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"Even as myself, my very own incontrovertible, unexceptional self,  
I feel I am disguised": Mimicry, Masquerade, and the Quest for  
Hybridity in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie

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## Abstract

Salman Rushdie's fiction delineates the author's struggle toward an ideal of hybridity that encompasses both individual and nation. The emblematic figure of the migrant plays a large role in Rushdie's oeuvre, demonstrating the process of translation from one medium to another and the way in which Rushdie's combination of disparate elements leads to heterogeneity.

Rushdie uses Bakhtin's discourses of the carnivalesque, the grotesque, and masquerade, and Bhabha's discourse of mimicry to undermine notions of fixity and purity, notions which reify difference and lead to destructive conflict and negation rather than to negotiation and productive change.

Focussing on The Satanic Verses, but also using material from Midnight's Children, Shame, and The Moor's Last Sigh, the thesis applies the theoretical work of Mikhail Bakhtin and Homi Bhabha to the fiction of Salman Rushdie in order to show the possibilities for resistance and the production of new subjectivities. The discourses Rushdie uses have traditionally called into question issues of power and are all ambiguous, able to be used by those in possession of power to reinforce their positions, as well as by oppressed people to undermine that power. The discourses demonstrate these ambiguities particularly when used in situations of colonialism and racism, undermining divisions between colonizer and colonized and between races at the same time they reinforce those divisions. Rushdie focuses on setting up and then undermining binary oppositions, moving toward a liminal space of hybridity where terms in opposition merge into something new.

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## Introduction

The Satanic Verses celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, music, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. The Satanic Verses is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love-song to our mongrel selves.

Salman Rushdie, "In Good Faith"

Despite the effect that The Satanic Verses has had in widening divisions between East and West, Christianity and Islam, and the so-called First and Third Worlds, Salman Rushdie states in his defence of the novel, "In Good Faith", that his intention was precisely the opposite.<sup>1</sup> Rushdie perceives his novel to be "a love-song to our mongrel selves", a paean to hybridity and transformation, a work that promotes the intermingling of opposites rather than their separation. The Satanic Verses constantly foregrounds hybridity and transformation. Indeed, the novel is the vital centre-piece in an argument advanced by Rushdie in all of his writings for hybridity and impurity, and against what he calls "the absolutism of the Pure". That argument touches on both individual and national identities and is particularly important in the construction of postcolonial identities which are equipped to resist the oppression of neo-colonialist doctrines. Rushdie's fictional renderings of the concepts of hybridity and transformation intersect, in this thesis, with a theoretical framework centring largely on the work of Homi Bhabha and Mikhail Bakhtin. These theoretical works illuminate the way Rushdie's fiction advances an imagining of postcolonial identity that has the potential to subvert the existing structures and hierarchies which repress the underclasses of society.

Rushdie's nonfictional writing explicitly states much that is implied in his fiction and contributes to the overall picture he is painting of hybrid subjectivities. The ideas he expresses in his non-fiction interact with those from his fiction and add to the complex picture of identity that he depicts. They

also combine with the theories of Bakhtin and Bhabha to provide an innovative account of postcolonial subjectivity and agency that can bring about political change.

### **Rushdie: Imaginary Homelands for Real Migrants**

Oz finally became home; the imagined world became the actual world, as it does for us all, because the truth is that once we have left our childhood places and started out to make up our lives, armed only with what we have and are, we understand that the real secret of the ruby slippers is not that "there's no place like home", but rather that there is no longer any such place as home: except, of course, for the home we make, or the homes that are made for us, in Oz: which is anywhere, and everywhere, except the place from which we began.

