradicted situations suggests a perspective for the reader. His satire attacks both the Asians and the English. The unexpected combinations in the novel produce a collage, reflect the hybrid post-colonial identity and make the text vivid with its colourful characters. His difficulty in finding a standpoint is perhaps because of the nature of the post-colonial condition itself. Shahid admits no rules and limitations and he is in search of pleasure, following his desires. He seizes his pleasures until they 'stop being fun' (276).

As seen in *The Buddha of Suburbia* and *The Black Album*, Rushdie's fragmented structure cannot be found in Kureishi's style. Traditional influences such

[16] Sandhu, Ibid., p. 142

as dastan and qissa are not seen in Kureishi's fiction either. Kureishi's style is smoother. Its rhythms are more Western. The collage and unconventional subtleties in his fiction are still significant although they are not due to his cultural inheritance. They are, however, still due to the post-colonial migrant community from which he selects his characters bringing juxtaposing images together. Yet, these juxtaposing images do not impel his style to forge something new in the Western novel genre. Unfortunately, the colourful thematic amalgam in Kureishi's novels does not display a fragmented unity as visually as in Rushdie's fiction, which can be compared to kilims and ebru. All this, however, does not prevent Kureishi's fiction from presenting many stories in one body, thus creating a whole story by the combination of many stories, which is still a characteristic relation to his companion Indo-Anglian authors.

Part Four

The God of Small Things

In her debut novel *The God of Small Things*, Arundhati Roy portrays the tragic destiny of a Syrian Christian family living in Kerala. It is a story of forbidden love, betrayal, death, and the politics of Kerala as the only state with a Marxist Government in India, and the impact of the British Raj in the form of Anglophilia. Like most first novels, it has certain autobiographical connections to the author. Roy is from Kerala and is the daughter of a Syrian Christian mother. *The God of Small Things* is the tale of irreconcilably eclectic characters, who are ready 'to break social laws' and die for desire.[1]

The whole story is told in the third person from the perspective of the twin protagonists of the novel, the nine-year-old twins Esthappen Yako, called Estha for short, and his sister Rahel. They share a single soul and their telepathic communication makes them feel and think the same about everything. They live in their grandmother's large Ayemenem House with their half-blind grandmother Mammachi, their mother Ammu, their grand-aunt Baby Kochamma, their uncle

[1] Brinda Bose, 'In Desire and in Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy's '*The God of Small Things*', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 29:2, (April, 1998) p. 59

Chacko, their cook Kochu Maria, and Velutha Paapen, the untouchable carpenter of the Ayemenem household.

The novel's circular narration, starting from the present day returning to the past and finishing on the point it starts, makes a brief plot summary essential before analysing the text's literary tropes. Ammu is a divorced woman who returned to her father's house after a failed inter-community marriage to an alcoholic Bengali man. She is despised for her inter-community marriage, which worsens her situation in the household, leaving her with no right to give her opinions upon the financial matters of the family's factory from which she will not inherit anything officially. Her children, Estha and Rahel, are regarded as devils, for being the children of an inter-communal marriage.

Chacko, a self-proclaimed Marxist, runs the family factory. He has been educated in Oxford and his marriage to Margaret, who used to work as a waitress in Oxford while he was studying, has failed. After his daughter Sophie Mol's birth, he divorced his wife and has come back home. Unlike Ammu, he is welcomed. His friendship with Margaret improves after the divorce. The main story of the novel is Margaret and Sophie Mol's visit to Kerala, after Margaret's second husband Joe's death in a car crash. After Joe's tragic death, Chacko does not want them to spend Christmas alone. However, their visit becomes a tragic experience for both Margaret and the whole Ayemenem household. Sophie Mol dies and Ammu brings disgrace to the family.

Ammu is severely punished after her secret relationship with Velutha is revealed. Velutha is arrested and beaten to death by the police after Baby Kochamma falsely claims that he has raped Ammu and abducted the twins. Ammu has to move out of her family home to die alone in an abandoned cottage. Although the twins love

Velutha, Baby Kochamma's persuades them that they have to tell the police that Velutha abducted them and caused Sophie's death by drowning in the river, otherwise their mother would be jailed. After all, both Ammu and Velutha were to be destroyed because of their violation of the 'love laws'. This dichotomy is very painful for the children. Their bitter agreement to co-operate with the conspiracy to destroy Velutha is justified by their belief that Velutha has a twin brother. When Estha goes to the custody room at the police station to identify the man who abducted them, Velutha is lying semiconscious on the floor after severe beatings and about to die. He thinks Velutha has escaped to Africa, and the man he is blaming is Velutha's twin brother about whom they know nothing. So, he sees nothing wrong in lying about him to rescue his mother.

Afterwards, Estha and Rahel, who are seen as trouble when together, are separated because, by taking her down the river on a boat they found, they were responsible for Sophie Mol's death. Ironically, it was the boat Ammu used to cross the river to see her lover. The trauma of separation from his sister results in rendering Estha dumb and leaving him in a lifelong silence. Rahel goes to America, where she marries Larry McCaslin, but despite her husband's love for her, the marriage does not work and they are divorced. Years later, like her mother, she returns to the Ayemenem house as a divorced woman, to find that Estha, who has also now returned to Kerala, is still not talking, and everyone thinks he is insane. The gloomy household still lives with the terrible secrets of its past.

The novel is set on one day – the day Rahel returns to the Ayemenem House. The whole story is told through flashbacks to twenty-three years ago when the central events of the novel took place. Through Rahel's memory, the story centres on Sophie's death by drowning, Ammu's love affair and the intolerable punishment of

her lover. Roy constructs her story around the questioning of 'Love Laws' that 'lay down who should be loved, and how. And how much.' (33), and she portrays the social life and values of a society whose relations are determined by caste divisions.

As with most novels in English by Indian authors, *The God of Small Things* is not devoid of imperial and colonial history. The impact of the British rule in India is explicitly depicted through the Anglophile main characters. Roy's style explores the way the English language is used by Indians, particularly the twin protagonists' childish perception of it, which symbolises the reversed colonisation of the English language by idiosyncratic Indian usage. Roy does not consider her book as a novel about post-colonial Indian culture particularly, but states that it is rather a book about human nature, about 'the irreconcilable sides of our nature, our ability to love so deeply yet be so brutal.'[2] However, due to the vernacular influence on her re-formulations of English language and the inevitable historical references, I am persuaded to read it as a post-colonial Indian novel. Through this post-colonial setting which brings many cultural idiosyncrasies into the text, it also proves to be an experimental novel in terms of its unconventional structure and its depiction of cultural clashes in uncompromising situations.

Structure and Style:

Roy opens the book with a quotation from John Berger: 'Never again will a story be told as though it's the only one.' Thus, she does not tell the story in *The God of Small Things* as though it were the only one. The powerful language of the novel, as R. Hema Nair suggests, is inseparably linked to its 'circular and mythic rather than

[2] Taisha Abraham, 'An Interview with Arundhati Roy', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 29:1, (January 1998) p. 89.

the linear structure'. The narrative is backwards, going from the end to the beginning, from the climax to the introduction, 'from the catastrophe to the event, from the mouth of the river of memory to its source'.[3] The circular narration through remembrance is echoed by the twins' backward reading of 'The Adventures of Susie Squirrel', the book bought for them by Mrs Mitten, the missionary friend of Baby Kochamma, who is responsible for their education:

> So when Baby Kochamma's Australian missionary friend, Miss Mitten, gave Estha and Rahel a baby book – *The Adventures of Susie Squirrel* – as a present when she visited Ayemenem, they were deeply offended. Mrs Mitten ... was a Little Disappointed in them when they read it aloud to her, backwards.
>
> *'ehT serutnevdA fo eisuS lerriuqS. enO gnirps gninrom eisuS lerriuqS ekow pu.' (pp. 59-60)*

Roy extends the volume of the day the novel is set in by evoking all the characters' pasts, inter-twining their stories. Both the language and the structure, including the twins' backward reading and the circular narration, echo these flashbacks. The twins appear in the novel as both children and grown-ups. The difference in their perception and understanding indicate whether we are in the present or in the past. The language of the present day narration sounds more grown-up and mature in terms of its sophisticated grammar and vocabulary, while the narration of the past presents a childish perception of adult language by splitting up words or by capitalising the names of certain significant concepts for the twins:

> It was raining when Rahel came back to Ayemenem. Slanting silver ropes slammed into loose earth, ploughing it up like gunfire. *(p. 1, present day)*

> She made them practise an English car song for the way back. They had to form the words properly, and be particularly careful about their pronunciation. Prer *NUN* sea ayshun. *(p. 36, past)*

[3] R. Hema Nair, ' "Remembrance of Things Past": A Reading of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*' *CIEFL Bulletin*, (New Series) Vol. 9, No. 2, (December 1998) pp. 48-50

The way the children form the word 'pronunciation' shows how they devise their own way of overcoming the difficulty of pronouncing a word they have never heard before. In order to pronounce the word properly, they have to put together different words and syllables that are articulated to sound the same as the new word entering their vocabulary: 'Prer *NUN* sea ayshun'. Sound and syllable, thus, become prioritised, while meaning becomes secondary.

The central story is told through Rahel's memory, going back twenty years, when their mother's love affair and their distant cousin Sophie Mol's death took place during Margaret and Sophie's visit to Kerala. The story of their visit is intertwined with the stories of the twins' birth and Ammu's divorce which forced her to come back to her father's house; the grand-aunt's disappointment in love; the grandmother's troubled marriage to their grandfather and their uncle Chacko's years in Oxford. There are, therefore, many stories to be read in *The God of Small Things*, recalling the multiple stories of *Midnight's Children*.

Even Rahel's flashback, however, does not have the chronological order of the events that caused the downfall of the family. The novel's overall circular structure is preserved by and reflected in Rahel's memory. She first recalls Sophie's funeral, which took place two weeks after their arrival in India. She then goes back to the days before Sophie Mol came into their lives. Despite a third person narrator, the perspective is unmistakably that of the twins. Yet, there are almost no suggestions for a plural third person, since they share the same soul and same thoughts, and they think of themselves as a singular self:

> ... Esthappen and Rahel thought of themselves together as Me, and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities. *(p. 2)*

Tirthankar Chanda states that what should be appreciated in *The God of Small Things* is not only what is said, but also, as in all effective writing, how it is said. What gives the book its plenitude is 'the dialectical interplay between the diegesis (past) and the narration (present)'.[4] The originality of the way Roy uses the English language originates from surprisingly natural reasons rather than an authorial self-consciousness in creating original sentences. She changed 'only about two pages' in *The God of Small Things*. She writes 'the way [she] think[s]',[5] confirming partly the impact of the idiosyncratic use of the English language on her word play. Although she rejects that she has been influenced by Rushdie,[6] some of her stylistic idiosyncrasies such as capitalising significant words or running together certain words are rather similar to Rushdie's style. Some concepts leaving significant marks in the children's memory are capitalised or typed together to foreground their effects on a child's mind and imagination:

> She noticed that Sophie Mol was awake for her funeral. She showed Rahel Two Things.
> Thing One was ... *(p. 5)*

> Thing Two that Sophie Mol showed Rahel was the bat baby ... The singing stopped for a 'Whatisit? Whathappened?' and for a furrywhirring and a sariflapping. *(p. 6)*

Roy boldly reproduces the English language to accommodate the twins' perception of it. At the funeral of Sophie Mol for instance, the hymn being sung is echoed in their mind humorously to imitate the echoing sound in the church and to emphasise the children's understanding of death. Funerals and hymns become the killers of people:

> *We entrust into thy hands, most merciful Father,*

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[4] Tirthankar Chanda, 'Sexual/Textual Strategies in *The God of Small Things*', *Commonwealth 20-1*, p. 38.
[5] Reena Jana, 'Winds, Rivers & Rain', *The Salon Interview/Arundhati Roy*, http://www.salon.com/sept97/00roy2, (15/11/2000)
[6] Jana, Ibid.

The soul of this our child departed,
And we commit her body to the ground,
Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

Inside the earth Sophie Mol screamed, and shredded satin with her teeth. But you can't hear screams through earth and stone.

Sophie Mol died because she couldn't breathe.

Her funeral killed her. *Dus to dus to dus to dus to dus. (p. 7)*

The poetic beauty and rhythm of the novel are attributed to her training as an architect.[7] Aijaz Ahmad states that Roy is 'the first Indian writer in English where a marvellous stylistic resource becomes available for provincial, vernacular culture without any effect of exoticism or estrangement, and without the reading as translation.'[8] Roy takes the English language away from its roots and creates her own formulation of usage through the twins' perception. Roy surely takes advantage of this mixture of languages spoken by the Indians, which Rushdie calls *Hug-me* (*GBHF*, 7).

Roy is also compared to William Faulkner as well as Rushdie, in terms of her storytelling technique. John Updike finds her technique 'Faulkner-like' and 'torturous'.[9] However, Roy's stylistic experiments contribute to the story rather than making it more difficult to read. They help us understand the psychology of the characters, and perceive events from their perspective. For instance, the way the words and sentences are written represents how the twins hear language and how they would write it. The childish language that eclipses the 'adult' language not only indicates that the story is told from the twins' perspective, but also indicates whether we are in the present or the past, as all the passages that narrate the past are underwritten in the childish formulation:

Margaret Kochamma told [Sophie Mol] to Stoppit.

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[7] Abraham, Ibid., p. 90
[8] Aijaz Ahmad, 'Reading Arundhati Roy Politically.' *Frontline* (8 Aug, 1997) p. 108.
[9] John Updike, 'Mother Tongues: Subduing the Language of the Coloniser.' *The New Yorker*, (23 June 1997) p. 156.