Salman Rushdie, The Wizard of Oz

In "Imaginary Homelands", Rushdie develops the idea of hybrid identity, suggesting that the migrant occupies a position both inside and outside his or her adopted culture, belonging and not belonging:

Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools. But however ambiguous and shifting this ground may be, it is not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy. If literature is in part in the business of finding new angles at which to enter reality, then once again our distance, our long geographical perspective, may provide us with such angles. ("Imaginary" 15)

Rushdie suggests here that, due to the process of migration, migrants have a unique perspective on reality, they have a sort of special sight whereby they can see aspects of society that non-migrants either take for granted and therefore can no longer see, or never thought to look at. Rushdie invokes the Hindu notion of 'Maya' to describe the illusory nature of the world. In Midnight's Children, he defines Maya as "all that is illusory; as trickery, artifice and deceit. Apparitions, phantasms, mirages, sleight-of-hand, the seeming form of things: all these are parts of Maya" (MC 211). Rushdie maintains in his non-fiction

writing that the migrant gains the ability to perceive the dream-web of Maya, to discern the illusions that cloud ordinary vision:

The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier. ("Location" 125)

Migrants become enlightened about the illusory nature of the world and multiple possibilities for 'being' as a result of their travels, and are therefore wary of claims concerning essential properties. For the migrant, nothing is essential. This contrasts with the philosopher who emerges into the light in Plato's parable of the cave and realises that his previous reality consisted of nothing but shadows, and that he can now see the real objects that cast the shadows. Rushdie does not claim that the migrant can see through the web of illusions to some objective reality that lies behind. He suggests, rather, that there exists nothing but illusions. Because the migrant has experienced different realities, or "ways of being", he or she knows to avoid being slotted into a fixed reality.

This fixing of reality often does occur when the migrant arrives in a culture where the inhabitants perceive him or her as dangerously different. A person appears less threatening if you can contain them within a stereotype, and stereotypes abound when migrants arrive in new cultures. There arises, therefore, the paradox whereby the migrant becomes multiple in the very act of migration, but then is reduced to a singularity by people using racist stereotypes in his or her new culture. Rushdie delineates this paradox in an essay on John Berger:

To migrate is certainly to lose language and home, to be defined by others, to become invisible or, even worse, a target; it is to experience deep changes and wrenches in the soul. But the migrant is not simply transformed by his act; he also transforms his new world. Migrants may

well become mutants, but it is out of such hybridization that newness can emerge. ("John Berger" 210)

Thus, although the migrant experiences "deep changes and wrenches in the soul", he or she also becomes defined by others and locked into a fixed identity: the migrant becomes both multiple and singular. This ambivalence surrounding the migrant is also visible in the writings of Bhabha about mimicry and in Bakhtin's analysis of carnival; the subversive elements of migrancy, mimicry and carnival are undercut by repressive features of those very discourses. Rushdie sees potential for positive change to come about from this merging of cultures, however, in the form of hybridization of identity. Rather than accepting the stagnation of a nation that is hermetically sealed and preserves a fixed identity, he looks forward to growth that can occur from multiplicity.

Much writing on postmodernism leads us to expect that such multiplicity is a comparatively recent phenomena. Rushdie points out, however, that multiplicity has a much older history, as in the case of Indian culture:

it is completely fallacious to suppose that there is such a thing as a pure, unalloyed tradition from which to draw. The only people who seriously believe this are religious extremists. The rest of us understand that the very essence of Indian culture is that we possess a mixed tradition, a mélange of elements as disparate as ancient Mughal and contemporary Coca-Cola American . . . Eclecticism, the ability to take from the world what seems fitting and to leave the rest, has always been a hallmark of the Indian tradition, and today it is at the centre of the best work being done both in the visual arts and in literature. ("Commonwealth" 67)

Rushdie here points out that instead of Indian art and literature drawing on a pure pre-colonial Indian culture, there has always been a mixture of heterogeneous elements on which people have drawn. Multiplicity has a long history in India, and this diversity is also visible in Great Britain. In a novel

such as The Satanic Verses, which depicts people from a rich mixture of cultures living together in London, the heterogeneity of British culture in the present also suggests that the British tradition is not as pure and unalloyed as some people, such as the policemen in the novel, might like to think. In Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Marlow muses on the fact that Britain has also been one of the dark places of the earth, a place of 'savagery' when invaded by the Romans, just as the British colonized a 'savage' Africa. Similarly, the current mélange of immigrants merging with British culture suggests that Britain may never have had quite that homogeneous national identity that people such as the policemen might like to think. The new immigrants to Great Britain are not creating a new diversity of races and traditions, only adding to a heterogeneity that already existed.