So she Stoppited. *(p. 141)*

Roy deviates from the traditional rules of grammar, using fragments and capitals frequently. Her explanation of the impulse behind her linguistic liberties is that she sees language as the skin of her thoughts.[10] When this skin is lifted, it is sensed that reformulating the English language through the children's mind is the conquering and redefinition of the English language, and, by implication, a counter colonisation of British culture. Estha and Rahel's perception of the English language reflects the cultural gaps between the culture they are brought up in and the culture of the English language they are taught. When they meet Margaret and Sophie at the airport, the twins hear the English language spoken in the native English accent for the first time, apart from their Uncle Chacko's mock Oxford drawl, and it becomes more important how the words sound than what they mean. Roy emphasises the way they hear the words by italicising their perception, and hence uses these forms throughout the novel:

'Hello, all,' she said. 'I feel I've known you for years.'
Hello wall. (p. 143)

This displays a child's logic as to how words are formed. They believe that language is created by putting sounds together, so it does not really matter which words are put together as long as they sound what the twins want to mean. 'Exactly' becomes 'eggzackly' (324), for instance. 'Later' becomes 'Lay. Ter.' and 'An owl' is spelled as 'a nowl'. Roy calls this 'designing the words'. She breaks them apart and then fuses them together.[11] She likes repetition, which provides the poetic rhythm of the novel. These repetitions are mostly in the form of repeating a name or a description the twins hear from adults. When the family goes to the cinema in Cochin, for

[10] Abraham, op. cit., p. 91
[11] Jana, op. cit.

instance, before entering the auditorium, Rahel goes to the ladies room, 'HERS', with her mother and grandaunt, leaving Estha who goes to the male toilets, labelled 'HIS', by himself (94). Afterwards, he is repeatedly referred to as 'Estha Alone' when the narrator refers to their visit to the cinema. This phrase is also repeated throughout the novel to refer to Estha's vulnerability and withdrawn nature. As well as this, because of the Elvis puff on his hair, Estha is called 'Elvis the Pelvis' when his hair is referred to. Whenever they are told how they should treat Sophie Mol, they are both referred to as Ambassador Estha and Rahel since they are supposed to act as the ambassadors of India for their cousin. The repetitions are often the mockery of the tone of language used by adults, indicating the slow acquisition of language by children:

> 'No?' Ammu said.
> 'No,' Estha said.
> *No? No. (emphasis added, p. 108)*

Due to the circular structure, some of the repetitions occur before the original creation of the repeated phrase is narrated. Although they are to be covered later in the novel, some of these repeated phrases have an impact at the outset of the novel, pulling the reader into a mystical fictional universe. Paul Brians calls this an 'insistent foreshadowing' that occurs in *Midnight's Children.*[12] This foreshadowing not only points out the circular narrative but also makes the novel more a part of the twins' understanding, explaining and naming everything. The grown-up Rahel names the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man in the cinema in the opening of the novel: 'She remembers, for instance (though she hadn't been there), what the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man did to Estha in Abilash Talkies.' (2).

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[12] Paul Brians, 'Arundhati Roy: *The God of Small Things* Study Guide' http://www.wsu.edu/~brians/anglophone/roy (15/11/2000)

However, the story of what Orangedrink Lemondrink Man did to Estha comes almost half way through the novel. The narration takes multiple verbal liberties in describing the most disturbing event that leaves a scar in the memory of the twins and marks the ending of Estha's happy childhood. The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man sells soft drinks in the foyer of Abilash Talkies, the cinema in Cochin where they go to see *The Sound of Music* (1965). When Estha is sent out to the foyer for singing along with the theme song of the film, he looks at the 'EXIT' signs over the doors, and as he exits, the verb is spelled with capital letters:

> He got up to go. Past angry Ammu. Past Rahel concentrating through her knees. Past Baby Kochamma. Past the Audience that had to move its legs again. Thiswayandthat. The red sign over the door said EXIT in a red light. Estha EXITed. *(p. 101)*

The audience becomes a single big creature that moves *its* legs 'thiswayandthat' to give way to Estha while he walks out of the auditorium. When he reaches the foyer he continues to sing and the soft drink-selling man notices him. He blames Estha for disturbing him in his resting time, and suggests that Estha have a drink if he wants to be forgiven. When Estha says he has no pocket money to buy drinks, the salesman's perception of the English language represents his abusive approach to both the colonial language and the economically privileged children who are taught to speak it:

> '*Porketmunny?*' the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man said with his teeth still watching. 'First English songs, and now *Porketmunny!* Where d'you live? On the moon?' *(p. 102)*

Then he gives him a free bottle of soft drink behind the counter where he abuses him sexually, whispering that it had to be secret since drinks were not allowed before the interval. Estha likens his big yellowish teeth to dirty piano keys. He has to hold the

man's penis with one hand while he holds his drink with his other hand. The 'piano keys' watches every movement he makes:

> The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man's hand closed over Estha's. His thumbnail was long like a woman's. He moved Estha's hand up and down. First slowly. Then fastly.
> The lemondrink was cold and sweet. The penis was hot and hard.
> The piano keys were watching. *(p. 103)*

The short but disturbing description of this abuse is recalled through the flow of the narrative by the repetition of the phrase 'Orangedrink Lemondrink Man'. In the same way, the bitter memory of this event is always invoked by the repeated phrase of 'piano keys' and particularly 'egg white' to refer to semen, leaving Estha with inwardness and vulnerability. Although Rahel was not present, she knew through their telepathic communication that something bad happened to Estha. Therefore, the images of piano keys and egg white became an important memory for her, too.

Another foreshadowing repetition is their mother's frequently used words 'jolly well behave', which reveal, towards the conclusion of the book, a moving as well as humorous explanation for the creation of words in Estha's logic:

> For Never they just took the O and T out of Not Ever.
> *They?*
> The Government.
> Where people were sent to Jolly Well Behave. *(p. 325)*

This happens after they are interviewed as witnesses at the police station, after they see what the police mean and what the consequences of being responsible for someone's death are. Estha's thoughts are resentful concerning what he, his sister and their mother have been through. He not only resents the government for making them 'jolly well behave' by separating them, but also for creating an inconceivable language. Roy's ironic playful undertone is humorously revealed in such examples where the words become alienated in the children's mind. The outside world is full

of new and alien culture for children and everyday they have to acquire new words imposed by an imperial history:

> When he died, Pappachi left them trunks full of expensive suits and a chocolate tin full of cuff-links that Chacko distributed among the taxi drivers in Kottayam. ... When the twins asked what cuff-links were for – 'To link cuffs together,' Ammu told them – they were thrilled by this morsel of logic in what had so far seemed an illogical language. *Cuff+link = Cuff-link. (p. 51, original emphasis)*

With its circular narrative, wordplay, vernacular words within the English text and the reformulation of the traditional rules of grammar, Roy's style is not observed in classical narratives. *The God of Small Things* is written in the English language mixed with vernacular words and idiosyncratic reformulation of grammar, which changes the conventional narration in English writing, although it is filled with traditional themes such as religious differences, caste relations, love, betrayal, and politics. With Margaret and Sophie Mol, Roy introduces English identity into her post-colonial setting alongside these traditional concepts, which are already manipulated by imperialist intervention. In a sense, despite the significant ambivalence in the main characters' Anglophilia, there are anti-imperialist elements in the depiction of the twins' rebellion against the English language. However, because of the implicit Anglophilia, which Chacko explicitly rejects, the text is more ambivalent than anti-imperialist. For its detailed description of the inevitable ambivalence and hybridity of the main characters, this novel is Roy's depiction of the post-colonial condition of Kerala.

The narrative is also enriched by magical realism, as will be seen in the following section. The nature of the magical realist techniques, as in the novels of Rushdie, is again strongly reminiscent of Eastern literary forms.

Magical Realism:

The use of magical realism, along with its circular narrative, wordplays and the linguistic collage produced by vernacular language within the English text, takes *The God of Small Things* to the farther margins of the novel genre. It has the atmosphere and characteristics of a timeless novel as in fairy tales, although there are numerous references to the sixties where the central story is set. Despite its flashbacks between the present day adult twins and the twins as children in the past, a sense of timelessness dominates the text. Rahel's plastic watch with the time painted on it symbolises such timelessness in the novel. The watch always shows 'ten to two'. The painted time on a plastic watch is also a reference to the circular structure of the story. The novel has no starting or finishing point. Its final word is 'tomorrow', a reference to the future at the end of the novel, as though indicating not an end, but the beginning of another circle. Years later, when she returns to Kerala, Rahel knows that her watch is buried somewhere across the river where she lost it still showing 'ten to two'.

Although there are no suggestions in the text that it is not a realistic novel, Estha and Rahel, the twin protagonists, share a single soul enabling them to communicate telepathically. In a logically realistic environment, their telepathic communication causes a sudden shift to a magical universe in most parts of the novel. The first significant instance of this comes at the outset of the novel. While introducing the main characters of the novel by depicting their village and the similarity of the twins as in classical realist fiction, Roy suddenly makes grown-up Rahel remember what appears to be unrealistic in the narrative: 'Now, these years later, Rahel has a memory of waking up one night giggling at Estha's funny dream.' (2).

At the very beginning of the novel, among the descriptions of family members and landscape, Rahel's memory prepares us for a magical experience, as well as a realistic family saga in the novel. A few pages into the novel, we read about Sophie Mol's funeral. The initially realistic-looking narrative now not only shifts into a non-linear structure, but also into a chilling supernatural atmosphere. Sophie Mol looks so alive in the coffin that the twins do not believe she is dead. Rahel even notices that she is showing them something and she sees, following the direction that the open eyes of the dead Sophie indicate, a baby bat in the dome of the church (5).

The first significant example of the telepathic communication of the twins occurs on their journey to Cochin to meet Margaret and Sophie. Rahel and Estha sit in the back seat of the car. Baby Kochamma sits between them preventing them from seeing each other. When Chacko has to stop the car at a rail crossing, they are stuck in the middle of a communist march. The car is suddenly surrounded by thousands of people. Although Chacko, being a self-proclaimed Marxist, tries not to appear to be scared, he tells everyone to close up the car windows in order not to provoke the marchers. While they are sitting and perspiring in the extremely hot car with windows closed, Rahel sees her beloved Velutha, their untouchable carpenter, carrying a red flag among the marchers. She suddenly opens her window and shouts with joy to Velutha who does not hear her. No one believes that she has seen him. They think she is totally mistaken. A chill is felt in the car. The fact is they do not want to believe that their Velutha can be a communist. In trying to persuade them that she has really seen Velutha, Rahel needs help from Estha, whom she cannot see. This is when we first witness their supernatural powers:

> 'Are you sure it was him?' Chacko asked Rahel.
> 'Who?' Rahel said, suddenly cautious.
> 'Are you sure it was Velutha?'

> 'Hmmm...?' Rahel said, playing for a time, *trying to decipher Estha's frantic thought signals. (p. 81, my italics)*

Estha, then, solves the dilemma of disbelief between his sister and the adults by speaking 'brightly':

> 'I saw Velutha at home before we left,' Estha said brightly. 'So how could it be him?' *(p. 81)*

Apart from being the first significant evidence of magical realism in the novel, this incident is a vital key point in the plot. When they return to Kerala, Rahel asks Velutha whether it was really him in the march or not, because she is sure he heard her call as he stopped and listened. However, Velutha says it was not him but could have been his twin brother. This surprises the children who have never heard about his twin brother before. It is significant that whether or not he has a twin brother or not or whether it was really him in the march is never revealed in the book. Velutha's reluctance to admit his participation in the march becomes the main justification for Estha's identifying him at the police station as the man who abducted them. He thinks the man dying in the custody room is Velutha's mysterious brother whom Velutha said was in the march. Estha and Rahel always believe their beloved Velutha has escaped to Africa.

At the cinema in Cochin, Estha's thought signals become more frantic. After this the twins acquire a more intense form of telepathy. After the abuse, as the whole family leave the cinema, they are all out in the foyer, and the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man is thrilled to see they also have a little girl with them. The strongest telepathy between Estha and Rahel occurs at the very moment the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man offers Rahel some sweets too:

> 'You never told me you had a little [girl] too.' And holding out another sweet 'Here, Mol – for you.'
>
> 'Take mine!' Estha said quickly, not wanting Rahel to go near the man.

> But Rahel had already started towards him. As she approached him, he smiled at her and something about that portable piano smile, something about the steady gaze in which he held her, made her shrink from him. It was the most hideous thing she had ever seen. She spun around to look at Estha.
>
> She backed away from the hairy man. *(p. 111)*

This incident explains the foreshadowing at the beginning of the novel when Rahel first remembers about the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, thinking she knew what happened 'though she hadn't been there' (2). At the hotel that night, Rahel is supposed to sleep in Chacko's room, while Estha goes to Ammu and Baby Kochamma's room. However, Rahel still feels the sadness of whatever happened to Estha in Abilash Talkies and cannot sleep. Estha cannot sleep in his room either. After vomiting 'a clear, bitter, lemony, sparkling, fizzy liquid', he puts his shoes on, and goes out of the room to stand 'quietly outside Rahel's door':

> Rahel stood on a chair and unlatched the door for him.
>
> Chacko didn't bother to wonder how she could possibly have known that Estha was at the door. He was used to their sometimes strangeness. *(p. 119)*

The final magical realist technique to be mentioned in this section is an explicit remark concerning the Eastern form of magic in *The God of Small Things*. In a way the novel names its inheritance:

> There were more red steps to climb. The same red carpet from the cinema hall was following them around. *Magic flying carpet. (p. 114, my italics)*

Roy appears to be acknowledging the source of her inspiration for use of the magical realism in her text. The magic here is not in a Western form, but an Eastern one. It has connotations of the magic used in Eastern oral literature, a widely known example of which is *Arabian Nights*. However, this traditional device still brings post-colonial condition into Roy's fiction as she writes in a Western genre in English, also forcing the major classical elements in that genre, such as realism and linear narrative to change into other forms.

Intertextuality:

The God of Small Things presents substantial intertextual allusions major colonial and post-colonial texts by Rushdie, Joseph Conrad and E. M. Forster. This section aims to illuminate the novel's intertextual allusions in order to evaluate its inevitable post-colonial condition in its re-use of the imperial and post-imperial material. Despite her rejection of such comparisons, her style is characteristically Rushdiesque, which is inevitable because he is 'pervasive among South Asian writers.'[13]

There are significant thematic allusions apart from the stylistic ones. Chacko's pickle factory 'Paradise Pickles & Preserves' pervading the novel's plot is strongly reminiscent of the pickle factory also central to *Midnight's Children*. The pickle jars in *Midnight's Children* symbolise the preservation of the content of each chapter. Each of them contains a different fruit, which, after preserving, changes into another shape and taste, although it remains basically the same fruit. This process of preserving alludes to the preservation of the novel's material in different chapters in different forms and tastes, each preserving its natural substance, evoking Rushdie's stance between reality and fantasy. The pickling process also emphasises the magical timelessness of the novel, as pickling protects the substance from time. In *The God of Small Things*, Chacko's pickle factory is another attempt at timelessness, but it is not a successful one. The pickles produced in this factory are spoiled, leaking oil out of their jars, alluding to the downfall of the family, and the decaying of people and their relationships through time. The tasteless pickles do not sell and symbolise the family's tragic fate. While the pickle factory provides salvation for Saleem in

[13] Brians, Ibid.