### **Postmodern/Postcolonial Identities**

The post-colonial desire is the desire of decolonized communities for an identity . . . . In both literature and politics the post-colonial drive towards identity centres around language, partly because in postmodernity identity is barely available elsewhere. For the post-colonial to speak or write in the imperial tongues is to call forth a problem of identity, to be thrown into mimicry and ambivalence.

Simon During, "Postmodernism or Post-Colonialism Today."

The picture that Rushdie has painted of a hybrid, provisional, shifting model of identity is one of great importance to postcolonial politics. In postcolonialism there has been much debate over the usefulness of postmodern conceptions of fragmented identity for the political projects that the theorists are working for. The worry is that fragmentation of subjectivity precludes any possibility of agency; by fragmenting the subject, one removes the possibility of resisting the dominant discourses that oppress groups on a racial or gender basis. The power to resist--and also to act in their own right, not merely to re-act against a dominant power--is a crucial one for marginalised groups, and is founded upon

the subject positions that they occupy. As Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon point out,

The forms of subjectivity that we inhabit play a crucial part in determining whether we accept or contest existing power relations. Moreover, for marginalized and oppressed groups, the construction of new and resistant identities is a key dimension of a wider political struggle to transform society. (5-6)

These subject positions need not be fixed, though; they can be constantly shifting like those of the migrants that Rushdie describes; they can be hybrid and multiple without losing the power of agency. Indeed, as Jordan and Weedon hint above, in order to transform society it is crucial to construct new identities on a regular basis, for just as the nature of oppression is constantly mutating, so the resistant identities from which to counter it must shift and alter.

How, though, can people from oppressed groups take up these new resistant identities? Can they simply put on new masks in order to choose new identities? Jordan and Weedon suggest that the discourse of postmodernism implies that people can easily assume new identities, whereas in reality marginalized groups do not have the range of options that are open to more privileged sectors of society: "The experience of living as a person of Colour in a racist society is not one of choice. Racism defines what we are, constrains what we do" (552). While true, this statement also oversimplifies. Racism is not the only discourse that people under oppression have to deal with in life. There are a vast number of discourses that affect each of us: some are oppressive and constraining, and others allow us freedom to act. For example, Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses encounters relatively minor examples of racism for most of his life in England due to his wealth and public school education (and perhaps due to his mimicry of upper-class English manners and attitudes). His access to more privileged discourses based on wealth, education, and class works against the disadvantages of his skin colour and

gives him the freedom to enter a relatively prosperous career as an actor. Racism remains a factor in his life, however, in the form of the people in charge of the networks who restrict him to being either a disembodied voice or encased in a mask when he appears on television. A variety of different discourses affect Saladin in a variety of different ways. Racism affects him, but it also interacts with a number of other important factors.

Jordan and Weedon point out that a conception of identity as provisional rather than fixed and essential does not rule out an identity based politics, it merely suggests that we see "identity as necessary but always contingent and strategic" (204). This means that identity to some extent depends on the alliances and interactions that take place as people unite to resist oppressive practices or institutions. People often operate by this issue-by-issue approach to transforming society, and The Satanic Verses depicts such an approach when the migrant community unites in the face of racism, despite being divided on other issues. In the case of racism, then, such action may centre on the rejection of racist stereotypes and dominant definitions of what it means to be a certain race, but it need not mean that only one alternative is proposed in its stead.

In summary, Jordan and Weedon observe that, to question the Western Enlightenment category of the Subject is not necessarily to undermine the possibility of subjecthood. Poststructuralist theories of subjectivity suggest that it is socially constructed and contradictory rather than essential and unified. (204)

They make the important point here that if subjectivity is a social construct rather than a fixed, unchanging thing, then there remains possibility for change. A writer such as Rushdie has the latitude to provide different constructions of reality. One way of achieving this change is to look to the transgressive possibilities of carnival and the associated practice of masquerade.

## Bakhtin and the Carnival

In its multivalent oppositional play, carnival refuses to surrender the critical and cultural tools of the dominant class, and in this sense, carnival can be seen above all as a site of insurgency, and not merely withdrawal.

Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory."

Salman Rushdie's novels do not contain the actual medieval types of carnival that occur in the novels of Rabelais, but rather display a number of features that could be labelled 'carnavalesque' because they draw on the imagery, practices and characteristics of the carnival as Bakhtin describes it. These features include the practice of masquerade, used to undercut official hierarchies; the use of grotesque realism as a symbol for popular community and hybrid, multiple identities; and the subversion of existing inequalities and prevailing truth claims. This analysis is particularly appropriate in a postcolonial reading of novels such as Rushdie's due to the inequalities that exist between colonizer and colonized, or between the 'official' culture of predominantly white, middle class, male English culture and the 'nonofficial' cultures of the immigrants who have come to England from places such as India and the Caribbean which still have rich carnivalesque traditions. Stallybrass and White observe that "it is striking that the most successful of these [contemporary] attempts to apply Bakhtin tout court focus upon cultures which still have a strong repertoire of carnivalesque practices, such as Latin America, or upon literatures produced in a colonial or neo-colonial context where the political difference between the dominant and subordinate culture is particularly charged" (11). Rushdie's novels, with their rich variety of carnivalesque characters and focus on colonialism and its aftermath, are ideally suited to a Bakhtinian analysis, especially as such analysis leads towards an examination of the issues of hybridity, mimicry, and shifting identities outlined by Rushdie himself and also by Homi Bhabha.

## Bhabha and Hybridity

If the effect of colonial power is to produce "hybridization", this undermines colonial authority because it repeats it differently; other, repressed knowledges enter unawares and effect a transformation.

Robert Young, White Mythologies: Writing History and the West

Homi Bhabha's writings on mimicry intertwine closely with his theory of hybridity, and his writings on hybridity both set up the discourse of mimicry and intersect with Rushdie's views on the desirability of a hybrid conception of identity and nation. In Bhabha's work the crucial location is the liminal one, the location that lies between binary oppositions and that can be a space for articulating hybrid identities that arise out of cultural differences rather than fixed and separate oppositional identities. Bhabha writes of the in-between spaces rather than the margins, a location often referred to in postcolonial criticism. The margins suggest an isolation and a separation from a colonial centre, and this conception is not adequate for a situation such as that depicted by Rushdie in The Satanic Verses where the 'marginalised' groups inhabit and are part of the centre. Such a situation shows the inadequacy of the centre/margins opposition and suggests a contestatory rather than a strictly oppositional postcolonial politics, that is, a politics based around the contestation of certain issues rather than one based on the conflict between two monolithic groups such as the colonizers and the colonized. In a contestatory politics, identity is constructed on an issue-by-issue basis, by asking questions about solidarity and community rather than by being defined in strict opposition to some discourse. Thus, Bhabha proposes that

What is theoretically innovative and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' places provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood--singular or communal--that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and

contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.

("Introduction" 1-2)

He discounts the usefulness of linear, teleological conceptions of history for the postcolonial subject, advocating a hybrid identity that arises out of differences instead of a pure identity that is supposedly achieved by a return to racial and cultural origins. As Rushdie points out about India, it is virtually impossible to return to a pure beginning, for every person and every culture is hybrid to some extent. Indeed, Rushdie sees this return to origins as positively dangerous, a point he makes with force in The Moor's Last Sigh, in his satirical portrait of the Hindu extremist leader Raman Fielding. Instead of peacefully coexisting and accepting India's diversity, Fielding and his followers cause great strife in their quest for religious and cultural purity.

By focussing on processes of subject formation and on "innovative sites of collaboration", Bhabha looks toward both Bakhtin's theories of the grotesque, with its body continually in the process of transforming, forming new identities, and an issues-based theory of communal identity where identities are based on coincidence of interest and collaboration across groups. Such collaborations mean that although groups might be opposed on certain issues they can work together on others, forming an effective coalition instead of staying divided and preserving the purity of their group identity. As Bhabha observes, communities that one might expect to work together due to a common experience of oppression don't always do so, and in certain situations an issues-based formation of identity is the only possible platform for action ("Introduction" 2). To assume that all oppressed people should join together in opposition to that oppression would be to fix the identity of that group, something Bhabha urges us to avoid. All oppressed people are not necessarily similarly oppressed; oppression takes on a wide variety of forms and is experienced in a vast number of different ways. In The Satanic Verses Rushdie depicts just such a community--that centring around the Shaandaar

Cafe--where the differences are often just as great as the similarities and antagonism is just as common as cooperation.