Midnight's Children, 'Paradise Pickles & Preserves' bankrupts and becomes the signpost of Chacko's failure. Brians states that this intertextual allusion should not necessarily be regarded as the influence of Rushdie, or as a recycled intertextual theme. Roy need not necessarily have taken the idea of featuring a pickle factory from Rushdie. Pickling is a very common business in India and Roy's uncle George Isaac, who is a model for Chacko, runs a pickle factory in real life.[14]

The telepathic communication of Estha and Rahel is a smaller example of the mass telepathic communication between one thousand and one children in *Midnight's Children*. However, the telepathy among Rushdie's 'midnight's children' is so developed that they can hold a conference telepathically, in order to create an alternative to the national parliament. Estha and Rahel feel and think the same things simultaneously, which echoes the real life belief that the twins can access each other's feelings. Yet, theirs is a communication that surprises even the major characters in the novel, who find them 'a little strange'. The communication of one thousand and one children in Rushdie's text is insistently political and insistently magical, suggesting the fantastic atmosphere of the novel. They also symbolise the new independent nation, being the 'midnight's children' born at the hour when Indian independence was declared. On the other hand, the telepathic communication between the twins in *The God of Small Things*, despite its sense of magical realism, does not function as a fantastic element in the novel, but as an illustration of the strangeness of the twins. Its significance, however, is in its function to symbolise Indian hybridity in their joint identity. They are the children of an Anglophile family, but they resist the colonisation of the English language, rejecting its grammatical authority. In a secret telepathic agreement between them, they read everything

[14] Brians, op. Cit.

backwards, as if to undermine the establishment of the language and to reverse the colonisation.

The twins' telepathy is also reminiscent of the telepathic messages Ormus Cama receives from his stillborn twin brother in Rushdie's *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Ormus's brother dies at birth, while Ormus survives. When Ormus becomes a musician, he starts receiving his brother's messages from the 'other side' full of melodies and lyrics inspiring him for new songs.

Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is recalled frequently with reference to Kerala, because of the river running between the Ayemenem House and a mysterious, large, old abandoned house the twins call 'the history house'. The connotations of the history house to imperial history with the river running in front of it evoke Conrad's novel. When the grown-up Rahel looks across the river to where the land is now owned by a hotel chain that has built a luxurious five-star hotel with high walls, she thinks of Conrad's Kurtz. The abandoned house used to be owned by a communist who was known as Kerala's Mao Tse-tung. Ironically it now houses luxurious dining rooms for tourists. The land is criss-crossed with artificial canals and bridges and small boats carry tourists through the tropical plants. This scene inevitably recalls the River Thames yawl mooring in *Heart of Darkness* with Marlow telling his jungle stories and paralleling the Thames with the unnamed river in Africa. Conrad's satire upon Europeans' view of Africa as the heart of darkness combines with Roy's evocation of Kurtz surveying a house once owned by a communist to suggest a multiple satire upon the conflict of civilisations, primitivism and communism. Roy satirises with great irony the commercial use of a house where communism was once discussed, and imagines Marx and Kurtz, symbolic figures of colonialism and

politics, as the workers in the hotel. They become the symbols of historical and philosophical figures defeated by the power of capitalism:

> So there it was then, the History and Literature enlisted by commerce. Kurtz and Karl Marx joining palms to greet rich guests as they stepped off the boat. *(p. 126)*

'Joining palms,' the Hindu greeting, should be noted here as another reference to Rushdie's use of this form of greeting when 'clock hands joined palms' as Saleem was born.

The image of 'holes' is another significant intertextual influence in *The God of Small Things*. Margaret's grief over her second husband's death in a car crash is repeatedly described as a 'Joe-shaped whole in the universe' (118). A similar metaphoric usage of 'holes' and 'shapes' is applied to describe other shapes and themes in the novel. For instance, when Baby Kochamma's missionary friend Miss Mitten dies, there remains a 'Miss Mitten-shaped stain by the truck that killed her' in the imagination of the children (82). Vellya Paapen, Velutha's father, tells them that there is nothing superstitious about black cats. He says there are 'only black cat-shaped holes in the Universe' (82). As Rahel watches the asphalt in the sun, while they wait at a rail crossing on the road to Cochin, the stains on the asphalt road are full of various images:

> There were so many stains on the road.
> Squashed Miss Mitten-shaped stains in the Universe.
> Squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe.
> Squashed crows that had tried to eat the squashed frog-shaped stains in the Universe. *(p. 82)*

These depictions of the holes and the stains undoubtedly recall Rushdie's holes in *Midnight's Children*, and more significantly a scene in *Shame* where Sufiya Zinobia escapes through a bricked up window leaving, like a cartoon character, a 'Sufiya-shaped hole' on the wall (242).

The God of Small Things also connotes, though less significantly, Joyce's *Ulysses*, another story entirely set on one day. More importantly, Roy is frequently compared to William Faulkner due to her complex style. She, too, uses the perspectives of different characters in different settings, as does Faulkner. *The God of Small Things* resembles in most respects *The Sound and the Fury*, which is also the story of the breakdown of a family. Its first section is also narrated from the perspective of the childish mind of a thirty-three year-old man.

Adela in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, like Margaret in *The God of Small Things*, travels to India for the first time to face both the mutual prejudices both cultures have for each other, and the most significant events of her life in the 'heart of darkness'. Margaret and Adela share a common fate, witnessing the conflict of cross-cultural relationships. Aziz symbolises a passage or gateway through which Fielding and Mrs Moore can see and understand more of India. His role foreshadows the role played by Estha and Rahel in *The God of Small Things*. Estha and Rahel are given the role of representing India to their cousin Sophie Mol from London. They are also bilingual, enabling them to guide their guest in India. They act as the interpreters between the host culture and the guest culture, providing a gateway to India for Sophie. They take her out for expeditions, as Aziz takes Adela and Mrs Moore. The failure and sad result of one of their expeditions is strongly reminiscent of the Marabar Caves incident. Sophie dies by drowning on a trip down river in a boat.

An expedition hosted by an Indian, results in failure, leaving the Indian character accused of the English character's suffering. Sophie Mol's mother Margaret of 1960s represents both Mrs Moore and Adela of 1910s. She visits India after her second husband's death in order to relieve her grief. However, her trip ends

in greater sadness. Her 'passage to India', too, starts merrily, but ends sorrowfully, leaving her disenchanted with India, while Mrs Moore dies subsequent to her departure from India and Adela leaves resentfully, maintaining a lifelong silence, keeping the secret of her expedition to herself.