Like Bakhtin, Bhabha conceives of identity as a fluid affair, one that destroys the binary oppositions that structure much of society by refusing to conform rigidly to either side of the opposition. The result of this is the dissolution of the hierarchies that can be so damaging to those at the lower ends of them such as people of colour and women. Invoking the work of Renée Green, the African American poet, Bhabha seizes on the image of the stairwell and says that "[t]his interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" ("Introduction" 4). In The Satanic Verses, Rushdie offers many examples of this "in-between" identity that dissolves hierarchies, with characters that waver between Indian and English identifications and between more supernatural identifications such as Angel and Devil. Indeed, almost all of Rushdie's major characters are hybrid, and often have a very ambiguous origin. Saleem Sinai, in Midnight's Children, has a vast array of possible parents and adopted fathers, including Ahmed and Amina Sinai, William Methwold and Vanita, Picture Singh and General Zulfikar. His biological parents are Methwold and Vanita, meaning that his biological origins are also hybrid, a mixture of English and Indian. Omar Khayyam, the peripheral hero of Shame, also has hybrid origins, being the son of an anonymous British officer and one of the Shakil sisters. He has a multitude of possible mothers, as three sisters all display the signs of pregnancy and refuse to divulge which is the actual mother. The Da Gama family of The Moor's Last Sigh claim hybrid illegitimate descent from Vasco Da Gama, and Abraham Zogoiby is descended from a hybrid union of a Jewish ancestor and the Sultan Boabdil, last of the Moorish rulers in Spain. Moraes, son of Aurora Da Gama, is even more hybrid as he is unsure whether his father is really Abraham

Zogoiby or if he is the product of an affair between his mother and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Bhabha writes that "[t]he very concepts of homogeneous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or 'organic' ethnic communities--as the grounds of cultural comparativism--are in a profound process of redefinition" ("Introduction" 5; original emphasis). Ethnic communities and national cultures, he suggests, are not self-contained organic entities that transmit historical traditions from one generation to the next in an orderly progressive way, but are rather heterogeneous and hybrid. Bhabha contrasts on one side what he calls "The hideous extremity of Serbian nationalism" (Raman Fielding's brand of religious extremism in The Moor's Last Sigh is every bit as hideous) with a more positive and "more transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities" ("Introduction" 5). These hybrid communities are imagined because they exist only as artificial constructs, not as natural societal divisions. The boundaries between different groups in society are permeable and shifting, not fixed and unyielding. It is through "transnational" means that borders can be crossed and through "translational" means that differences can be understood, leading to a society that is varied and multiple yet still a whole.

Bhabha maintains that "[t]he Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative internal to its national identity" ("Introduction" 6; original emphasis). Thus, the postcolonial migrants to England are part of its heterogeneous national identity and not intruders from the margins trying to impose on the homogeneous centre. In a similar manner, British history and traditions include those of the nations they colonized, or as the stuttering Whisky Sisodia says in The Satanic Verses, "The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means" (SV 343).<sup>2</sup>

This hybrid, in-between space of identity formation can be a space of political action and intervention as well. Such intervention is not the negation of one term of a binary opposition by the other, but rather a negotiation between the two terms, the introduction of a third term that disrupts the binary opposition with its implicit hierarchy. Bhabha sees the way forward as being "negotiation rather than negation" ("Commitment" 25; original emphasis). Referring to the effectiveness of postcolonial criticism, he asserts that, by finding the way between binary oppositions such as colonizer and colonized, one can find a new space of political action from which one can disrupt the fixity of these oppositions and bring about a hybrid situation which avoids unproductive negation:

The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. ("Commitment" 25)

Bhabha here advocates undercutting binary oppositions by opening up a hybrid space between the terms in which constructive dialogue can take place. This space in between the two terms of the opposition is characterised by dialogue between the terms and not negation of one term by the other. Whereas some people, such as Raman Fielding in The Moor's Last Sigh, or Tavleen and Hind in The Satanic Verses, can only conceive of political action in terms of opposition, antagonism and negation, Bhabha theorizes such political action as a place of hybrid negotiation. Rushdie also provides characters such as Saleem, Saladin, and Moraes who occupy that in-between space of hybridity in which negotiation can occur.