Historiography:

As in most post-colonial Indo-Anglian novels in English, history has an important role in Roy's text. Roy uses it as the background to her story, to pull her readers into the environment and atmosphere created by that particular history. She inscribes 'the dialectic of Self and the Other, subaltern authority into the historical text revealing in the process the patriarchal biases of [history]' which 'serves here both as the context of fiction' and 'as a thematic sub-text of the novel'.[15] On the other hand, Rushdie and Kureishi rewrite history to produce their stories from that particular version. Roy employs direct allusions to many colonial invasions that occurred in India, but not to rewrite history or use it as the raw material of her story. The particular history she directly alludes to is not manipulated to employ 'historiographic metafiction' in order to produce alternative histories in the postmodernist sense. History is, rather, employed to display how the past manipulates and produces hybrid and alternative cultures in the post-colonial India. At the end of the first chapter, we are plunged into historical detail in order to understand how 'it actually began':

> Still, to say that it all began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem is only one way of looking at it.
>
> Equally, it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendency, before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's

[15] Chanda, p. 41

> conquest of Calicut. Before three purple-robed Syrian Bishops murdered by the Portuguese were found floating in the sea, with coiled sea serpents riding on their chests and oysters knotted in their tangled beards. It could be argued that it began long before Christianity arrived in a boat and seeped into Kerala like tea from a teabag. *(p. 33)*

Sophie Mol's arrival is regarded as starting the events that lead to the family's breakdown as the centre of the story. However, the narration then goes back to history, in reverse order, to show what actually brought Sophie Mol to India. This reverse order going back to the times when the social laws of Syrian Christianity were established shows how ancient and rigid certain laws are, and how the caste system still remains intact. It also shows how the chain of invasions by different nations began, from the arrival of Christianity to the establishment of the British colony in the late 18th century. Roy uses history as the container of determinants and causes preparing the background to her story. Unlike Rushdie and Kureishi, she does not rewrite history, which, for her, is itself the creator and the manipulator of the stories. The history briefly documented in the above quotation is shown as having manipulated the lives of the characters. It intervenes in the fate of a people whose line of history is changed through its intervention:

> Chacko told the twins that though he hated to admit it, they were all Anglophiles. They were a *family* of Anglophiles. Pointed in the wrong direction, trapped outside their own history, and unable to retrace their steps because their footprints had been swept away. He explained to them that history was like an old house at night. With all the lamps lit. And ancestors whispering inside. *(p. 52)*

The characters lack a knowledge and sense of their own history due to imperialist interventions. Chacko points out that they have been invaded in a war, and made to 'adore' their conquerors and 'despise' themselves. Their sense of belonging is lost (53). They do not belong to the land of their conquerors, while they do not feel at one with their own homeland because of their admiration for the imposed culture. Their dreams are never big enough, and their lives are never important enough (53).

History changes lives, it is the reason for the characters' hybridity, but it is not material for alternative histories. Chanda regards Chacko's marriage as another historical allusion in the novel. If Chacko is replaced 'by writers from the erstwhile British Empire and Margaret by the English language', then their union becomes 'a magnificent metaphor for the decolonisation of language, divested of its Eurocentric authority.[16]

The use of and numerous allusions to history is more of a post-colonial element rather than a postmodernist one in *The God of Small Things*, because it helps mostly to illuminate the characters' hybridity and Anglophilia, and it provokes anti-imperialism. It is more useful to examine hybridity and Anglophilia as post-colonial elements in the light of the history embodied in the novel.

Hybridity and Anglophilia:

The impact of British Imperialism is reflected in Roy's specific focus on the twins' mis- or partial acquisition of language and their idiosyncratic, parodic and hybrid usage of English, indicating their hybridity. Ammu reads to the twins from Kipling's *Jungle Book* (59), teaching them about their own land from the perspective of an English author. As they are a 'family of Anglophiles,' Baby Kochamma forcibly makes the children speak in English, because she does not want the whole family to be mortified by their use of the local language Malayalam in front of Margaret and Sophie Mol. Her privileging the English language thus highlights the whole family's admiration of English culture. She severely monitors the children, and when she hears them speak their native tongue, she urges them to stop talking Malayalam and speak English:

[16] Chanda, p. 38

> That whole week Baby Kochamma eavesdropped relentlessly on the twins' private conversations, and whenever she caught them speaking in Malayalam, she levied a small fine which was deducted at source. From their pocket money. *(p. 36)*

Apart from the monetary fine, they have to write the expression 'I will always speak English' a hundred times – a typically archaic and traditional British pedagogic punishment. The children's hybrid use of language dominates the text, representing the impact of Anglophilia.

Roy also focuses on other aspects of admiration for the English as a result of cultural imperialism. When Ammu's husband's alcoholism worsens, his boss calls him to make a deal. If he wants to remain employed, he is required to agree to go away for treatment, leaving his 'extremely attractive' wife with his boss to be 'looked after' (42). On hearing that her husband has accepted this deal, Ammu divorces him and returns to her father's house. However, Pappachi, her father, does not find this story credible, 'not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, *any* Englishman, would covet another man's wife.' (42).

Hybridity and Anglophilia are not only represented in the children's idiosyncratic use of the English language and their comic mimicry of its pronunciation, but also in the local perception of Englishness. The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man's perception of both the language and culture of English is parodic. He is full of admiration for the concept of English and England, but hybridises the language with his mispronunciations such as '*Porketmunny?*' (102):

> 'We must go,' she said. 'Mustn't risk a fever. Their cousin is coming tomorrow,' she explained to Uncle. And then, added casually, 'From London.'
>
> 'From London?' A new respect gleamed in Uncle's eyes. For a family with London connections. *(pp. 109-110)*

The family's trip to a cinema to see Robert Wise's 1965 film *The Sound of Music* for the third time provokes a questioning of 'the universality of Western culture'[17] as to whether they are seeing it because they are a family of Anglophiles or because the film is a part of the universal culture:

> Chacko said that going to see *The Sound of Music* was an extended exercise in Anglophilia.
>
> Ammu said, 'Oh come on, the whole world goes to see *The Sound of Music*. It's a World Hit.' *(p. 55)*

Roy describes a post-colonial society, rather than exploring or rediscovering it. Although there are examples of this sense of rediscovery and redefinition of the colonised society through English characters such as Margaret in the novel, the text immediately reacts to those, since it is written from the native perspective. Roy's characters explicitly express their feelings and thoughts about imperialist and colonialist issues, but at the same time, their Anglophilia is equally explicit, which reflects a characteristic post-colonial ambivalence.

Dramatically, Roy shows that the assimilation of Indian society to English culture results in the subduing of Englishness by the Indians themselves. As Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams argue, the English language is exported as a 'homogenous language', and it is 'imposed as an alien but official language'. However, it has become 'a diverse and heterogeneous range of hybrid languages, or contact languages.'[18] In *The God of Small Things*, despite the foregrounded Anglophilia, there is a resistance against the use of this imposed language in the idiosyncrasy of the English spoken by the protagonists. This resistance inevitably imposes an anti-imperialist tone into the novel, foregrounded in the children's speech. Their idiosyncratic use of the imposed language and their amusing

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[17] Chanda, p. 42

[18] P. Childs & P. R. J. Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, (London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1997) p. 193

relationship with Miss Mitten, for instance, are the strongest representations of the anti-imperialist politics of the novel. They show her how it is possible to read both *Malayalam* and *Madam I'm Adam* backwards as well as forwards (60). When Miss Mitten, not amused by their backward reading, reveals that she does not know what Malayalam means, they tell her that it is the native language in Kerala. The twins' reaction to her preconceived information about Kerala is satirical:

> She said she had been under the impression that it was called Keralese. Estha, who had by then taken an active dislike to Miss Mitten, told her that as far as he was concerned it was a Highly Stupid Impression. *(p. 60)*

Estha's criticism of her misinformation is in a characteristically imperial manner. The way he says 'Highly' to intensify the adjective is in the tone of a native speaker's natural accent. Miss Mitten, as the imperial representative, becomes the one to be taught and educated. Her death a few months after her encounter with the twins gives them pleasure because she is killed by a milk van and 'there was a hidden justice in the fact that the milk van had been *reversing*.' (60, original emphasis). The annihilation of Miss Mitten by Roy and the manner of her death politicise the incident satirically. Roy's criticism of her ignorance of the place where she resides as a missionary underlines the Western perceptions of the Third World.

Roy conceptualises the Western approach to alien culture. Her characters accuse their colonisers of being ignorant of their culture. They are annoyed by concepts of exploration, rediscovery and conquering. During Margaret's visit, Ammu resents the way Margaret treats their indigenous culture. The 'imperial eyes', see it as a responsibility or burden to educate and lead the 'uncivilised'. Therefore, the imperial eyes regard it as necessary to impose identifiable judgements, gestures or thoughts when they come across the unidentifiable, alien or 'savage.'[19] Gestures or

[19] Childs & Williams, Ibid., p. 191

habits that are unidentifiable to Western eyes become concepts of exploration and they need re-defining. On Margaret and Sophie Mol's first day in the Ayemenem House, Kochu Maria, the cook of the household, takes Sophie's hands in hers and raises them to her face to inhale deeply. Sophie is naturally inquisitive about it. When Chacko explains to her that it is 'her way of kissing', Margaret inquires excitedly:

> 'How marvellous!' Margaret Kochamma said. 'It's a sort of sniffing! Do the men and women do it to each other too?'
>
> ...
>
> 'Oh, all the time!' Ammu said, and it came out a little louder than the sarcastic mumble that she had intended. 'That's how we make babies.'
>
> ...
>
> 'Must we behave like some damn godforsaken tribe that's just been discovered?' Ammu asked. *(pp. 179-180)*

Ammu feels inferior when questioned about her own culture by a Westerner, because she believes that her culture is perceived as a newly discovered culture to be unearthed and understood. Upon Ammu's reaction, Chacko attempts to protect his ex-wife by demanding an apology for Margaret. However, his defence of Margaret's inquiry is also ironic, since he acts as an anti-Anglophile throughout the novel.

Roy foregrounds cultural differences as a way of confrontation. This confrontation, in most cases as in the above example, brings the coloniser and the colonised relationship to the fore, satirising both. The contents of Margaret's suitcase including medication to protect herself from unexpected and unfamiliar sicknesses of the 'heart of darkness' are described with à sense of disgust, because they reflect her worries about the belief that 'anything can happen to anyone':

> Sellotape, umbrellas, soap (and other bottled London smells), quinine, aspirin, broad spectrum antibiotics. 'Take everything,' her colleagues had advised Margaret Kochama in concerned voices. 'You never know.' Which was their way of saying to a colleague travelling to the Heart of Darkness that:
>
> (a) Anything Can Happen To Anyone.

So
(b) It's Best to be Prepared. *(pp. 266-7)*

The Imperial idea of the colonial land is explicitly presented in the phrase 'heart of darkness'. One must be prepared for anything that can happen to anyone. On the other hand, the children's curiosity about the souvenirs she brings from London is ironic:

> ... two ballpoint pens – the top halves filled with water in which a cut-out collage of a London street-scape was suspended ... A red double-decker bus propelled by an air-bubble floated up and down the silent street. There was *something sinister about the absence of noise* on the busy ballpoint street. *(emphasis added, p. 267)*

Roy employs, in her narrative structure, a description of how the English are seen from the perspective of the colonised. The lively image of London on a ballpoint pen has a 'sinister silence', which increases their suspicion and fears of the English, rather than portraying an attractive culture. Their fear of the sinister silence also functions to symbolise their prejudiced perception of the 'sinister' English approach to their 'colonial subjects'. The English habit of politeness is contradicted by Margaret's father's stereotypical and prejudiced views of Indian people:

> Margaret Kochamma's father had refused to attend the wedding. He disliked Indians, he thought of them as sly, dishonest people. He couldn't believe that his daughter was marrying one. *(p. 240)*

However, despite their resentfulness and anti-colonialist feelings of the novel, the inevitable Indian admiration for England and Englishness dominates the book. In fact, a humorous representation of Anglophilia is ironic. Although exploitation of the land and the assimilation of the culture do not prevent Roy's characters from wishing to adopt English cultural manners, the use of the children's perspective and their resistance to speaking English language properly reduces the Anglophilia in the novel to a comical state.

The God of Small Things should not be limited by ostensible definitions of post-colonial literary theory, but, being a novel set in a complex and troubled post-colonial setting, it is inevitably viewed as such. In Linda Hutcheon's assumption, a post-colonial novel presents 'a parallel and equally contested context that involves the *post-modern* as well', and the troubled and ambivalent characteristics of post-colonial writing 'have become almost the hallmarks of the post-modern'.[20] Roy' s style, in most respects, contributes to post-colonial writing and the novel genre with the novelties it brings to the post-colonial condition. No matter what the setting is and who the protagonists are, her style remains unconventional, as she creates her own way of using the English language and reformulates grammar rules through the minds of children. The use of a child's perspective with original wordplay in a poetic rhythm is her most important contribution to the post-colonial novel. Her style is comparable to that of Rushdie, because it deconstructs traditional narration in a post-colonial setting in terms of language usage. The unexpected situations and interactions between the characters due to their diaspora and identity problems extend the sense of collage in the text, again emphasising collage as intrinsic to the post-colonial condition.

[20] Linda Hutcheon, 'The post always rings twice: the postmodernism and the post-colonial', *Textual Practice*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (Summer 1994) p. 210

Conclusion

Rushdie questions whether Indian writers writing about India in English can 'do no more than describe, from a distance, the world that they have left', and asserts that 'description is itself a political act.'[1] Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy describe the post-colonial condition, and their descriptions are replete with political allusions on account of the ideological and historical content of the material they share: ambivalent and hybrid characters from a formerly colonised culture. These descriptions are not devoid of allusions to the brute fact of colonisation.

Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy are all ambivalent in their depictions of the post-colonial condition. Despite the ideological potential of their material and the presentation of anti-imperialist characters alongside Anglophiles, these authors' points-of-view leave it ambiguous as to whether Indian Independence should be celebrated and the colonial rule in India be condemned. This ambiguity, which is itself reminiscent of Forster and Kipling's colonial texts, results in the need to dismiss the term postcolonialism in its political sense. Postcolonialism is defined as the stylistic reversal of colonial discourse, and in being a new literary mode set against the hegemony of colonialist fiction. Because their fiction cannot be defined

[1] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*, (London: Granta, 1991), p, 13.

as such on account of their political ambivalence, postcolonial*ism* is not an accurate term in reference to Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy. They are post-colonial authors in terms of their historical period, rather than being authors with a common literary style and political stance that unites them against colonialism. The post-colonial period is their historical era, and the description of the post-colonial condition in Britain and India is their common theme.