Bhabha's view of difference and hybridity as positive attributes also informs his conception of stereotypes, which he ties to notions of rigidity and stagnation. Thus,

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. ("Other" 66)

Stereotypes fix perceptions of certain groups of people. These perceptions are often negative ones, but, according to Bhabha, even if they were positive stereotypes they would be destructive, for both the people being stereotyped and those doing the stereotyping, because of the rigid and unchanging views they promote. Bhabha's conception of hybrid identity means that people are able to change and shift their identities instead of being locked into one. As Bhabha also observes, the notion of fixity in colonial discourse has somewhat paradoxical connotations, for not only does it suggest unchanging and essential hierarchies in which the colonized is inferior to the colonizer, but it also stereotypes the colonized subjects as being disordered, unable to govern themselves, degenerate, and daemonic. The supposed disorder of the colonized subject is fixed into a rigid order. If one embraces the notions of hybridity and shifting identities then one breaks free of these damaging stereotypes. This is dramatised in The Satanic Verses, in which Saladin is first locked into the degenerate stereotype that the police hold of Asian immigrants, and then forced to break out of that fixed identity.

The problem with stereotypes, therefore, is not that they misrepresent the group being described, but that they fix an unchanging essence onto that group. As Bhabha says of Edward Said, he "rightly rejects a notion of Orientalism as the misrepresentation of an Oriental essence" ("Other" 72). The

problem is not that Indians have a fixed essential identity and that Orientalists have failed to see that identity in their representations. The point is that nobody has a fixed essence. As Rushdie demonstrates in The Satanic Verses, people of colour can certainly have attitudes and personalities that correspond with racist stereotypes, but this is not a universal or essential element of people of colour. Everybody is different, and those that do, in some respects, fit the stereotypes have the ability to change if they wish.

The following chapters detail the contributions made by the discourses of the carnival and mimicry to the construction of hybrid identities and nations in Rushdie's novels. Chapter One looks at Mikhail Bakhtin's work in Rabelais and his World on the carnivalesque, masquerade, and grotesque realism, and identifies those elements in The Satanic Verses. Rushdie's use of those elements reinforces his construction of subjectivities which are based on hybridity and multiplicity. The use of the carnivalesque in The Satanic Verses contributes to Rushdie's undermining of hierarchies, particularly that between the 'official' and 'nonofficial' worlds. His use of the grotesque with the character of Saladin underlines his idea of identity being something that is continually in process, and the idea of the masquerade advances his conception of hybrid identities.

Chapter Two uses Homi Bhabha's writings on mimicry to illuminate The Satanic Verses, Midnight's Children, and The Moor's Last Sigh. Mimicry is a self-undermining discourse, and Rushdie highlights the menace of mimicry and its consequent threat to the colonial hierarchy. This chapter also outlines the fragmentation of identity and nation, identifying the parallels between the two, and proposing hybridity as a possible solution to the conflicts caused by such fragmentation.

The undermining of binary oppositions is the focus of Chapter Three, which investigates the way Rushdie sets up oppositions in order to undercut them. By rejecting binary oppositions in favour of a hybrid space of negotiation

between opposites Rushdie outlines his ideal hybrid world; it is this model of negotiation rather than negation that allows "newness to enter the world" through an active process of sharing and intermingling. The Moor's Last Sigh, however, adds a cynical awareness that such ideals often fail to be achieved in the political realities of the world. The ideal is maintained in that novel, but it is not successful in overcoming the forces of fragmentation epitomized by the Hindu extremist Raman Fielding.