The post-colonial condition is used in this thesis as a response to Lyotard's description of the 'postmodern condition', because it is not the post-modern but the post-colonial that causes the unconventionality of the fiction of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy. The cultural collage of Lyotard's 'postmodern condition' stems from the spread of consumerist culture via global capitalism. In the period of post-Independence, however, cultural collage stems from the accumulation of distinct cultures and languages of the formerly colonised nations in the imperial centre, mutual borrowings between cultures, cultural clashes, hybridity, ambivalence and modified pre-colonial epistemologies in the cultures of both the coloniser and the colonised.

The ethnic roots of Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy are inevitably hybridised when combined with the coloniser's language and culture. The cultural hybridity of post-colonial condition exhibits more unconventionality and chaos than does the cultural collage of Lyotard's post-modern condition. Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's style, which challenges the traditional concepts of the novel genre with their stylistic novelties and unexpected themes, is an outcome of the post-colonial cultural hybridity that they describe. The literary representation of this condition is inevitably hybrid and offers substantial linguistic, stylistic and cultural material to analyse. The

representation of the post-colonial condition is therefore not to be considered postmodernist in the case of the authors in question here.

An experimental storytelling style is steps away from post-colonial storytellers. Rushdie, Kurcishi and Roy depict the post-colonial condition, choose their hybrid and ambivalent characters from a post-colonial community and construct their stories upon them in their novels. This results in novels recounting the stories of chaotic lives and marginal individuals, as well as the linguistic liberties particularly in Rushdie and Roy's novels.

Rushdie is himself a post-colonial character with a Muslim cultural background and an English education. There is always a character reminiscent of Rushdie buried in his novels. His fiction therefore reflects his own hybridity and ambivalence. His style is replete with the traditional storytelling devices of his own cultural roots such as dastan, qissa and oral storytelling. The multi-layered fragmental structure of his stories also alludes to the visual arts of traditional rug-weaving called 'kilim' and paper marbling on water called 'ebru', classical artistic styles throughout central Asia and Asia Minor since the Middle Ages. The multiple stories in Rushdie's novels are reminiscent of multiple patterns – each with a different meaning – put on a rug to tell a story, and his standpoint at 'a slight angle to reality' (*Shame*, 29) alludes to the magical 'ebru', painting on water.

Rushdie knows Anglo-American literature very well, not only through the cultural influence of British colonisation in India that started long before Rushdie's birth, but also through his education in England. This enables him to combine his ethnicity with Western cultural modes to write his novels. However, his cultural background had already been a hybrid combination of Hindu and the Muslim culture introduced into India by the Mughal Empire long before India was colonised by the

British. This hybrid combination is reflected in his novels as the use of traditional Persian, Arabic and Hindu storytelling techniques, which are hybridised further by the English language and its literary modes. Rushdie takes advantage of the richness and multiplicity offered by this hybridity. This is the post-colonial condition in which Rushdie produces his novels. He consciously plays with this post-colonial condition, not only to produce a hybrid genre, but also to depict chaotic lives in this condition. He intrinsically presents a political scene of the post-colonial era with its cultural clashes and ambiguities, despite choosing political ambivalence intentionally. Rushdie's deliberate allusions to both *Arabian Nights* and Western authors such as Márquez, Grass, Joyce, or colonial authors like Forster and Kipling do not point to an influence of these texts on Rushdie's creativity as a novelist, but rather indicate the post-colonial cultural hybridity in which Rushdie constructs his novels.

Kureishi is born and bred in Britain, and unlike Rushdie, does not utilise the literary devices of his Indian Muslim father's culture. Despite his hybrid genealogy, Kureishi considers himself neither Indian nor English: he is a Londoner.[2] He seeks for new ways of describing the modified concepts of being Indian, Muslim, and English in post-colonial London.

Kureishi's style is traditionally Western. *The Buddha of Suburbia* is a *Bildungsroman* written in a similar manner to the Western realist fiction with straightforward descriptions and linear story line. Within this Western genre, he concerns himself with the post-colonial condition in London and recounts the stories of the second generation of post-colonial migrants. He selects his characters from the

[2] Hanif Kureishi, 'Some Time with Stephen: A Diary', in *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 75

Asian community in London, who contradict both the contemporary cultural scene in London and the culture of their parents.

Kureishi does not attempt an experimental style as in Rushdie's novels. His style is not chaotic in terms of its mixture of distinct literary traditions, and certainly not hybrid. There is a firmer style in Kureishi's fiction as opposed to the stylistic and generic multiplicity in Rushdie's novels. His texts represent hybridity and unconventionality in their depiction of unexpected combinations in the post-colonial condition in London, despite their lack of linguistic liberties, polygotism and generic mixture.

Kureishi's novels are thematically chaotic. None of his characters, English or Asian, conforms either to the perceptions of traditional English culture or to the pre-colonial concepts of their own culture. Therefore, Kureishi's themes constitute an unconventional content for his firm Western style in English. His disciplined and careful style presents chaotic lives, depicted humorously. The cultural clashes and collage that he presents are straightforward descriptions of the modified cultural identity in the post-colonial condition. Despite the author's ambivalence and lack of any political standpoint and correctness, his novels are potentially political on account of their inevitable allusions to the colonial history.

Roy's style invites an immediate comparison to Rushdie's style due to the linguistic liberties and magical realism in her novel. Her use of magical realism also stems from the Eastern literary traditions. Despite its conventional content – forbidden love, betrayal and domestic violence – Roy's family saga exhibits experimental storytelling techniques, such as reformulation of English language. Her description of the hybrid post-colonial and Anglophile characters, and mutually prejudiced relationship of her main Indian and English characters is itself a

description of the post-colonial condition. The depiction of Indian characters hosting English guests is strongly reminiscent of Forster's *A Passage to India*, which points to a colonial genealogy of her fiction. This makes her novel classified and analysed in parallel with other post-colonial texts in this thesis. In a similar manner to Rushdie and Kureishi, the post-colonial condition that Roy describes represents unconventional lives, marginal characters and chaotic combinations of distinct cultures within the traditional concepts of the society she depicts. As an unavoidable consequence of the post-colonial condition, Roy's fiction also displays a combination of magical realism in the Eastern sense, Indian idiosyncrasy of the English language and Western literary styles, compared to that of Faulkner.

The standpoint of all of the three authors studied here is rather ambiguous in their representation of mutual mistrust and prejudices between cultures. They do not suggest a political standpoint in order to be labelled as anti-imperialist, but the characters and the stories they create cannot be separated from the politics of the historical period in which they set their novels.

The post-colonial condition modifies the literary concepts of both the coloniser and the colonised and causes mutual borrowings. The fiction of the post-colonial condition, a hybrid genre that transposes Eastern and Western literary genres and cultural concepts, crosses cultural barriers through description of cultural hybridity and clashes. It inevitably reflects the problems of identity, hybridity, cultural collage and flamboyance as a result of the modification of traditional pre-colonial cultural concepts of both the coloniser and the colonised. This reflection occurs in the language of the coloniser through the eyes of the formerly colonised in the novels studied here. This offers an amalgam and a contradicted form and content relation. The fictional content of the hybridised colonial culture is in the language of

the coloniser, forcing the boundaries of that form: much like the yoghurt seller, who sells car stereos, his form and content contradicting each other.

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